

The first prayer ever said to the Blessed Virgin in our land was the prayer of the Christian Norsemen who came to Vinland in 1002. The most popular prayer at that time was "Ave Maria Stella" (Hail Star of the Sea).

AVE MARIS STELLA

Hail, bright star of ocean,
God's own Mother blest,
Ever sinless Virgin,
Gate of heavenly rest,
Taking that sweet Ave,
Which from Gabriel came,
Peace confirm within us,
Changing Eva's name,
Break the captive's fetters,
Light on blindness pure,
All our ills expelling,
Every bliss implore,
Show thyself a Mother,
May the Word divine
Born for us thine Infant,
Hear our prayers through thine.
Virgin all excelling,
Mildest of the mild,
Freed from guilt preserve us,
Meek and undefiled.
Keep our life all spotless,
Make our way secure,
Till we find in Jesus,
Joy forevermore.
Through the highest heaven
To the almighty Three
Father, Son, and Spirit
One same glory be.



A nineteenth century painting of
Mary, Star of the Sea.

Our Lady Star of the Sea



*Image of a miraculous statue of Our Lady,
Star of the Sea in Maastricht,
the most important
Marian shrine of the Netherlands.*

OUR LADY, STAR OF THE SEA

*Our Lady, Star of the Sea is an ancient title for the Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus Christ. The words *Star of the Sea* are a translation of the Latin title ***Stella Maris***, first reliably used with relation to the Virgin Mary in the ninth century. The title was used to emphasize Mary's role as a sign of hope and as a guiding star for Christians. Under this title, the Virgin Mary is believed to intercede as a guide and protector of those who travel or seek their livelihoods on the sea. This aspect of the Virgin has led to Our Lady, Star of the Sea, being named as patroness of the Catholic missions to seafarers, the Apostleship of the Sea, and to many coastal churches being named *Stella Maris* or Mary, Star of the Sea. This devotion towards Our Lady with this ancient title is very popular throughout the Catholic world.

THEORIES OF ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

The title most probably has its origin in the Biblical passage 1 Kings 18:41-45, which speaks of a cloud above the sea, no bigger than a man's hand, which is seen from Mount Carmel. The tiny cloud's scriptural significance is as the sign of hope that heralds the end of a long drought.

A similar message is reflected in another title of Mary, which appears in the official Litany of the Virgin, *Morning Star*. Both titles refer to Mary as a symbol of hope and as a foreshadowing of the imminent coming of Jesus. A combination of the two themes produces *Star of the Sea*.

Around the year 400 Saint Jerome interpreted the Hebrew name of Mary, *Miriam*, as "*stilla maris*," or a drop of the sea. It has been suggested as an alternative origin for the term that this may have been miscopied as *stella maris*. The first reliable use of the term *stella maris* that is still extant is in the writings of Paschasius Radbertus in the ninth century, who wrote of Mary,

Star of the Sea, as a guide to be followed on the way to Christ "lest we capsize amid the storm –tossed waves of the sea." At this time too the plainsong hymn Ave Maris Stella (Hail, Star of the Sea), became increasingly popular.

In the twelfth-century, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux wrote: "*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.*"

Pope Pius XII in his encyclical, *Doctor Mellifluus*, also quoted Bernard of Clairvaux in saying; *Mary...is interpreted to mean 'Star of the Sea.' This admirably befits the Virgin Mother.. (for) as the ray does not diminish the brightness of the star, so neither did the Child born of her tarnish the beauty of Mary's virginity.*

Another explanation refers to Isis, an Egyptian goddess whose epiphets included that of *Stella Maris*, under which she was adored by tempest-tossed sailors. The attributes of a marine deity may have been bestowed on Isis by the sea-faring Greeks of Alexandria. On this hypothesis Sirius, the bright star of Isis, was the true *Stella Maris*.

DEVOTIONAL APPLICATION

The idea of Mary as a guiding star for seafarers has led to devotion to Our Lady, Star of the Sea in many Catholic coastal and fishing communities. Numerous churches, schools and colleges are dedicated to *Stella Maris*, *Our Lady Star of the Sea*, or *Mary, Star of the Sea*.

Stella Maris Monastery, the foundation house of the Carmelite order was established on Mount Carmel, Israel, in the early thirteenth century. The abbey was destroyed several times, but a re-founded *Stella Maris* monastery is still considered the headquarters of the order.

*(excerpted from:en.wikipedia.org)