

## UNIT ONE: WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

### LESSON 6: MARIAN MORNING: Mary, Model and Mother

[9.00am -1.00pm]

#### CONTENTS OF SESSIONS:

1. Mary is an 'icon' of the Church: By looking at Mary's life we discover a MODEL for our own journey and a MOTHER who loves and helps us. [CCC 972]
  - i) God prepared Mary: Mary was kept free from sin all her life, right from her conception, by the merits of Jesus. (IMMACULATE CONCEPTION). [CCC 491]
  - ii) Mary says 'Yes': At the Annunciation, Mary accepted God's plan and by the power of the Holy Spirit, God's Son was conceived in her. We call her 'EVER VIRGIN' because she remained a virgin physically and because she was all for God, his 'handmaid'. [CCC 494, 510] *(When the Bible mentions 'brothers and sisters' of Jesus, it refers to close relatives, not real brothers and sisters)* [CCC 500]
  - iii) Mary sings God's praise: When Mary went in haste to visit her cousin, she sang a song of praise to God. Elisabeth called her 'Blessed' and 'mother of my Lord' and praised her faith. We too acknowledge Mary as 'MOTHER OF GOD', because Jesus, whose mother she became, is truly God. [CCC 495, 2619]
  - iv) Mary gives birth to God's Son: Mary accepted the difficulties she faced in the circumstances of the birth of Jesus. She kept her heart open and treasured the words and actions of God. [CCC 495]
  - v) A prophecy about Mary: At the presentation in the temple, Simeon prophesied that a sword would pierce Mary's heart. Mary accepted her part in God's plan for our redemption, even though it meant suffering with her son. [CCC 964]
  - vi) Mary finds her son: Like any other mother, Mary faced anxieties, (as when she lost her son for three days) joys and sorrows. She did not always understand, but kept believing and pondering the ways of God. [CCC 534]
  - vii) Mary intercedes: At Cana, we see how Mary interceded for the couple to Jesus. In spite of the seemingly negative response, she had faith. We can ask her to pray for us. [CCC 2618]
  - viii) Our mother too: At the cross of Jesus, Mary suffered along with her son. Jesus gave her to us to be our mother when he said, "Behold your mother." [CCC 964]
  - ix) Mary, full of the Spirit: Mary was filled with the Holy Spirit right from the start. She prayed with the disciples when the Spirit was outpoured at Pentecost. We call her the MOTHER OF THE CHURCH. [CCC 722-726]
  - x) Mary is taken up into heaven: When the course of her earthly life was over, Mary was taken up, body and soul, into heaven (ASSUMPTION). There she is exalted as Queen over all things. [CCC 966]
2. *We seek to imitate Mary and to cooperate with God, giving him our all. We also honor and pray to her as a mother who cares for us. We honor her because God first honored her and because she is fully God's. When we pray to her, we are joining her in praying to God.* [CCC 2682]
3. *The Rosary is a 'Christocentric' prayer which can bring great blessing. It is to contemplate the face of Christ with Mary. Without contemplation, the Rosary becomes 'a body without a soul'. We therefore try to pray the Rosary in a meditative and loving manner. [ROSARY OF THE VIRGIN MARY, JOHN PAUL II]*

REFERENCES: Luke 1:26-56; 2:1-7, 15-19, 41-52; John 2:1-12, 19:25-30. saintbosco.org

*N.B. A fifth session could be included when a movie on Mary is viewed. E.g. 'The Apparitions of Mary' Narrated by Ricardo Montalban, portraying the apparitions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.*

*ASSIGNMENT: Ask students to prepare for a written test by carefully reading all the handouts of Unit 1. They should memorize quotes and the names of the apostles.*

SESSION ONE: *WHO IS MARY TO ME?*

MATERIALS NEEDED: Question papers, answer slips, pins (1 per student), prizes. DURATION: 40 mins

**I. STARTER:**

*[As the students enter, ask them to pick up a slip and pin it onto their shirts in a visible place. When all are assembled introduce the game as follows:]*

- Today we have come for a Marian Morning... a morning with Mary. Why are we spending a whole morning just for Mary? Why do we pray to her? Why not just pray to God? Can Mary make a difference to my life? What is so special about her? We will be thinking about all these things.
- But first let's see how much we already know about her. Here's a small game that will help you to check what you know. This is how it works:
  - Each of you will get a question slip with 12 questions on it.
  - First write your name on the top. Your task is to try and find the answers from the slips pinned onto your friends.
  - However, there is an important rule: You have to get the person who has the answer to write it on your question paper and sign next to it. Only such answers will be valid. This means that you have to cooperate with each other.
  - As soon as you complete the 12 answers, submit your paper. The first 10 all-correct entries win prizes.

*[After the game, read out the correct answers, award prizes to the winners.]*

**II. DEVELOPMENT:**

- We just had a random check on what we know about Mary. Let's think now about how much we know Mary: How do we relate to her; and who she is to us. Ask yourself, "Who is Mary for me?" Choose a word that is appropriate to your relationship.  
E.g. If she is someone whom you often talk to and share your ups and downs, you could choose FRIEND/ COMPANION. If you have no relationship with her, but just think of her as a family member, you could say GREAT-GREAT- GRANDMOTHER.

*[Students share their word with their neighbor and explain why they chose that word.]*

Words chosen could be: MAMA, MOTHER, BIG SISTER (DIDI) MODEL, RESCUER, LIFE-GUARD, TEACHER, INSPIRATION, STRANGER, A HOLY NAME, INTERCESSOR etc. Review the names chosen.]

- Many, many Christians through the centuries have found great strength from Mary. I'd like to share about one such person, a very great saint.

When Johnny Bosco was just 9 years old, he had a very vivid dream in which he was in a field full of boys. He heard some boys using bad language and was about to hit them. Then a man appeared to him and called out his name. He told him he was to be a leader and change the boys by loving them.

Johnny felt this to be an impossible task and said so. Then the man said, "I will give you a Teacher, under whose guidance you will learn and without whose help all knowledge becomes foolishness."

Johnny turned and saw a Lady who looked like a queen. She took him by the hand and showed him that the boys had turned into animals of all kinds: dogs, cats, bears... and then, when he looked again, they had become into lambs playing around the two strangers.

This dream showed John Bosco what God wanted him to do, and how he would get the help he needed. He did grow up to be a great saint, and brought a great many boys to lead good and holy lives. He always took the help of Mary and taught his boys and priests to do the same. He said, "Do nothing without Mary!" and called her by the title, 'Mary, Help of Christians.'

SESSION TWO: *LEARNING FROM MARY*

MATERIALS NEEDED: Bibles, Bible study questions for groups (6).

DURATION: 70 mins

**I. STARTER:**

- When you spend a lot of time with a really good person do you find a change in yourself?... It does happen that you unconsciously or even consciously try to become like a person you admire. Eg. If you find yourself in a group who works very hard at studies and have a lot of ambitions, you would feel like working hard yourself.

**II. DEVELOPMENT:**

- Let's spend some time now finding out more about Mary's life. As you read the Bible passages and discuss the questions given, see if there is anything you admire in Mary and would like to imitate. [Divide the class into 6 groups and give each group a slip with the Bible study questions. They read the passage, discuss the answers and share what they admire about Mary. They then prepare to enact the event described. After 20 minutes, they come up and enact the event. They also share with the class what they admire in Mary.]

.....[30 MINUTE BREAK].....

SESSION THREE: *WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT MARY*

MATERIALS NEEDED: Handouts, blank papers for quiz.

DURATION: 60 mins

**I. STARTER:**

- You have managed to learn a lot by reading the Bible and thinking about Mary. Let us now look at Mary from a slightly different angle. Let us try and understand what we as a Church believe about her. You will receive a handout with key moments in Mary's life. Study it carefully. After 15 minutes we will have a quiz (without the handouts) and see if we remember and have understood the beliefs about Mary. There will also be some extra questions which you can discuss and answer as a group. [Students study the handouts individually and then with their group.]

**II. DEVELOPMENT:**

[Students retain the same groups as before. Each group is given some blank slips of paper. As the question is read, they discuss quickly and write the answer on a slip of paper which is handed over to the quiz-master or an assistant. The quiz-master announces the answer and adds any further remarks necessary. The teams could keep a record of their own points. MAKE SURE ALL HANDOUTS AND BIBLES ARE PUT AWAY!]

1. WHO SAID TO WHOM AND WHERE: (3 marks for all correct answers. Don't give marks for partially right answers.)
  - i. "A sword will pierce your own soul too!" (SIMEON... TO MARY...AT THE TEMPLE)
  - ii. "Behold your mother!" (JESUS... TO JOHN...AT THE CROSS)
  - iii. "He has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant" (MARY... TO ELISABETH...AT ELISABETH'S HOUSE)
  - iv. "Hail full of grace! The Lord is with you!" (THE ANGEL GABRIEL... TO MARY...AT MARY'S HOME) [We suppose it was at Mary's home since it was set in Nazareth]
  - v. "Blessed are you among women!" (ELISABETH... TO MARY...AT HER HOME)
  - vi. "Nothing will be impossible for God." (THE ANGEL GABRIEL... TO MARY...AT MARY'S HOME)
  - vii. "Why have you treated us like this?" (MARY... TO JESUS...AT THE TEMPLE)
  - viii. "Do whatever he tells you!" (MARY... TO THE SERVANTS...AT THE WEDDING FEAST)
2. DEFINITIONS: Explain the meaning of: (6 marks for each correct explanation.)
  - i. The Immaculate Conception of Mary. [God kept Mary free from sin right from the first moment of her life, that is, when she was conceived. He did this taking the grace that Jesus earned and applying it to Mary in advance.]

(God can go forward and backwards in time!) The Immaculate Conception does NOT mean that Mary's mother Anna conceived her in a miraculous way. It is NOT talking about Jesus being conceived by the Holy Spirit.

- ii. The Assumption of Mary. *[When Mary had completed her time on earth, she was taken, body and soul into heaven.]* Thus, she shared in her son's Resurrection. Seeing her, we have hope that one day, we too will experience resurrection, and receive new bodies.
- iii. Ever-Virgin. *[Mary remained a virgin physically even after conceiving a child and giving birth. Spiritually too, she was a virgin in that she belonged fully to God. She was God's hand-maid, as she said herself.]*

3. THINK ABOUT IT! Discuss and think of good reasons for the following questions. (5 marks for any good reason given)

- i. If we believe that Mary was always a virgin, then why does the Bible mention that Jesus had brothers and sisters (in Mark 3:32 for example)?  
*[In the Jewish culture (as in India too) the word brother or sister could mean a close relative.]* In the Old Testament too we find the word 'brother' used instead of relative. E.g. Abraham called his nephew Lot his brother.
- ii. How can we say that Mary is the Mother of God? She is only a human being. *[Mary is called Mother of God, because Jesus, her son, was God, even when he became a human being.]* We do not think that Mary was the mother of God the Father, or that she created God. This title was first used when Elisabeth called Mary 'Mother of my Lord'.
- iii. Why do we pray to Mary? Shouldn't we pray only to God? Why do we give her so much importance?
  - Just as we mentioned about saints, when we pray to Mary, we are not making her into God. We are simply talking to her because we consider her our mother, part of our own family.
  - We do not worship Mary, because we believe that worship belongs to God alone. (Worship means bowing down as a creature before our creator and God.)
  - We honour Mary and give her importance because God first honoured her. Even the angel said, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!"
  - When we pray to Mary, we are joining her in praying to God. This is because she is fully God's. Whatever she does is for God.

#### SESSION FOUR: *PRAYING WITH MARY*

MATERIALS NEEDED: Rosaries

DURATION: 40 mins

### I. STARTER:

- How many of you pray the rosary at home? Do you find that it brings you close to God? Or do you think it is boring and a waste of time? Be honest. *[Get the responses of the students.]*
- Maybe many of us don't really pray the Rosary. We just say it. Our minds are not on God at all, quite often. Saint John Paul II says, "To recite the Rosary is nothing other than to contemplate with Mary the face of Christ." He also said, "WITHOUT CONTEMPLATION, THE ROSARY IS A BODY WITHOUT A SOUL." *[Write on the board.]* He warned that we might be going against Jesus' teaching if we just pray with no love or attention to God. (Jesus warned us not to heap up empty phrases when we pray!).
- What is 'contemplation'? It means to look at with the heart and mind. Let's try to pray the Rosary now in the way that would please God and bless us.

### II. PRAYER/INTERIORISATION:

- We will ask the Holy Spirit to help us contemplate each mystery as we say it peacefully, not too rushed, and without shouting the prayers. After each mystery is over, you can share any thought, or insight you got while praying.  
*[The Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary could be taken. Different groups could lead the decades. After each decade, pause and allow students to share their insights. A visual of each mystery would aid contemplation. End with a hymn to Mary.]*