

How to use these reflections

The Church 40 years on No. 8

God Called a Young Girl: Our Lady, Symbol of Church and Discipleship

Chapter Eight

The Dogmatic Constitution on the
Church
Second Vatican Council, 1965

A Small Group Reflection

Contents:

The guide provides texts for reflection and brief supplements on the texts. At the end there are questions suggested for reflection and sharing.

Method:

There is no fixed method. Groups that meet regularly may use their established ways of presenting the materials, reflection and sharing. For others, it is suggested that a facilitator leads the reflection and sharing. One suggestion takes the following format: opening prayer (hymn?); introduce the theme (facilitator), share experiences and understanding, summary of the sharing and closing prayer.

[Note:

The texts are not easy to read. Have the reader(s) prepare. After each text, pause, and give time for the others to read the texts quietly on their own. The reflection questions provided are only suggestions – do not be limited by them.]

Comment:

It is good to have available the document itself (*Lumen Gentium* or *The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church*), and a Bible.

Caution:

This is the eighth and last in the series of eight reflections on the Church. Try to stay focused on the aspects of Church discussed in each chapter. Using this booklet in conjunction with the flyer will help.

Inside:

1. How to use this reflection.
2. Part One: Our life story
3. Part Two: Scripture and Church teaching.
4. Part Three: Mary's Universal Appeal

Our Lady: The Universal Symbol of Church and Discipleship

A. Our Life Story

One morning, on my way out I met my upstairs neighbour in the lobby of our building. She is 89 and was doing her usual exercise pacing up and down. While waiting for my friend to come, I spoke with her.

In Cantonese, she asked, "Are you Christian?", "I am," I replied. She asked, "Do you belong to the Church with the Sainly Mother?"

This is the way many non-Christian Chinese identify the Catholic Church, the Christian church with the Mother.

For Catholics, and others like my neighbour, Mother Mary is very much a part of our church traditions.

Question for Reflection:

Mary is "Mother of the Church": How do you understand this?

Supplement

Read the supplement and discuss the points that were not mentioned by the group. Do the same for other supplements if there is time.

- At Pentecost, the group of disciples were gathered in an "upper room" in Jerusalem. This group is traditionally understood as the nucleus of the new church, upon which the Holy Spirit bestowed the gifts of Pentecost.
- Mary is the only woman in the room mentioned by name. (Acts 1:12-14)

- At the foot of the cross, Jesus said to Mary, "Woman, this is your son." and to the beloved disciple, "This is your mother." (John 19:25).
- Mary was the mother of Jesus. The Church is the Body of Christ, which makes Mary our Mother too. (DCC chap 2)

B. Scripture and Church teaching.

Take turns in the group to read the following texts slowly and clearly. Pause after each text to give time for thinking.

1. Mary was specially chosen. She is to be mother of Jesus, who will proclaim the Kingdom of God to the world. (Luke 1:26-34)
2. Mary bowed to the will of God in response, freely cooperating in God's plan. (Luke 1:38)
3. In giving birth to Jesus, Mary helped to bring the Light of Christ to the world, giving glory to God and bringing peace and joy to the world. (Luke 2:1-14)
4. Mary praised God acknowledging the blessings that God bestowed on her and the People of God. (Luke 1:46-55)
5. Mary was a real mother to Jesus, she raised him in the traditions of her faith. She was close to her son. (Luke 2:22-52)
6. Mary was there at the beginning of Jesus' ministry and at his death on the cross. (John 2:1-10; 19:25). She had faith in God and her son; in union with Jesus in joy and sorrow. She was mother to the disciples
7. Mary was the faithful disciple who pondered in her heart what she could not understand.
8. She was taken to join her son.

Question for Reflection:

As disciples, followers of Christ, how do our lives parallel that of Mary?

Supplement

Just like Mary:

- We are called by God
- By our baptism, we are asked to bring Jesus to the world, to proclaim the good news (DCC 64)
- We do not always comprehend God's ways; we need to ponder and reflect his action, in our hearts
- We need the gifts of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit for the courage to live our faith (DCC 65)
- We need to acknowledge and praise God for the blessings he has bestowed on us "From now on we will be called blessed."
- In the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary we hope to be resurrected bodily in communion with God and the saints. (DCC 59)
- The Immaculate Conception reflects the purity of the beginning the church
- Mary is someone we can use as model for discipleship.
- We are called and chosen by God for friendship with God. We are precious to God. "I call you friends." "The vine and the branches" – no matter how fruitful the branch, it is the main vine that provides life.
- By our baptism we are elected to be children of God. By accepting the call, we exercise our freedom to choose and cooperate with God.
- As disciples, we have the responsibility to continue the work of Jesus the Christ. "Love one another as I have loved you."
- To belong to the church is not a private matter, it involves community and relationship.

C. Mary's universal appeal

Read each paragraph and think of people of other Christian churches or faiths who have trusted in Mary or respect her.

One evening, a member of our Bible sharing group who had just returned from Australia, told us about the image of Mary she had seen on the wall of an Anglican church. Some of her Catholic friends were puzzled. In their minds, Roman Catholics only appreciate Mary.

My Muslim friend tells me that Muslims have a high regard for Mary the mother of Jesus and that she is mentioned many times in the Koran. Miriam is the Muslim equivalent to Mary.

In Chinese religions, Mary is often equated to or associated with Guan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy. Some Buddhists even regard Mary as someone who can and will intercede for them.

It appears that people of other faiths find it more difficult to believe in Christ, but they accept his mother Mary more readily.

Finally, in *Time Magazine* in its March 21, 2005 issue there was a feature on Mary. One of the key challenges expressed was:

"God Called a Girl: How Mary Changed Her World and You Can Too."

Question for reflection

How would you respond to such a challenge? What was Mary's particular gift which made her so great?

Supplement

- Mary allowed herself to be an instrument of the Holy Spirit. She abandoned herself to the will of God.
- Mary did not try to understand everything but she must have prayed a great deal to have the strength to keep believing.
- Mary had no illusions about who was the cause of her greatness. She saw God's hand in everything.

Conclusion

Close with a hymn that all are familiar with.

Say any prayer which helps all gathered to recall Mary's great place in the story of Salvation. (Hail Mary)

Close with spontaneous prayers of thanks.

