

Mary: Model of Hope

(Read the Opening Prayer and Scripture out loud.)

Opening Prayer

Hail Mary, full of grace! The Lord is with you; blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Scripture

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.” (*Luke 1:34*)

(Take time for silent reflection, then read the Introduction out loud.)

Introduction

The Church honors Mary with a variety of titles such as Our Lady, Mother of God, Blessed Mother of the Church, and Queen of Heaven to name a few. As our loving Mother, Mary continues to intercede for us before her Son Jesus. It is fitting that we also see her as a model of hope because through her “yes” to God’s presence in her life, we have been given the true gift of salvation, leading us to live and to express our lives in everlasting hope. This program presents Mary as a model of hope through whom we all experience our call to holiness.

(Introduce a speaker or the facilitator can read the following paragraphs with pauses in between.)

Documentary Tradition

From the Church (the Christian) learns the *example of holiness* and recognizes its model and source in the all-holy Virgin Mary, (the Christian) discovers it in the spiritual tradition and long history of the saints who have gone before him....”(Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2030)

Seeing Mary as the first faithful disciple provides a context from which Mary can be understood. She is a woman of faith who embodies trust in her motherhood as she accepts God’s invitation. She continues to grow as she learns more of who and what her son is all about.

The Holy Spirit prepared Mary by grace. She became the first person to be touched by the Spirit that would signal the reign of God in humanity. In this fullness, Mary became the first disciple receiving the Word through the Spirit. She then shared that Word with Elizabeth before she gave birth to Jesus. With her husband, Joseph, she nurtured the Spirit in her Son, calling on the Him to give hope to those in distress at Cana. As a constant companion to Jesus, she accompanied him in his ministry right up to the foot of the cross. She watched in hope at the tomb and greeted the resurrected Christ. To reflect on the life of Mary and her collaboration with the Spirit is to realize that she did not accept a passive role; rather, she embraced the Spirit with a self-direction and focus that allowed her to give herself to the reign of God. In essence, she heard the Word of God and acted on it intimately, becoming the true beacon of hope for all women and men, everywhere.

(The facilitator can read the Discussion Questions out loud for general or small group discussion.)

Discussion Questions

1. What does Mary's life tell us about living a life that is rooted in the Holy Spirit?
2. Which incidents in Mary's life give you the most hope for the future of the Church?
3. What significance does the life of Mary have for Serrans?

(If time permits invite the small groups to share with the large group any insights that they gain from the group discussion, then read the Closing Reflection.)

Closing Reflection

The scriptures present Mary as a disciple actively involved in a maturing process. She comes to know, love, and follow her Son, the Christ. The Church, at the Second Vatican Council, reminds us that we ought to revere her because of this great event, and also points out that all devotion to Mary leads to Christ. Let us look to Mary as our most human and most friendly example of virtue, faith, and hope, with her total love of God and of others.

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Church: Beacon of Hope

(Read the Opening Prayer and Scripture out loud.)

Opening Prayer

Glory to God, whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine; glory to God from generation to generation in the Church through which we experience the hope of salvation and in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Scripture

“I will pour my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams...” (*Acts 12:17*)

(Take time for silent reflection, then read the Introduction out loud.)

Introduction

From the beginning of his public life Jesus called people to follow him. As more and more people responded to his invitation to follow, and a community was born. Within this community today, those who have been baptized find their hope through the Holy Spirit, are formed in the Lord's name. This program stresses that our hope lies in our need for each other, which is experienced as the mystery of God's profound love for each one of us.

(Introduce a speaker or the facilitator can read the following paragraphs with pauses in between.)

Documentary Tradition

From its earliest beginnings the church has been described as a community that is imbedded with God's hidden presence. Its stance as a beacon of hope is born out of the Father's love, the Sons saving work, and the Holy Spirit's guidance. For two thousand years, the church has defined its identity by Christian behavior in the lives of saints and all the faithful members of the community.

“What the soul is to the human body, the Holy Spirit is to the Body of Christ, which is the Church. To this Spirit of Christ, as an invisible principle, is to be ascribed the fact that all parts of the body are joined one with the other and their exalted head; for the whole Spirit of Christ is in the head, the whole Spirit is in the body, and the whole Spirit is in each of the members. The Holy Spirit makes the Church the temple of the living God.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, #797*)

The church is founded on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We see the Spirit bestowing these gifts and making them active in the church. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit is then regarded as an endowment bequeathed by Christ to the Church to carry on the same mission of Jesus, and mandates it to demonstrate the reign of God. Through this activity, the Holy Spirit assists the Church to become a living beacon of hope by establishing continuity between Christ and the ongoing Church community worldwide. Taking possession of the apostles at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit revealed that the newly born family of faith has the responsibility to spread hope.

(The facilitator can read the Discussion Questions out loud for general or small group discussion.)

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean for the Church to be a sign of hope?
2. In what ways do you experience your parish as a temple of the Holy Spirit?

3. How does your Serra experience complement and extend the Church's mission of hope?

Closing Reflection

The Church is the bearer of divine life offering hope to all those who comes in contact with her. Through its human and divine elements the Church becomes the "salt and light" to the world showing the path to experiencing the mystical body of Christ and transforming the world into God's kingdom.

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Humanity: Called to Hope

(Read the Opening Prayer and Scripture out loud.)

Opening Prayer

The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament proclaims God's mighty works among us. We have been called by love into faith and are treasured in the sight of God. We pray for God's help to freely respond as chalices and instruments of hope for others. Amen.

Scripture

"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple, and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple." (*1 Corinthians 3:16*)

(Take time for silent reflection, then read the Introduction out loud.)

Introduction

To reflect on our experience of community is to become more aware of the spiritual heritage that challenges us to consider the welfare and well being of each other. This program points out that by attending to the needs of others we make visible the love of God in the world, and offer hope to those who find themselves in painful or desperate situations.

(Introduce a speaker or the facilitator can read the following paragraphs with pauses in between.)

Documentary Tradition

Through our humanity, we become aware of God in unique and individual ways. As Christians, we know a personal God through the experience of Jesus. Because the Holy Spirit is universal, we speak of the Spirit's work throughout the world. We perceive the Spirit as also working in our lives as our Father-Creator, Son-Redeemer, and Spirit-Unifier. The Spirit brings people together in a closer community to struggle with bettering the world. The working of the Holy Spirit in this context is the development of the human person as he or she moves toward fulfillment. This is a spiritual orientation that makes each aware of the need for mutual care and concern for the other, in fairness and sharing that promotes the common good.

"Through his grace, the Holy Spirit is the first to awaken faith in us, and to communicate to us the new life, which is to know the Father and the one whom he has sent, Jesus Christ. But the Spirit is the last of the persons of the Holy Trinity to be revealed. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, #684*)

(The facilitator can read the Discussion Questions out loud for general or small group discussion.)

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you need the Holy Spirit to be hopeful?
2. How can you become a sign of hope to those around you?
3. How does your Serra Club show signs of hope in its concern for the larger Church, and larger Serra?

Closing Reflection

The virtue of hope, while oriented to the next life is now viewed as having significance for the world in which we live. In the Spirit of sharing in God's creation we offer hope by caring for those in need.

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