



Ask, Father James:

“In the ‘Hail Holy Queen’ prayer, what is meant by the phrase: ‘poor banished children of Eve’ and ‘in this Valley of Tears’?”

Let us begin by stating the whole prayer: (I highlighted the areas referred to):

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve: to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus, O merciful, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary! Amen.

Biblically, “**poor banished children of Eve**” refers to our life situation after Original Sin, when Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24) and consequently humanity started living in this “Valley of Tears.” Life in this world is a valley of tears; meaning sinful and suffering world and our time here can be considered a kind of exile until we are summoned to “come up higher” to our true and heavenly homeland.

When we pray this prayer, we see Mary as the new Eve. This Second Eve is the notion that Our Lady’s Annunciation was the antithesis of the first Eve’s disobedience. By the first Eve’s disobedience of God brought misery, while in the other, obedience brought about happiness. Now, while God was no feminist or sexist, He did give woman a special place. However, by disobeying, she became the cause of death for herself and for the whole human race and Mary, by obeying, *she became the cause of salvation* for herself and for the whole human race.

The former drove us out of paradise; *the latter leads us back to heaven*. She was addressed as; ‘Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you’ (Luke 1:28). When we pray the Hail Holy Queen prayer, we call on her to intercede for us by turning her most gracious Advocate eyes of mercy toward us and show unto us the blessed fruit of her womb, Jesus, the only one who can save us. Jesus came to redeem us and he has purchased our salvation, by his once and for all perfect sacrifice on the cross.

We pray this prayer after every Rosary. It is encouraged that we all join in praying the Rosary. The Catechism speaks of the rosary as an epitome of the whole Gospel (CCC #971). In other words it is a summary or an embodiment of the whole Gospel, because it encourages the faithful to meditate upon the fundamental events of salvation history; from Mary’s cooperation in the economy of salvation and the life of Christ. This is why the Rosary is sometimes called, the “gospel on the string.”

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