

Music Notes for this Sunday – Last Sunday after the Epiphany – February 23, 2020

Our choir anthem for this Sunday, “*Ave Maria*” (Hail Mary), also called the *Angelic Salutation*, is a prayer of the Roman Catholic Church which is comprised of three parts addressed to Mary. It was originally used as a salutation among Christians until its use as a devotional prayer. The prayer is recited in the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin and is often assigned as penance during the sacrament of reconciliation (confession).

The first part, the words of the archangel Gabriel (Luke 1:28), appears in liturgies as early as the 6th century – Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee. The second part, the words of Elizabeth, the mother of St. John the Baptist (Luke 1:42) – blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb - was added to the first part by about 1000 AD, the name *Jesus* being added some two centuries later, possibly by Pope Urban IV (reigned 1261–64).

The second half of the prayer is a closing petition that came into general use during the 14th or 15th century – Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. In our anthem, the soloists intersperse the words of the hail Mary with the recitation of the Angelus, which were prayers that were said three times a day, morning, noon, and night by the monastic orders.