

## MARY, STAR OF THE SEA

From the smiling Madonna to the sorrowful Mother of God, Our Lady is known by her children by a multitude of titles. Some of them are intuitive—Mary, Help of Christians, the *Theotokos*, or Christ-bearer—but some are not. Why do we call Mary “Star of the Sea”?

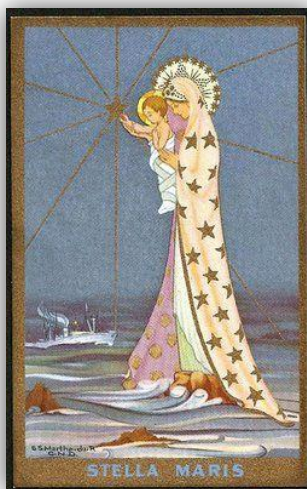
The *Catholic Encyclopedia* mentions that this title of Mary originated from St. Jerome’s fifth century translation of Eusebius of Caesarea’s *Onomasticon* (dictionary of proper names) in which he translates Mary’s name in Hebrew—*Miryam*, meaning drop of the sea—into the Latin *Stilla Maris*, which later became *Stella Maris* due to a dialect of the Latin peasants.

A linguistic error? You might be disappointed in the origin of that beautiful and oh-so-appropriate title for Our Lady who points us in the direction of Her Son, helping us navigate the sometimes rough waters of this world and even our own passions. But really, the etymology of that title seemed fitting: a drop in the ocean becoming the guide for the entire sea; an unknown girl through faith and generosity becoming the Mother of God. The title now also evokes God’s exaltation of humility.

Since Jerome, Mary, Star of the Sea has been a beloved title of Mary, especially among her many children who live and make their livelihoods by the sea.

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux captured this moment and how we ought to respond in supplication to Mary in his twelfth century treatise “Homilies on the Gospel ‘Missus est’”:

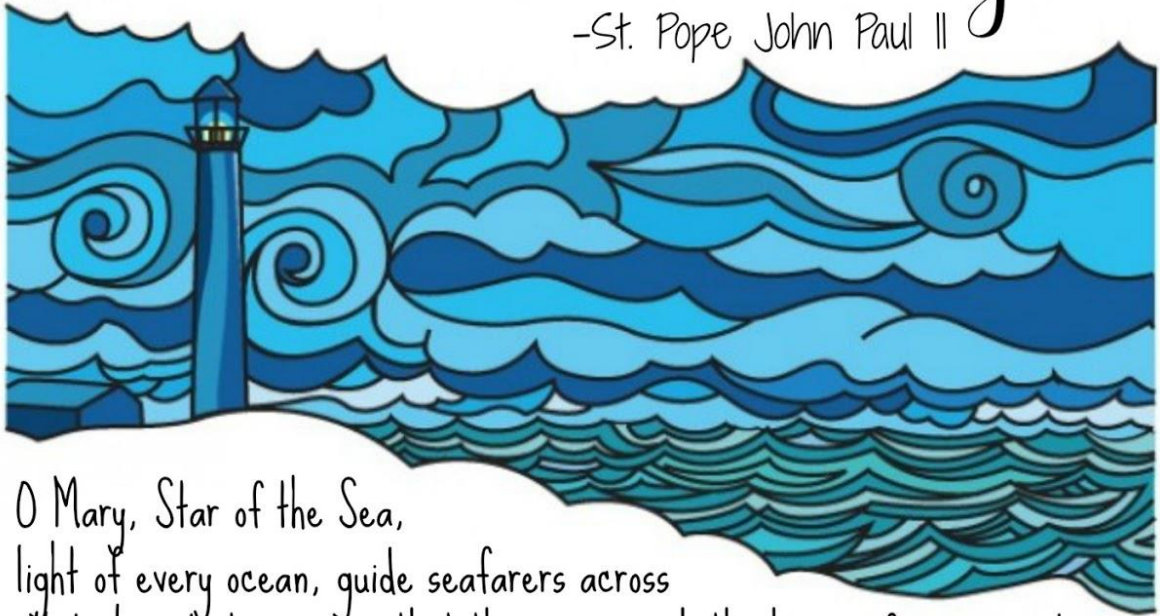
*If the winds of temptation arise; If you are driven upon the rocks of tribulation, look to the star, call on Mary; If you are tossed upon the waves of pride, of ambition, of envy, of rivalry, look to the star, call on Mary. Should anger, or avarice, or fleshly desire violently assail the frail vessel of your soul, look at the star, call upon Mary.*



Mary, Star of the Sea, pray for us!

# Stella Maris Prayer

-St. Pope John Paul II



O Mary, Star of the Sea,  
light of every ocean, guide seafarers across  
all dark and stormy seas that they may reach the haven of peace and  
light prepared in Him who calmed the sea.

As we set forth upon the oceans of the world and cross the deserts of our  
time, show us, O Mary, the fruit of your womb, for without your Son we are  
lost.

Pray that we will never fail on life's journey, that in heart and mind, in  
word and deed, in days of turmoil and in days of calm, we will always look  
to Christ and say, "Who is this that even wind and sea obey him?"

Our Lady Star of the Sea,  
Pray for us. Amen

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