

✘ **Enriching Faith** ✘

LESSONS AND  
ACTIVITIES ON  
MARY

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# CONTENTS

Introduction	5	<b>17</b> WOMAN OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION	38
<b>1</b> MARY OF NAZARETH	6	<b>18</b> MARY, OUR MODEL	40
<b>2</b> IMMACULATE CONCEPTION	8	<b>19</b> OUR LADY OF LOURDES	42
<b>3</b> ANNUNCIATION	10	<b>20</b> OUR LADY OF FATIMA	44
<b>4</b> VISITATION	12	<b>21</b> OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE	46
<b>5</b> MAGNIFICAT	14	<b>22</b> MIRACULOUS MEDAL	48
<b>6</b> HAIL MARY PRAYER	16	<b>23</b> OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY	50
<b>7</b> BIRTH OF JESUS	18	<b>24</b> THE SCAPULAR	52
<b>8</b> PRESENTATION OF JESUS	20	<b>25</b> MARIAN PRAYERS	54
<b>9</b> FLIGHT INTO EGYPT	22	<b>26</b> LITANY OF MARY	58
<b>10</b> FINDING OF JESUS IN THE TEMPLE	24	<b>27</b> OLD TESTAMENT TYPES OF MARY	60
<b>11</b> WEDDING OF CANA	26	<b>28</b> MARIAN FEAST DAYS	62
<b>12</b> MARY VISITS JESUS	28	<b>29</b> MARIAN DEVOTIONS AND HYMNS	64
<b>13</b> MARY ON CALVARY	30	<b>30</b> THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN ART	66
<b>14</b> PENTECOST	32	<b>31</b> PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS NAMED FOR MARY	68
<b>15</b> ASSUMPTION	34	<b>32</b> CHURCHES DEDICATED TO MARY	70
<b>16</b> CORONATION	36		

# INTRODUCTION

One thing that distinguishes Catholics is our devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the woman God chose to be the mother of his Son. We admire Mary as a faithful handmaid of the Lord, strive to imitate her as the first and best disciple, and love her as our heavenly mother. Our Lady has inspired such devotion in artists and writers that she appears in more artwork and literature than any other woman. Cathedrals are built in her honor, and hymns are composed about her.

We are greatly indebted to Mary because, through her, Jesus came into the world and won eternal life back for us. As Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta succinctly said, “No Mary. No Jesus.” Mary’s role as mother of the Savior involved such suffering that we call her Queen of Martyrs. Her work for us continues. Mary is our powerful intercessor. Several times she has visited earth and invited us to come to her for help. She also urged us to pray and do penance. The mother of Jesus loves and cares for us, who are Jesus’ brothers and sisters. St. Anselm commented, “There is never enough said or written about Mary.”

Sadly, not everyone understands the Virgin Mary. Some regard her as a goddess, too sublime to be approached or imitated. Others ignore our Blessed Mother, saying that they prefer to go directly to God. Many people confuse the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception with the virgin birth. The lessons in this book clarify for children what the church teaches about Mary. They

also invite children to reflect upon who Mary is for them. They present Mary’s life as revealed in Scripture and church doctrine. In addition, they introduce children to the Marian prayers and devotions that the church encourages us to practice. These have developed over the centuries to honor Our Lady and express our love. When we show devotion to Mary, we please her Son. When we model our lives on hers, we are more assured of joining her and Jesus in heaven.

## **The Book**

For each of the thirty-two lessons in this book, a one-page plan is provided with one focused objective. Catechist Notes offer background on the topic and also suggest ideas for the lesson. Materials required for the lesson are listed. The steps for developing the topic are few and simple. They engage the children, draw on their experiences, and vary from lesson to lesson. Each lesson is accompanied by an Activity Sheet to be duplicated for the children. These sheets develop or reinforce the lessons in a variety of ways, such as prayer services, plays, art projects, and paper and pencil activities. A brief prayer concludes each lesson.

By supplementing regular religion lessons with the lessons in this book, teachers, catechists, and parents will help to plant a love for the Blessed Virgin Mary in the hearts of children, a love that will last a lifetime.

## 1

# MARY OF NAZARETH: WOMAN FROM GALILEE

## Objective

The children will become familiar with Mary's hometown and culture.

## Catechist Notes

Mary was a Jew who lived in Israel some two thousand years ago. Acquainting your children with what Mary's life was like will enable them to know her and her Son better. It will also help them to understand the gospels. You might dress as Mary and let the children interview you about life in Nazareth; or prepare a friend to be Mary, and you ask her questions.

## Materials

- A MAP OR GLOBE
- A LOAF OF STORE-BOUGHT BREAD
- COPIES OF ACTIVITY SHEET 1

## Activity

- 1 Explain that Mary lived in Nazareth in what is now the Middle Eastern country of Israel. Help a child locate Israel on a map or globe.
- 2 Inform the children that church tradition tells us that Mary's parents (Jesus' grandparents) were Joachim and Anne. We honor them as saints and celebrate their feast day on July 26.
- 3 Lead the children to realize how different Mary's life was from ours.
  - How long ago did Mary live? (about two thousand years ago)
  - What wasn't invented yet?
  - The church wasn't established. Mary was Jewish.
  - [Show the bread.] Here is one way Mary's life was different. We buy our bread. Mary ground grain and baked bread for her family. Maybe she helped harvest the grain. Most of the people in Nazareth were farmers.

- 4 Distribute Activity Sheet 1. Ask the following questions to introduce each fact on it. After each question is answered, have a child read the corresponding fact on the sheet.

1. *How many people are in your town or city? (thousands)*
2. *When did you learn to read and write? (starting at age five)*
3. *How many rooms does your house have? (Answers will vary.)*
4. *How do you light your house? (lights and lamps powered by electricity)*
5. *How many meals do you eat a day? (three)*
6. *What foods do you mainly eat? (Answers will vary.)*
7. *How often does your family shop for food? (Answers will vary.)*
8. *Where do you get your drinking water? (from the tap or a bottle)*
9. *How are clothes washed at home? (in a machine)*
10. *What do women wear today? (dresses, slacks, blouses, skirts)*
11. *At what age do girls today get married? (eighteen and above)*
12. *What day do we call the Lord's Day? (Sunday)*
13. *How do we observe the Lord's Day? (rest, celebrate the Eucharist)*
14. *Where is the center of our Catholic faith located? (Rome)*
15. *What kind of government does our country have? (democratic; it is a free country.)*

## Prayer

*Jesus, help me be the best I can be in my time and place, like your mother was in hers.*

# A First-Century Jewish Woman

COMPARE YOUR LIFE TO MARY'S LIFE.

1 Mary lived in Nazareth, a village of about two hundred people, and many of them were related. Nazareth was in the province of Galilee, which is in northern Israel.

2 Girls didn't go to school, so Mary probably couldn't read or write. A woman could not inherit if there was a man in the family. They could not be a witness in court or speak in the synagogue, the house of prayer.

3 Mary lived in a one-room house of stone that had a dirt floor and one small window. When it was hot, she slept on the flat roof.

4 Mary used oil lamps to light her house. People went to bed as soon as it got dark.

5 Mary ate breakfast and then had a larger meal in the evening.

6 Mary ate cheese, eggs, fish, dates, grapes, figs, olives, and bread. Meat was seldom eaten. Because there were no spoons or forks, Mary used her fingers or dipped bread into a common bowl of stew or soup.

7 Because there were no refrigerators, Mary shopped at the market every day.

8 To provide water for her family, every day Mary went to the well, where she met the other village women.

9 Mary washed clothes by hand.

10 Mary wore a long dress and a veil. She spun thread, wove cloth, and then made her family's clothes.

11 Jewish girls could marry at age twelve.

12 For Jewish people, the Lord's Day, or the Sabbath, was Saturday.

13 Mary observed the Sabbath by obeying strict rules, such as not sewing, lighting a fire, tying a rope, or walking more than a certain short distance.

14 The center of the Jewish religion was Jerusalem, the site of the temple, the only place where sacrifices were offered.

15 Israel, or Palestine, as it was then known, was controlled by the Romans, who charged high taxes and oppressed the people.

## IMMACULATE CONCEPTION: MARY MOST PURE

### Objective

The children will learn that Mary was born without sin and lived a life of holiness.

### Catechist Notes

In his poem “The Virgin,” William Wordsworth describes Mary as “our tainted nature’s solitary boast.” The dogma of the Immaculate Conception, declared by Pope Pius IX in 1854, affirms these words. Because Mary is the Mother of God, she was free from original sin through her Son’s merits in advance. Also, because Mary was full of grace and not weakened by original sin, she led a sinless life. This lesson will forestall the misconception that the Immaculate Conception refers to the virginal conception of Jesus.

### Materials

- IMMACULATE CONCEPTION WRITTEN ON THE BOARD OR ON POSTER PAPER
- A GLASS OF WATER
- PENS OR PENCILS
- COPIES OF ACTIVITY SHEET 2

### Activity

- 1 Show the glass of water and develop the meaning of “immaculate.”
  - Some people keep water in purifiers. Why? (to strain out anything that makes the water impure, or not completely water)
  - In stores, you see labels like “100% pure orange juice” or “pure prune juice.” Nothing is mixed in with the juice.
  - Another word for pure is “immaculate.” What would an immaculate floor, window, or shirt be like? (spotless, stainless)
  - Conception means the very start of a living being within its mother.
- 2 Explain the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

- God preserved Mary from the original sin we all inherited from Adam and Eve. From the first moment of Mary’s existence in her mother, she was pure and sinless. We call this the Immaculate Conception.
- Mary remained filled with grace throughout her life by loving and obeying God. She did not commit sin but lived a life of holiness. She is the model for us of how to live our lives full of divine life and grace.

### 3 Offer this further information:

- The feast of the Immaculate Conception is December 8, nine months before we celebrate Mary’s birth, on September 8. The feast of the Immaculate Conception is a holy day of obligation.
- Mary the Immaculate Conception is the patroness of the United States.
- The National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception is in Washington, DC.
- Father Jacques Marquette, a missionary and explorer, named the Mississippi River the River of the Immaculate Conception.
- When Mary appeared to St. Bernadette in Lourdes, France, she identified herself as the Immaculate Conception.

- 4 Tell the children that God wants us to try to be pure and holy like Mary. Distribute Activity Sheet 2. Direct the children to finish the sentences that give advice for having a pure and holy heart. When they are finished, correct their answers. **Answers:** 1) *Hail Marys*; 2) *tempted*; 3) *books*; 4) *movies*; 5) *friends*; 6) *Communion*; 7) *saints*; 8) *penance*.

### Prayer

*O Mary, most pure, pray for me that I might have the grace to avoid sin.*

## A Pure Heart Like Mary's

Mary Immaculate, our mother, would like us to be holy. On each line is advice for creating a pure heart by avoiding sin. Some words are missing. Fill in the blanks by writing the letters that come before the letters below the lines

1 Pray three \_\_\_\_\_ each night.

**l b j m N b s z t**

2 When \_\_\_\_\_, pray a Hail Mary.

**u f n q u f e**

3 Read good \_\_\_\_\_.

**c p p l t**

4 View good \_\_\_\_\_.

**n p w j f t**

5 Choose good \_\_\_\_\_.

**g s j f o e t**

6 Receive \_\_\_\_\_.

**D p n n v o j p o**

7 Learn about the \_\_\_\_\_.

**t b j o u t**

1 Celebrate the Sacrament of \_\_\_\_\_.

**q f o b o d f**



### Trivia Fact!

We celebrate Mary's birthday on September 8, exactly nine months after the feast of the Immaculate Conception, on December 8.



## ANNUNCIATION: SPOUSE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

### Objective

The children will admire and strive to imitate Mary's openness to God's will.

### Catechist Notes

Mary's privileges flow from being Mother of God. Out of all women, Mary of Nazareth was the one God chose to raise his Son as a human being. The feast of the Annunciation of the Lord (March 25) celebrates Mary's agreeing to cooperate with God's plan. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus was conceived in her, a virgin. The Council of Ephesus in 431 confirmed that Mary was the Mother of God, not only mother of Jesus' human nature. To enhance this lesson, show pictures of the Annunciation.

### Materials

- A BOX CONTAINING A CARD WITH THE WORD YES
- BIBLES
- PENS OR PENCILS
- COPIES OF ACTIVITY SHEET 3

### Activity

- 1 Show a box that contains the word Yes. Pose this riddle:
  - In this box is a very important word. The world's salvation depended on it. Guess what it is. [If necessary, give clues: It has three letters. It was Mary's response when God asked her to be his mother.]
  - [Display the word Yes.] Today you will learn about the great day Mary said yes to God.
- 2 Distribute the Bibles. Help the children locate Luke 1:26–38. Choose a child to read the angel Gabriel's words and a child to read Mary's. They might act out their parts. Tell the rest of the class to read the other parts. Have the passage read. [Or have the children close their eyes and picture the story as you read it.]
- 3 Discuss Mary's openness to God's will. You might inform the children that under Jewish law unmarried pregnant girls could be stoned to death.
  - Why do you think God chose Mary to be his mother? (She was holy.)
  - How must Mary have felt when she heard the news? (surprised, happy, frightened)
  - Mary was to give birth to Jesus by the Holy Spirit's power. She became pregnant yet remained a virgin, just like light passing through a windowpane doesn't change the windowpane.
  - What other miraculous event did Gabriel tell Mary about? (Elderly Elizabeth was pregnant.)
  - Why did it take courage for Mary to say yes to God's plan? (No one had ever been Mother of God. She didn't know what the child would be like. Joseph would be puzzled and hurt. Mary's parents and neighbors wouldn't understand how she became pregnant. She risked gossip and scorn.)
  - What did Mary call herself? (God's handmaid, servant)
  - What difficult things does God ask you to do?
- 4 Distribute Activity Sheet 3. Tell the children to see who can fill in the most words related to the Annunciation, using the letters in the word. After a set time, call on children to give answers and explain how they relate to the Annunciation. **Possible answers:** GAbriel, aNgel, Nazareth, SoN, JaCob, DavId, ElizAbeth, Throne, Holy SpIrit, JOseph, haNdmaid or ser-vaNt.

### Prayer

*Mary, you let God use you in order to save the world. Pray that I may always say yes to God as you did.*

# The Annunciation of the Lord

Think of words related to the Annunciation story that contain a letter in the word "Annunciation." For each letter, write a word on the line. Be ready to explain why you chose each word.



A \_\_\_\_\_  
N \_\_\_\_\_  
N \_\_\_\_\_  
U \_\_\_\_\_  
N \_\_\_\_\_  
C \_\_\_\_\_  
I \_\_\_\_\_  
A \_\_\_\_\_  
T \_\_\_\_\_  
I \_\_\_\_\_  
O \_\_\_\_\_  
N \_\_\_\_\_

~ Nothing will be impossible with God. ~