



## Mary, Woman of Faith: Renewing Our Awareness

### *Core Community Meeting*

#### **Aim**

Ideally, this meeting will accomplish three goals

1. to help Parish Core Community members to invigorate their own relationships with Mary of Nazareth, the young Jewish woman who became the Mother of Jesus, the Son of God
2. to discover ways to revitalize devotion to Mary within the small Christian communities and/or the parish
3. to call participants to a deeper discipleship to Jesus Christ where prayer and action interact and nourish our personal and pastoral lives

#### **Leader's Instructions:**

If you want to use a song, choose a hymn to Mary or about discipleship to Christ that is familiar to your community.

In advance of the meeting, ask someone to be prepared to read the Scripture passage. After the Leader's Reflection, allow a few minutes of silence before moving on to the sharing questions.

#### **Opening Prayer**

Mary, we gather here to revitalize our relationship with you.  
You are both the Mother of God and our mother.  
Help us to find in your life of faithful discipleship  
a model for our own lives. Help us to reflect on your role  
as both Mother and follower of Jesus  
and to see in the gospel stories  
both your contemplative spirit  
and your faith in action.  
Help us to look around us  
with compassion, to turn to your son  
in prayer, and to trust in his response.  
Help us to live always  
with the Spirit in our lives.  
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son,  
who lives and reigns with God the Father  
and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen

#### **Reading     John 2:1–12**

## Leader's Reflection

In this familiar scene, the wedding at Cana, which appears only in the Gospel of John, we are invited to reflect on Mary as she appears on this third day of Jesus' public life. The "Mother of Jesus"—she is never called by name in this gospel—is in fact mentioned only twice by John: here at the beginning of Jesus' ministry and one last time at the foot of the cross. (19:25–27)

Scripture scholars have written at great length about the relationship between Mary and Jesus in this scene. Whatever the nuances of the language may be, we want to take note that as Jesus begins his public ministry, Mary is beginning her life as his disciple. She had said her yes to God many years before, but she, too, must work out her response in faith day-by-day. John also shows us where her path ultimately led.

Mary is someone to whom we can relate. Her humanness allows us to feel very close to her—despite the cultural, geographical, and historical differences between our worlds. In a very ordinary setting, the Mother of Jesus sees a situation that is causing a problem and she is moved to do something to solve the problem. So, we can reflect on Mary's sensitivity and perception—her awareness of the needs of people around her.

However, there is more for us to consider. Yes, Mary shows compassion by observing the needs of the world around her, but she does not stop there. She takes action by turning to her son and placing her trust in him: "Do whatever he tells you." (2:5)

Is it not this combination of compassion (awareness of someone in need, along with a desire to alleviate the need) and action in faith that marks a disciple of Jesus? As we try to revitalize our image of Mary for the twenty-first century, we can ponder this scene, perhaps extracting from it some lessons to aid our own discipleship.

### Leader's Instructions:

There are two sets of sharing questions below. The first concentrates on personal response to Mary's actions. The second deals with response within a group context—the Parish Core Community itself, the small Christian communities, or the parish. Choose the set that suits the tenor of your group and the specific purpose of this meeting: personally reinvigorating images of Mary or working to enliven a group response.

## Personal Response

1. How does Mary's role in this scene resonate in your own day-to-day life? How do you act when you have to ask others to do things?
2. As a disciple, which do you find more difficult—noticing the needs of others or acting to solve the problem? Why? How might you remedy this?
3. How and when do you turn to Jesus in faith?

## Small Group Sharing

1. What are some needs in this Parish Core Community (this parish, these small Christian communities) that have been overlooked recently?
2. How do we combine action with prayer in our response? What are some of the challenges here? How can we deal with these challenges?
3. How can we include Mary in both our prayer and our actions.

## Leader's Instructions:

Lead a discussion of future activities relating to the role of Mary in our lives. Determine what is important to the Parish Core Community. Is it a personal goal for individual members? Or one to be pursued for the larger community? Or both? Depending on the results of this discussion, select from some of the possibilities below.

## Business Meeting Agenda

1. Review previous meeting's minutes and actions.
2. Possible actions to introduce the topic, "Mary, Woman of Faith: Renewing our Awareness," to small Christian communities and the parish
  - Read and discuss appropriate passages from important Church documents on Mary: Chapter 8 of *The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen gentium)*; Pope Paul VI's *Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary (Marialis cultus)*; Pope John Paul II's *The Mother of the Redeemer (Redemptoris mater)*; the pastoral letter of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, *Behold Your Mother: Woman of Faith*; and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. [See Links and Resources for full references.]
  - Brainstorm ways to enhance devotion to Mary among specific groups in the parish; for instance, young adults, parents of students in the school and religious education program, or seniors in a nearby assisted-living site. Request volunteers to examine the options and report back with suggestions.
  - Consider the seasonal activities of the community. How is Mary a vibrant part of any of those celebrations? Brainstorm and request volunteers to follow up and report back with appropriate ideas.
  - Develop a parish resource team that will be able to evaluate ideas in light of the guidelines for Marian activities as presented in documents listed in #1 above.
  - Establish a timeline for reports and allow time in subsequent meetings for follow-up discussions.
  - Decide to print the downloadable Day of Reflection on Mary from [www.ParishLife.com](http://www.ParishLife.com). Use it to lead a three-hour session for yourselves, for small Christian community participants, and/or for your parish at large. If that is not a possibility, consider using the three meditations and linked images contained therein as a prelude to one or more subsequent Parish Core Community meetings.
  - Decide whether to consult RENEW International to help us organize a workshop and/or run it? (Contact Michael Fabian: [SCCServices@renewintl.org](mailto:SCCServices@renewintl.org)); (908) 769-5400 ex 144.)
3. Assign tasks to individuals and groups.
4. Discuss other action items.

## Closing Prayer

**Leader's Instructions:**

Offer spontaneous prayers asking Mary's intercession.

**Leader's Introduction**

As we pray to and with Mary, let us remember in faith those among us who need our prayers.

Now let us pray together the RENEW Prayer to Mary.

**All:**

Mary, you are a woman wrapped in silence  
and yet the Word born of your yes  
continues to bring life to all creation.  
Mary, help us to say yes—  
to be bearers of good news  
to a world waiting.

Mary, you are a virgin and a mother  
empowered by the Holy Spirit.  
Help us to open ourselves  
to that same life-bringing Spirit.  
Mary, help us to say our yes.

Mary, you are gift of Jesus to us,  
Mother of the Church.  
Look upon our world and our lives.  
Pray for us, to your son,  
that we might be renewed,  
and that we might help renew  
the face of the earth.

Mary, help us to say yes. Amen