Toolkit for Faith
Marian Devotions

Toolkit Working Group

GOAL:
Through outreach and service, members of The Catholic Women's League of Canada foster a culture where all life is valued with dignity and respect.

STRATEGIES: Create ready-made adaptable toolkits for use in parishes.

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CORE PURPOSE

Uniting Catholic women to grow in faith, and to promote social justice through service to the church, Canada and the world

CORE VALUES

FAITH – following Catholic teaching

SERVICE – local, national and international

SOCIAL JUSTICE – actively involved in society

MISSION STATEMENT

The Catholic Women's League of Canada calls its members to grow in faith, and to witness to the love of God through ministry and service.

ENVISIONED FUTURE

The Catholic Women's League of Canada is an inclusive and engaged community of Catholic women inspired by faith. It is:

A vital participant in the church;

A valued partner for social justice;

A respected advocate at all government levels;

Connected to the world.

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise person who built their house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish person who built their house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash"

(Matthew 7:24-27).

In this toolkit:

Our Lady of Good Counsel Liturgy Guide

This is a one-hour event celebrating the Feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel. It could be opened to the parish.

Prayer Service on the Feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel

This prayer service is for League members.

Our Lady of Good Counsel workshop

With three modules, this is a flexible tool for workshops on Marian devotions—litanies, images and apparitions.

One-day Retreat

This is a six- to eight-hour retreat for members.

Appendices

There are documents for use in the prayer service, workshop and retreat. Printable copies may be obtained from cwl.ca.

Images

Chairpersons are encouraged to get to know this toolkit and any part of or the entire service for special celebrations, retreats or meetings. Leaders are urged to adapt these ideas to the council's needs and, like any good tool, use what is found here to make the task of uniting women to grow in faith simpler and more achievable.

Introduction

The League is a gift of faith, friendship and support. The patroness of the League is Our Lady of Good Counsel, whom the church celebrates each year on April 26th.

This toolkit has resources and tools for growing in faith through praying and learning about Our Lady of Good Counsel and finding inspiration and spiritual growth through prayer, discussion, meditation and study.

Prayer is the action of coming together to do something for all people. When members pray together, they are "acting" on behalf of the whole church and all people. When using prayer services at meetings and events, involve as many members as possible, using many voices to include everyone. You are encouraged to make any necessary adjustments to ensure the services and activities work for you and your council.

Prayer is experienced in many ways, with different groups and different environments. With this in mind, include familiar music as much as possible and seek inspiration from many sources for prayer services. Connect to members' lives and support them in their life struggles with prayer. Let them know you are praying for and with them.

The hope is that learning about Our Lady of Good Counsel will inspire members to develop and deepen their relationship with Our Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, in all her beauty.

Although many members will be familiar with meetings and the structure of business meetings, for many, this will be the only one they attend that opens and closes in prayer. So make the most of this beautiful distinction!

Please take from this toolkit and adapt what is useful to you. Use parts of suggestions or make these ideas a jumping board to your thoughts and needs. Consider visiting the wonderful sources of prayer on the national website. They are so well done and free to download and use. Make the prayer life of your council alive, significant and a source of real inspiration to members.

Guide for Organizing a Mass for April 26th – Feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel

(Ceremonies Booklet, The Catholic Women's League of Canada)

In consultation with the priest celebrating the mass, the chairperson of faith (or another organizer) will make the necessary arrangements to celebrate this liturgy. Most often, this will be the normally scheduled mass of the parish on the feast day. League members will act as:

- sacristan(s)
- greeters/ushers
- music ministers
- lector(s)
- gift bearers
- extraordinary minister(s) of holy communion

Opening Hymn

Opening Prayer

Loving God, You know that our thoughts on earth are full of fear and uncertainty; through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, from whom Your Son took flesh and blood, send us the Spirit of Counsel to teach us how to know Your will and to guide us in all we do. Grant this through Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia. Jesus manifested His glory and His disciples believed in Him. Alleluia. *[Use only if sung]* Our Lady gave herself wholeheartedly to God's loving plan.

Prayer after Communion

Ever present God, we have shared in Your mysteries on this memorial of Our Lady, Mother of Good Counsel. Grant that we may learn what is pleasing to You, and receive salvation from Jesus Christ, whom You gave to us as our Wonderful Counsellor through the cooperation of the Blessed Mother. Amen.

Closing Hymn

Prayer Service on the Feast Day of Our Lady of Good Counsel

(*cwl.ca*)

Preparation

Materials: For this prayer service, a table/altar could be set up with a picture of Our Lady of Good Counsel, candles and a rosary.

Roles: A leader and lector are needed.

When making hymn selections, please choose from the hymnal used at your parish church to respect the rights of the owners of the copyrights attached to these songs.

Order of Service

Hymn: (*suggested*) "Gentle Woman", "Holy is His Name" (or other singing of the Magnificat) or "Sing of Mary, Pure and Lowly."

Leader: As patroness of The Catholic Women's League of Canada, Our Lady of Good Counsel guides our work "For God and Canada." We trust that she will be with us now as we unite our hearts to pray in her honour.

All: ***League Prayer***

Left: It is truly fitting, Mary, that we should honour you, for God chose to honour you by making you the mother of His Son.

Right: The prophets of old spoke your praises and called you "the glory of Israel" and "the glory of womanhood."

Left: The angel bowed in reverence as he addressed you, who was chosen to be the mother of God.

Right: And all generations have called you blessed.

Left: So joyfully, Mary, we praise you.

Right: We praise you in your spotless chastity, which made you worthy to bear the saviour of the world.

Left: We praise you in your virginity, which you kept so preciously together with your motherhood.

Right: We praise you in your openness to God's will for your life, and in your perfect following of that will.

Left: We praise you in your courage in facing hardships, misunderstandings and criticisms your vocation brought upon you.

Right: We praise you in the honour you have brought to motherhood throughout the ages and for the example you give to mothers.

Left: We praise you in your motherhood, which by God's decree has made you the mother of us all.

Right: Yes, always and at all times and in all places, we will praise and bless you, Holy Mother of God, ever Blessed Virgin, Our Lady of Good Counsel.

Scripture: Luke 1:46-55

Leader: As a response to Mary's beautiful words, let us pray five decades of the rosary asking God to give us the openness to accept his desire for our life as Mary did.

All: ***(Pray the Rosary)***

O Lord, our God, by Your love and mercy, help us to imitate our patroness, Our Lady of Good Counsel. Make us humble and generous in all we do for You. Teach us to give and not count the cost, to serve others and not to ask for reward save that of knowing we have done Your will. Let the joy of Your grace overflow in our hearts and grant that we each will be builders of peace and of Your kingdom. We ask this through Our Lady of Good Counsel. Amen.

Leader: Let us join our hearts as we recite the League Promise.

All: **For the glory of God and the good of God's people, I promise as a Catholic woman to honour, invoke and imitate our patroness, Our Lady of Good Counsel. I promise to be a loyal member of The Catholic Women's League of Canada and to promote its interest and growth in every way. I promise to cooperate with League officers and conform, to the best of my ability, to the bylaws of the organization in all League activities**.

Hymn: (*suggested*): "Hail, Holy Queen" (Salve Regina), "Immaculate Mary," or "On This Day, O Beautiful Mother."

[*A social hour would be a fitting conclusion.]*

Workshop – Our Lady of Good Counsel

Roles

- Host: responsible for overseeing the organizing and implementing of the workshop
- Organizing team: responsible for the logistical and material preparations and the registration of participants, if required
- Facilitator: responsible for making the presentations and leading the activities of the workshop
- Hospitality team: responsible for greeting, providing refreshments and otherwise making participants feel welcome and comfortable

Tasks

- Taking registration information from workshop participants
- Deciding the content of the workshop (choice of modules, reviewing and editing the "scripts")
- Preparing workshop materials, including making copies of all prayers, stories and images from this toolkit that will be used in the workshop and providing paper, pens, colouring utensils, etc.
- Setting up the space for the workshop on the day (seating, equipment for presentations, distribution of materials to participants, refreshment area)
- Setting up and serving refreshments for participants

Workshop Format

Introduction and Welcome

Workshop Host:

- Welcomes participants and special guests
- Introduces workshop facilitator
- Explains the schedule and purpose of the workshop
- Hands out and/or explains materials for the workshop

Good morning, everyone. My name is *[name]*, and I welcome you all today on behalf of *[name]* Parish Council. Please welcome *[special guests]* and our facilitator for today's workshop, *[name]*.

This workshop is on our Blessed Mother and patroness, Our Lady of Good Counsel. For the next few hours, we will pray, learn about devotions to Mary and share our knowledge, experience and faith in the Blessed Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You will find all the necessary materials for today's workshop on your tables. We will begin in prayer with the Litany of Our Lady of Good Counsel.

Opening Prayer

One leading voice and all responding. **Litany of Our Lady of Good Counsel** (*see page 29*).

Assigned lector now proclaims the following gospel passage.

Scripture: John 2:1-11

> "On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is it to you and me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.' Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him."

If a music leader is available, consider singing a Marian hymn. Please use a hymn available in the parish's hymnal to respect the copyright holders of the music.

Facilitator's Opening Remarks

The Catholic Women's League of Canada was formed in 1920, and Our Lady of Good Counsel was named its patroness at the national convention in 1923. As the Litany of Our Lady of Good Counsel made apparent, the Blessed Virgin Mary is known by many, many names.

Why the title "Mother of Good Counsel"?

- Her last words recorded in the gospels are the best advice, "Do whatever He tells you."
- In the Book of Isaiah, the prophet says, "For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (9.6). And the Blessed Virgin is the mother of Good Counsel/wonderful Counselor.

What is "Counsel"?

Counsel is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit: "... wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord... ." The *Catechism of the Catholic* Church (CCC) explains the gifts of the Holy Spirit "complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them" (1831).

The virtue most closely associated with counsel is the moral virtue of prudence. "*Prudence* is the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it" (1806). Prudence guides judgment and directs conduct. It is a natural human virtue and, as such, can be tainted by human weakness, such as doubt and insecurity. However, with the gift counsel of the Holy Spirit, prudence can become stable and secure, making our actions the work of God.

Tasks

Discuss personal responses to "Do whatever He tells you."

Workshop Modules

Choose one or more of the following modules for your workshop, depending on interest and time.

1. Litanies

Facilitator

Litanies are prayers of petition, intercession and thanksgiving. They have a simple structure of petition or invocation and response. They are found in the liturgies of the Western and Eastern Catholic churches and the private devotions and prayers of the faithful.

Many of us have probably prayed the Litany to the Saints in the liturgy for All Saints Day, Easter Vigil and ordinations. It is the oldest litany. The litany prayed to open this meeting is the Litany of Our Lady of Good Counsel, provided some years ago to the League by former National Spiritual Director Most Rev. F. J. Klein (1958-1964).

Catholics have prayed litanies for centuries. This type of prayer was mentioned in fifth-century writings and remarked on as a beautiful tradition by the Council of Orange in 529 AD.

Litanies may be said both publicly and privately. The litanies prayed publicly are authorized for such use. In the Western Catholic church, there are only six of them—the Litany of All Saints, the Litany of the Names of Jesus, the Litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Litany of the Precious Blood, the Litany in Honour of Saint Joseph and the Litany of Loreto (of the Virgin Mary).

The Litany of Loreto is so named because it was first used at the Marian Shrine in Loreto, Italy, at least as early as 1531 and approved by Pope Sixtus V for public use in 1587. It may be recited at the end of the rosary. Its many titles or invocations of the Blessed Virgin Mary come from the early fathers of the church.

The title Our Lady of Good Counsel was added to the Litany of Loreto by Pope Leo XIII in 1903. On the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, June 20, 2020, Pope Francis added three new invocations: Mother of Mercy, Mother of Hope and Solace of Migrants. As has been pointed out, these are not new invocations for our Blessed Mother; however, they are new to the litany.

Reflecting on these Marian litanies allows us to ponder the magnificent portrait they paint of our heavenly Mother and Intercessor.

Tasks

In small groups, discuss:

- What are some of your experiences with litanies?
- Why do or don't you pray litanies in your personal prayer?
- Do you have a favourite litany?

Next, choose one or both litanies to reflect on. First, individually recite the litany to yourself. Then together, describe your personal response to the litany. Which title or titles struck you most about the Blessed Virgin Mary? Together choose two or three of the titles and discuss the origin of the title, what it tells you about Mary and how this may bring you closer to her heart and her Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Finally, share the fruit of your work with the whole group.

Materials

- copies of the Litany of Our Lady of Good Counsel (*page 29*) and the Litany of Loreto (*page 31*)
- paper and pens for recording thoughts and discussion points

Adaptations

(1) This module could be used at a parish council meeting by simply reciting the litany and then going into the discussion questions.

(2) This module could be combined with one or both of the other modules to create an extended workshop.

2. Images

Facilitator

There are probably billions of images of the Blessed Virgin Mary in any manner of style, form, substance and subject matter. Some are highly well-known and much loved, such as Michelangelo's famous *Piètа* and Leonardo Da Vinci's numerous paintings of the Madonna and Child. Many of the images were created to adorn chapels, churches, cathedrals and basilicas.

The three images we will discuss are the icon of the League's patroness, Our Lady of Good Counsel, the icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help and the image on the tilma of St. Juan Diego, known as Our Lady of Guadalupe. These images are all objects for devotions of the faithful. Millions of pilgrims travel every year to pray and honour our Blessed Mother in these images. They all have interesting and exciting backstories about how they came to be.

Our Lady of Good Counsel

You will see [*on the wall, here next to me, on the screen*] the image of the League's patroness, Our Lady of Good Counsel. There are two images of the same patroness [*show them both*]. The first dates back to at least the 15th century. The second was painted in the 19th century.

Who here knows the story of the older image? Several versions of the story can be found on the Internet from reliable and credible sources.

[*Read the story on page 33 about the first image.*]

In the image of the mother, so tenderly cradling her Son, who hugs her neck and rests His cheek on hers, we see the faithful disciple and the loving Lord.

The church in Genazzano, Rome, has been a place of pilgrimage for popes Urban VIII, Pius IX, Innocent XI, John XXIII and John Paul II. Pope Saint John XXIII wrote a prayer to Our Lady of Good Counsel. [*Share prayer, page 15*]

Our Lady of Perpetual Help

Another image of the Blessed Mother with a different advocation is Our Lady or Mother of Perpetual Help. [*Show image*]

As with Our Lady of Good Counsel, there is no record of the image's origins. The story of its coming to the faithful's attention also has elements of supernatural intervention. Another interesting parallel is the gifting of these images to communities of consecrated men who make the image known worldwide.

[*Recount the story on page 34*]

In this image of mother and child, we see the Mother of God holding the Divine Son while the archangels Gabriel and Michael present him with the instruments of His Passion. Mary holds her son while looking toward us and pointing us to Jesus. Just as Jesus ran to His mother, seeking comfort when frightened, we too can turn to her in our trials and temptations, knowing she will bring us to our Lord.

Our Lady of Guadalupe

A third and very famous devotional image of Mary is Our Lady of Guadalupe. Who here is familiar with the image? [*You may want to draw the story details from the workshop participants before you read the story provided on page 36*]

The first basilica was built at Tepeyac Hill on the site of the apparition in 1536. The present basilica was constructed between 1974 and 1976.

The image of Our Lady on the tilma of St. Juan Diego is now nearly 500 years old. Yet, it has not deteriorated at all, even though the material is cactus fibre and should have disintegrated within 30 years of the apparition. The image has remained essentially unchanged all this time, although it appears to change colour.

The symbolism of the image is also compelling evidence of a supernatural event. Many symbols of Mary in this image are familiar to Catholics, such as her blue mantle and rose-coloured garment, the sun, moon and stars and the finger pointing to the cross at her neck. However, many were also powerful symbols for the Aztecs of that place and time:

- Mary stands in front of and blocks the sun, an Aztec god.
- Her foot rests on a crescent moon, the symbol of a very fearsome Aztec god.
- The stars are strewn across her mantle; the Aztecs worshipped the stars, and here Mary is more powerful than they are.
- The blue-green colour of her mantle was the colour of Aztec royalty.
- The black belt she wears could be an Aztec maternity belt.
- Mary herself appears as a pregnant Indigenous woman.
- There is a four-petal flower over her womb, symbolizing to the Aztecs the flower of life and deity, meaning she is the Mother of God.
- The black cross, which would have invoked the Catholic missionaries, is at her neck, and she is pointing to it, indicating that the God of the missionaries is even more powerful than she.

Furthermore, the rose-coloured garment bears a map of Mexico at the time and indicates the exact location of the apparition. The eyes of the Virgin reflect the images of several men, Juan Diego, Bishop Juan de Zumarraga and the interpreter.

Twenty-four popes have officially honoured Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Tasks

In small groups, discuss the images and names of the Blessed Virgin Mary that have enriched and deepened your faith life and devotions. Together or individually, create an image of Mary that reflects what she means to your spiritual life.

Materials

- copies of the stories of the three images presented in the module
- copies of the images (either on a screen or printed)
- paper, coloured markers or pencils, crayons, coloured paper, scissors, glue and anything else that will encourage creativity

Adaptations

(1) This module could be combined with one or both of the other modules to create an extended workshop.

(2) The facilitator can give the introduction for each story. Participants can then divide into three groups. Each group is given one of the stories and prepares a skit or re-enactment.

3. Apparitions

Facilitator

The church teaches that Jesus Christ is the final revelation of God—the revelation that began with Abraham and ends with the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. This means there is nothing new to be added to the teachings of the gospels, although the church has been entrusted with unfolding and explaining the contents of revelation.

In different times and places, one or more people have claimed a personal revelation from God, often in the form of an apparition, which is usually of Mary. The church does not reject or deny all such claims. However, the Vatican has developed three guidelines for weighing the validity, authenticity and value of such revelations:

- Is the revelation positive (honest and obedient to church teaching) or negative (contains errors or immoral acts)?
- If positive, has a public devotion grown up around it?
- Does it display an authentic supernatural character?

The bishop of the local diocese in which the revelation or apparition is reported undertakes an official investigation following the guidelines. If

he is satisfied it is valid and authentic, that is, it is worthy of belief, then it becomes an officially approved apparition. The site of the apparition becomes an approved site of pilgrimage.

The Holy See may also investigate the same apparition, and if the devotion is considered to be of universal benefit, then it may also be officially approved by the Vatican.

At present, 26 Marian apparitions worldwide have been found worthy of belief. Sixteen of them are Vatican-recognized, including:

- Our Lady of Guadalupe
- Our Lady of Fatima
- Our Lady of Lourdes
- Our Lady of Knock
- Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal

Keep in mind the apparitions of Medjugorje are not officially approved by the local bishop or the Vatican.

As private revelations, even though officially recognized, Catholics are not required to believe in them.

We are going to learn about three apparitions: Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Lourdes and Our Lady of Fatima.

Our Lady of Guadalupe (1531)

Invite people to provide the details to fill in the elements: location, witness(es), sign of authenticity, message and result.

Location: Teyapac/Mexico City, Mexico

Witness: Juan Diego (Cuauhtlatoatzin]), (five times)

Sign of authenticity: Tilma full of roses

Message: I am Mother of God; build a chapel on Teyapac Hill (the former site of a pagan temple).

Result: Six million converts in seven years

[*Share the story provided on page 36.*]

Our Lady of Lourdes (1858)

Invite people to provide the details to fill in the elements: location, witness(es), sign of authenticity, message and result.

Location: Lourdes, France

Witness: Bernadette Soubirous (18 times)

Sign of authenticity: Revelation of a (hidden) stream/spring/fountain

Message: I am the Immaculate Conception; dedicate prayer and penance for the conversion of sinners; build a chapel and people come in procession.

Result: A place of pilgrimage and many healings

[*Share the story provided on page 37.*]

Our Lady of Fatima (1917)

Invite people to provide the details to fill in the elements: location, witness(es), sign of authenticity, message and result.

Location: Fatima, Portugal

Witness: Lucia dos Santos, Jacinta Marto, Francisco Marto (six times)

Sign of authenticity: Miracle of the "Dancing of the Sun"

Message: I am Our Lady of the Rosary; pray the rosary frequently for the conversion of sinners; consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart.

Result: Conversions

[*Share the story provided on page 39.*]

Tasks

There are many devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary used by Catholics worldwide. For many of us, our relationship with Jesus Christ is deeply interwoven with our relationship with His mother. Of course, Mary herself always points us to her Son when we seek her intercession, advocacy and the comfort of her love.

In small groups, discuss and explain your favourite Marian devotions, pilgrimage, etc. As a group, choose one story to share with everyone.

Materials

- copies of the three stories presented
- copies of the list of Vatican-recognized apparitions
- paper and pens for recording thoughts and discussion points

Adaptations

(1) This module could be combined with one or both of the other modules to create a longer workshop.

(2) The facilitator can give the introduction for each story. Then the participants can be divided into three groups. Each group is assigned one of the stories and prepares a skit or re-enactment.

Closing Remarks

The facilitator sums up the learning and sharing of the last few hours.

The workshop host thanks the facilitator and participants and may make announcements as appropriate about other business.

Closing Prayer

Facilitator: Let us pray together the League's prayer to our patroness *[page 15]*.

Prayer to Our Lady of Good Counsel, Patroness of The Catholic Women's League of Canada

Mary, Our Lady of Good Counsel:

filled with the Holy Spirit,

you were a faithful disciple of Jesus, your Son.

Intercede with your Son for us

that we may be faithful to our baptism,

fervent in prayer,

and generous in the service we give

to our sisters and brothers.

May the spirit of the living God,

who graced you with the gift of counsel,

lead us in the way of truth and love.

With the help of your prayers,

may we come to rejoice forever

with you and the great company of saints

in the kingdom of heaven.

Amen.

You may want to use a PowerPoint presentation for the workshop.

A Day of Prayer and Reflection: Embracing Mary, Our Patroness and Mother

Some Planning Tips

Purpose

A retreat day or a day of recollection provides a wonderful opportunity to gather together, to grow in wisdom and holiness, to get to know members better and to create a more profound sense of community.

Theme

Usually, you would choose a theme appropriate to your vision or goals, with enough flexibility to allow for interesting and varied sessions and to attract members' attention.

Retreat Master or Guest Speaker?

Often, a retreat master will speak at all sessions and guide the prayer sessions. However, it is sometimes easier to have a guest speaker who will give an opening or keynote talk at some point in the day. If you decide to go the route of a guest speaker, plan early and give the speaker some input into the theme. A careful selection of the speaker is important. Some considerations might include a local cleric or deacon known to be a good speaker, a religious sister or a lay speaker in the area known for his or her passion or dedication to a cause. If you go this route, be aware that you will need to offer a stipend and pass it by your pastor or spiritual advisor. Give yourself time for this. The sample provided here is a model without a guest speaker that would be useful for all.

Scheduling

Ideally, the retreat day should include mass. Mass can be a regularly scheduled morning mass or the Saturday evening mass. Plan the start time so participants can attend the regularly scheduled morning mass, or a Saturday evening mass could close the day. In either case, alert the celebrant ahead of time so, if he wishes, he can welcome your group to the celebration or add prayers for the success of your day.

Lunch Options

It is best to make lunch a part of the day rather than giving participants the option to leave for lunch. To minimize planning and keep your council focused on the retreat, keep lunch options simple rather than having it be the day's focus. Some options include:

- participants bring a bagged lunch; the council provides beverages
- serve platters of sandwiches and sweets to each table with beverages available
- soup and a bun, with sweet platters

If charging a fee for the day, consider including a simple caterer's lunch in the price. Keep it simple and easily executed to keep the draw of members to a minimum.

Crafting/Activities

In this sample, hands-on activities are included. It provides the opportunity to chat and get to know the people around you and opens up new channels of communication, which are vital in establishing relationships. These activities are important to team building and should not be overlooked.

Planning Tip

Ask all participants to bring a small zip-lock bag containing the following:

- a pair of small scissors, a pen and a glue stick
- a variety of small (5" or less) squares of coloured scrap paper
- a few coloured pencils or felts
- a small (4x6) copy of a photograph of themselves

Supplies

- a prayer table with fresh flowers, candles and a place for a bible; League banner
- sufficient hymnals for all to use—choose one that has all hymns you plan to use
- name tags
- an evaluation form
- bible
- a large piece of chart paper with a vase cut from construction paper and glued in place - lower center
- 9"x12" white paper for morning activity (one sheet for each participant)
- a selection of small (5" maximum) squares and scraps at each table
- 6-8 pairs of small scissors at each table
- 3-4 glue sticks

Room Setup

- tables and chairs (10 for each table) set up around the room
- beverage station with hot coffee, tea and jugs of water and glasses
- prayer table
- podium and sound system

If you have a guest speaker, be sure to check what audio equipment and setup are preferred.

Proposed Retreat Day Program

Opening Mass and Gathering

Ideally, the retreat day should open with mass. Plan the start time so participants can attend the regularly scheduled morning mass. Alert the celebrant ahead of time so, if he wishes, he can welcome your group to the celebration and add prayers for the success of your day.

9:15 Coffee and muffins, registration

9:30 Call to attention—ask all to take their places at the tables

Enthronement of the Bible Service (15 minutes)

All participants are asked to stand and face the doorway to the meeting room. The bible is held high and solemnly processed in, flanked by lighted candles.

Sing a hymn, such as "Be Not Afraid", "Here I am Lord", "I Have Loved You," or an equivalent that is in the parish hymnal.

Short Bible Reading: Luke 1:26-38

Then, place the bible open on the prayer table for the duration of the day.

Opening Prayer

Sing together "Gentle Woman" or an equivalent hymn if this one is not in the parish hymnal.

Morning Session

1. Introducing Mary

If you wish, there are many beautiful images of Mary that can be shown on a PowerPoint during these three mediations.

Leader: The first three sets of events where we meet Mary as a young woman illustrate her humanity, humility and absolute obedience to the will of God.

This is Mary of the Joyful Mysteries of the rosary.

Voice 1: Meditation on the Annunciation

"Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (Lk 1.38). With those words—her fiat—the Virgin Mary placed her trust in God. She was only 13 or 14; betrothed, but not yet fully united physically, but married to Joseph in the eyes of the law and the community, and God was asking her to become the Mother of His Son. What a predicament she was placed in. How easy it would have been to say no, or at least to ask God to choose someone else! Mary had to have known what others would think, how people would look at her; for most people pride would prevent them from accepting God's will.

But not Mary. In humility, she knew that her entire life depended on God; how could she turn down even this most remarkable of requests? From a young age, her parents had dedicated her to the service of the Lord; now, this humble servant would devote her entire life to the Son of God.

Voice 1: Meditation on the Visitation

When the Virgin Mary learned from the angel Gabriel that her cousin Elizabeth was also with child, she rushed to Elizabeth's side.

Mary responds to her cousin's greeting in the canticle we call the Magnificat, a beautiful prayer of praise:

"My Soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my saviour, for He has regarded the lowliness of His handmaid. For behold henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."

As the body of our Lord is growing in her own womb, Mary spends three months caring for Elizabeth, leaving only shortly before the birth of her son, Saint John the Baptist. She shows us what true love of neighbour means: placing the needs of others above our own, devoting ourselves to our neighbour in his or her hour of need. The virtue most commonly associated with the mystery of the visitation is love of neighbour.

Voice 1: Meditation on the Nativity

"And she gave birth to her firstborn Son and wrapped Him in bands of cloth, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn" (Lk 2.7). God has humbled Himself to become man and the Mother of God gives birth in a stable. The Creator of the Universe and the Saviour of the World spends His first night in that world lying in a feed trough, surrounded by animals, their food, and their waste.

When we think of that holy night, we tend either to idealize it—to imagine it as neat and tidy as the nativity scenes on our mantles on Christmas Eve—or we think of the physical poverty that Jesus and Mary and Joseph endured. But the physical poverty is merely the outward sign of the inward grace in the souls of the Holy Family. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:3). On this night, heaven and earth have met in a stable, but also in the souls of the holy family. "The Beatitudes," writes Fr. John Hardon, S.J., in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, "are expressions of the New Covenant, where happiness is assured already in this life, provided a person totally gives himself to the imitation of Christ." Mary has done so, and so has Joseph; and Christ, of course, is Christ. Here among the sights and sounds and stench of the stable, their souls are one in perfect happiness, because they are the poor in spirit.

(Based on the resource: ThoughtCo. "Meditations on the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary." Learn Religions, February 8, 2021, learnreligions.com/meditations-joyful-mysteries-of-the-rosary-542784.)

2. A Woman's Visit with Mary

From here we meet Mary in the beautiful prayer of the rosary, the Hail Mary. Let's reflect on these beautiful and so familiar words.

Use two voices for this reflection.

Voice 2: **Hail, Mary,**

Voice 1: Hi, Mary, here I am again. Finally have a moment to myself and I need to talk to someone who understands. Who better than you?

Voice 2: **full of grace,**

Voice 1: Once, Mary, I thought this made you untouchable, far removed from my own life. You were someone so perfect that I could neither relate to you nor hope to imitate you. But now I know you better—you needed God's graces just as I do. It was His help that made you holy. And now, as I go to Him, who knows? Maybe I, too, can follow in your footsteps.

Voice 2: **the Lord is with you**.

Voice 1: Surely you turned to God, asking Him to help you through the nitty gritty of everyday life. It's reassuring to finally realize that you must have had those days like I have, days when everything seems to go wrong, and everyone expects too much of me! I had never envisioned you as not having the time to get the work done, things breaking, or visitors coming when the house was a disaster! Nor did I think your day was ever so hectic that your prayer amounted to a quick "Help me through this day, Lord." But, of course, it was! Then when it comes to the birth of your child, I can't begin to comprehend the fear and frustration you must have felt as you and Joseph searched for a place to rest in Bethlehem! If He helped you, won't He also help me?

Voice 2: **Blessed are you among women,**

Voice 1: Yes, you are closer to Him than any other, but that shouldn't put you so far and remote from me! It won't be easy, but I'll try to rid myself of that pristine statue image of you that I grew up with. Now I see you were real and walked this earth just as I do. You too struggled to understand and wondered why these things were happening. But you accepted and trusted in God's plan. Maybe, with your guidance, I can become more like you in that way.

Voice 2: **and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus**.

Voice 1: Thanks, Mary, for saying "yes," even when you had no idea of all you were saying yes to! How often I think of you now when I want to control my own life. I hadn't planned on all the twists and turns my life has taken; the moves, death of family members I hold dear, loss of friends, illnesses, job changes and pressures. But you faced many struggles too! This wondrous event brought many changes to your life! Your "yes" gives me a hope that I too will live through the "yes" I made in my life too. Like you, this must be my path to holiness.

Voice 2: **Holy Mary,**

Voice 1: I still have trouble thinking I could ever be holy. You were one of the chosen few to be so close to Jesus. We talk about His humanity, but yours has been so terribly overlooked. By rethinking you, I now have a new hope! I'll never look at a Christmas card in the same way again! I promise when I look at the nativity scene in any form, I will see my friend, my patroness and my mother, and I will smile at you, my dear and treasured friend. It is within my reach to emulate your life on earth, and I can still revere your holy place in heaven.

Voice 2: **Mother of God,**

Voice 1: What an awesome task! God placed in your hands His one and only Son. My task in life is pretty awesome, too. How often I've heard that God doesn't give the responsibility without also giving the graces you need. My task is to ask for help, to pray for the graces I need to get through all the hard stuff.

Voice 2: **pray for us sinners now,**

Voice 1: Some will never understand this, going through you to Jesus. I didn't always do this. But you gave us one reason at Cana, and He gave us the best reason at the cross, making you mother of us all. I like thinking of you as "mother." I'm so glad to discover this side of you now, to see us as mothers in common. It's easier to turn to you with my frustrations, fears, worries and tears. In turning more readily to you, I turn more readily to your Son. What a privilege. Will you help me to treasure all these things and reflect on them in my heart, Mary?

Voice 2: **and at the hour of our death**.

Voice 1: Mary, it's overwhelming to think you will greet me when this old body dies. Because of the love I've had for your Joseph (the forgotten saint), I'd always hoped that he would lead me across that threshold. To think you too would be with me as I face your son is overwhelming! Thank you, Mary, for being with me on my journey, and so patiently awaiting my coming to know you better. Thank you for being fully human and real and for helping me to see you in a new and special way. Thank you for giving me hope.

Voice 2: **Amen**.

Voice 1: So be it. I think I'm on my way now, lucky to be living in these times, no matter how difficult they may be. I still have questions, and fears, but I feel like I'm setting out on a new journey with you as my guide. If I hold out my hand, and accept you as my patroness and my mother, I will make it! Thank you, Mary, and please continue to help me.

(Source: A Mother's Look at the Hail Mary. Adapted from the CWL website (Kathy Vignoli, printed in The Marian Helpers' Bulletin, August-September/89, Kay Allen, Newfoundland and Labrador)

These three events in Mary's life help us understand the very human side of Mary, our patroness and mother. Here we see a woman we can relate to, a woman who lived in her times and who understands the universal concerns of all women. We see Mary reaching out in kindness and love, a friend and mother.

3. Activity

In our next activity, we will have an opportunity to show and share our care for each other and practice and experience the effects of an act of kindness shared with friends and perhaps some strangers as well!

Have coffee, water, etc., available as participants may want a little refreshment as they work.

Directions for the Activity

Part A. *Give the participants the following instructions (10 minutes)*

Participants should be seated around tables with a maximum of 12 people per table. Make the adjustments you need so that each group has approximately the same number.

You will each need the following:

- a sheet of 9"x12" of white paper
- a few glue sticks
- a few sets of crayons or coloured pencils (to be shared)
- a few pairs of scissors

Ask each person to take out the photograph of themselves that they were asked to bring. Glue it down in the centre of the page. Using the crayons/ pencils, put their name on the page and simple decorations around the photograph to frame it. Don't take up too much space but make it attractive! It is important that everyone take part in this activity, even the facilitators and speakers.

Part B. *Once this is finished, give the following instruction (15-20 minutes)*

Once everyone is ready, we will begin the next step! You will need your pencil or pen.

We will all pass our paper to the person on our right. When you receive the paper, write a positive and caring message to the person whose page it is. The message can be personal and very specific if it is someone you know well. If not, it can merely be a compliment or an observation. Sign the message, then pass the page to the person on your right. Please keep the pages moving. When you get your paper back, the circle is complete. Your photograph should have a message from each person at your table. Read each message and enjoy!

Part C. *Concluding Activity (10 minutes)*

Take a few moments to reflect on the following questions. [*If you have time, tell groups they will be invited to share some responses with the whole group.*]

(1) How did the process of writing all those positive comments feel?

(2) How did you feel when you received and read the comments on your page?

(3) What is the value of such an exercise?

Lunch Break *(30 minutes)*

Afternoon Session

1. Walking with Mary

Mary's Way of the Cross

This beautiful prayer was written by Rev. Richard G. Furey, C.Ss.R. Booklets can be purchased from many sites online if you would like participants to have one. Your parish may also have copies as it is a very popular Lenten devotion. You can also make copies from the printable version available for this toolkit.

You will need a leader and a reader for each station.

First Station: Jesus is Condemned to Death

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: **Because by Your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

Leader: "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgement you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get" (Mt 7:1-2).

Reader 1: It was early Friday morning when I saw my Son. That was the first glimpse I had of Him since they took Him away. His bruised and bleeding skin sent a sword of pain deep into my heart and tears down my cheeks. Then Pilate, from his chair of judgment, asked the crowd why they wanted my Son executed. All around me they shouted, "Crucify Him!" I wanted to plead with them to stop, but I knew this had to be. So I stood by and cried silently.

All: **Lord Jesus, it is hard for me to imagine the anguish Your mother felt at Your condemnation. But what about today, when I hold a grudge…? "Crucify Him!" When I judge others…? "Crucify Him!" Doesn't this bring tears of anguish to both You and Your mother? Forgive me, Jesus.**

Second Station: Jesus Takes His Cross

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: **Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.**

Leader: Then the King will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed Me, I was naked and you gave Me clothing, I was sick and you took care of Me, I was in prison and you visited Me." Then the righteous will answer Him, "Lord, when was it that we saw You hungry and gave You food, or thirsty and gave You something to drink? And when was it that we saw You a stranger and welcomed You, or naked and gave You clothing? And when was it that we saw You sick or in prison and visited You? And the King will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of My family, you did it to Me" (Mt 25:34-40).

Reader 2: Regaining a little strength, I walked with the crowds to the entrance of the square. A door flew open and my Son stumbled out, the guards laughing behind Him. Two men dragged over a heavy wooden cross and dropped it on His shoulders. Then they shoved Him down the road. My pain for Him was unbearable. I wanted to take the cross from Him and carry it myself. But I knew this had to be, so I walked on silently.

All: **Lord, Jesus, I beg You to forgive me for the many times I have added more weight to Your cross by closing my eyes**

to the pain and loneliness of my neighbour. Forgive me for gossiping about others and for always trying to find excuses to avoid certain people who wish to talk with me. Help me to be more like Mary, always seeking to lighten the crosses of others. Forgive me, Jesus.

Third Station: Jesus Falls the First Time

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: **Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.**

Leader: Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ (Gal 6:2).

Reader 3: I followed close behind my Son as He stumbled toward Calvary. Nothing had ever hurt me more than to see Him in such pain. I saw the cross digging into His shoulders. My heart dropped when I saw Him fall face to the ground, the heavy cross landing squarely on His back. For a moment I thought my beloved Son was dead. Now, my whole body began to tremble. Then the guards kicked Him. He rose slowly and began to walk again, yet they still whipped Him. I wanted to protect Him with my own body. But, I knew this had to be, so I walked on and wept silently.

All: **Lord, how often have I seen You fall, and, unlike Mary, have left You there without concern? How often have I seen people make mistakes and laughed at them? How often do I find myself getting angry when someone does things differently than I? Mary offered You her support through Your entire passion. Help me to do the same for You by the support I give to others. Lord, have mercy on me.**

Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Blessed Mother

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: **Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

Leader: My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing (Jas 1:2-4).

Reader 4: I managed to break through the crowd and was walking side by side with my Son. I called to Him through the shouting voices. He stopped. Our eyes met, mine full of tears and anguish, His full of pain and confusion. I felt helpless; then His eyes said to me, "Courage! There is a purpose for this." As He stumbled on, I knew He was right. So I followed and prayed silently.

All: **Lord Jesus, forgive me for the many times our eyes met and I turned mine away. Forgive me the times things did not go my way and I let everyone know about it. Forgive me the times I brooded over little inconveniences or became discouraged and did not heed Your call to courage! Yes, Lord, our eyes have met many times, but fruitlessly.**

Fifth Station: Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: **Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.**

Leader: Although He was a Son, He learned obedience through what He suffered; and having been made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him (Heb 5: 8-9).

Reader 5: I could now see almost complete helplessness on the face of my Son as He tried to carry His heavy load. Each step looked as if it would be His last. I felt His every pain in my heart and I wanted the whole thing to end. Then I noticed some commotion near Jesus. The guards had pulled a protesting man from the crowd. They forced him to pick up the back of the cross to help lighten my Son's load. He asked the guards why this had to be. I knew, and so followed silently.

All: **Lord Jesus, I have many times refused to help You. I have been a selfish person who has often questioned Your Word. Don't let me remain like Simon, but help me to be like Your mother, Mary, who always silently followed and obeyed.**

Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: **Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.**

Leader: Do not let loyalty and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favour and good repute in the sight of God and of people (Prov 3:3-4).

Reader 6: As I continued close by Jesus, a woman pushed past the guards, took off her veil, and began to wipe my Son's sweating, bloody face. The guards immediately pulled her back. Her face seemed to say, "Why are you doing this to Him?" I knew, so I walked on in faith, silently.

All: **Lord, this woman gave You the best she could. On the other hand, I have wanted to take more than I give. So many opportunities arise every day for me to give to You by giving to others—but I pass them by. My Saviour, never let me ask why again, but help me to give all I have to You.**

Seventh Station: Jesus Falls the Second Time

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: **Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.**

Leader: Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will return to You. Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of Your deliverance (Ps 51:12-14).

Reader 7: Again my Son fell, and again my grief was overwhelming at the thought that He might die. I started to move toward Him, but the soldiers prevented me. He rose and stumbled ahead slowly. Seeing my Son fall, get up again, and continue on was bitter anguish to me. But, since I knew this had to be, I walked on silently.

All: **Lord, of all people Mary was Your most faithful follower, never stopping in spite of all the pain she felt for You. I have many times turned away from You by my sins and have caused others to turn away from You. I beg You to have mercy on me.**

Eighth Station: Jesus Speaks to the Women

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: **Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.**

Leader: Open my eyes, so that I may behold wondrous things out of Your law. I live as an alien in the land; do not hide Your commandments from me (Ps 119:18-19).

Reader 8: I was walking a few steps behind Jesus when I saw Him stop. Some women were there crying for Him and pitying Him. He told them not to shed tears for Him. They had the opportunity to accept Him as the Messiah; like many others, they rejected Him instead. He told them to shed tears for themselves, tears that would bring their conversion. They did not see the connection between that and His walk to death. I did, and as He walked on, I followed silently.

All: **My Saviour, many times I have acted like these women, always seeing the faults of others and pitying them. Yet, very rarely have I seen my own sinfulness and asked Your pardon. Lord, You have taught me through these women. Forgive me, Lord, for my blindness.**

Ninth Station: Jesus Falls the Third Time

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: **Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world**.

Leader: "You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbour, or you will incur guilt yourself. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord (Lev 19:17-18).

Reader 9: This fall of Jesus was agony to me. Not only had He fallen on the rocky ground again, but now He was almost at the top of the hill of crucifixion. The soldiers screamed at Him and abused Him, almost dragging Him the last few steps. My heart pounded as I imagined what they would do to Him next. But, I knew this had to be, so I climbed the hill silently behind Him.

All: **My loving Jesus, I know that many times I have offered my hand to help people but when it became inconvenient or painful to me I left them, making excuses for myself. Help me, Lord, to be like Your mother, Mary, and never take my supporting hand away from those who need it**.

Tenth Station: Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: **Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world**.

Leader: Indeed we call blessed those who showed endurance. You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

Above all, my beloved, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your 'Yes' be yes and your 'No' be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation (Jas 5:11-12).

Reader 10: With my Son finally relieved of the weight of the cross, I thought He would have a chance to rest. But the guards immediately started to rip His clothes off His blood-clotted skin. The sight of my Son in such pain was unbearable. Yet, since I knew this had to be, I stood by and cried silently.

All: **Lord, in my own way I too have stripped You. I have taken away the good name of another by foolish talk, and have stripped people of human dignity by my prejudice. Jesus, there are so many ways I have offended You through the hurt I have caused others. Help me to see You in all people**.

Eleventh Station: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: **Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world**.

Leader: "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on My account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before" (Mt 5:11-12).

Reader 11: As they threw Jesus on the cross, He willingly allowed Himself to be nailed. As they punctured His hands and His feet I felt the pain in my heart. Then they lifted up the cross. There He was, my Son, whom I love so much, being scorned as He struggled for the last few moments of earthly life. But I knew this had to be, so I stood by and prayed silently.

All: **Lord, what pain You endured for me. And what pain Your mother went through, seeing her only Son die for love of me! Yet, both You and she are ready to forgive me as soon as I repent of my sin. Help me, Lord, to turn away from my sinfulness**.

Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: **Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world**.

Leader: Then the disciples approached and said to Him, "Do you know that the Pharisees took offence when they heard what You said?" He answered, "Every plant that My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted (Mt 15:12-13).

Reader 12: What greater pain is there for a mother than to see her son die right before her eyes! I, who had brought this Saviour into the world and watched Him grow, stood helplessly beneath His cross as He lowered His head and died. His earthly anguish was finished, but mine was greater than ever. Yet, this had to be and I had to accept it, so I stood by and I mourned silently.

All: **My Jesus, have mercy on me for what my sins have done to You and to others. I thank You for Your great act of love. You have said that true love is laying down your life for your friends. Let me always be Your friend. Teach me to live my life for others, and not fail You again**.

Thirteenth Station: Jesus is Taken from the Cross

Leader: We adore You O Christ and we praise You.

All: **Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world**.

Leader: Out of the depths I cry to You, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!

If You, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, so that You may be revered.

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning.

O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with Him is great power to redeem. It is He who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities. (Ps 130).

Reader 13: The crowd had gone; the noise had stopped. I stood quietly with one of Jesus' friends and looked up at the dead body of Our Saviour, my Son. Then two men took the body from the cross and placed it in my arms. A deep sorrow engulfed my being. Yet, I also felt deep joy. Life had ended cruelly for my Son, but it had also brought life to all of us. I knew this had to be, and I prayed silently.

All: **Lord, Your passion has ended. Yet, it still goes on whenever I choose sin over You. I have done my part in Your crucifixion and now, my Saviour, I beg Your forgiveness with all my heart. Help me to live a life worthy of You and Your mother**.

Fourteenth Station: Jesus is Placed in the Tomb

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: **Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world**.

Leader: As the Father has loved Me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love (Jn 15:9-10).

Reader 14: We brought Jesus' body to a tomb and I arranged it there myself, silently weeping, silently rejoicing. I took one more look at my loving Son, and then walked out. They closed the tomb and before I left, I thought, I knew this had to be... it had to be for you! I would wait in faith silently.

All: **Yes, my Lord, this had to be because You love me, and for no other reason. All You ask is that I live a good life. You never said such a life would be easy. I am willing to leave sin behind and live for You alone, in my brothers and sisters**.

Used with permission of the Redemptorists of the Baltimore Province.

2. Receiving the Gift

"... Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple whom He loved standing beside her, He said to His mother, "Woman, here is your Son." Then He said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home" (John 19:25-27).

With these beautiful words, spoken by the dying Jesus, we are given the wondrous gift of Mary, our Mother. This precious gift of Mary is ours to embrace, to recognize and to celebrate.

3. A Prayer of Gratitude

Heavenly Mother Mary, we acknowledge you as our intercessor, our counselor, our guide and our Mother.

Your Son gave you to us knowing our frailty and our flawed human nature.

He knew we would need you.

Thank you for the many times you have stood by our side guiding our decisions and our actions, comforting us in times of stress and worry and bringing our petitions to your Son, our Father and Redeemer, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you for the many blessings we have received through your intercession:

Blessings in our youth and early married lives,

Blessings received in the birth of our children, our grandchildren, and those of families and friends,

Blessings and help with the struggles of raising a family and keeping peace in our homes and hearts,

Blessings in loss, in sickness and in death,

Blessings of friendships, supportive relationships, and loving moments.

You have been with us, through all the ups and downs of our lives.

So often we get caught up in our busyness and forget to show our gratitude for your intercessions on our behalf.

Today we recognize your presence in our lives and your place in our hearts.

4. Final Activity

At each table, place a variety of scrap paper, sized no larger than a five inch square, scissors and glue sticks. Participants are to make a small flower that will be glued onto a sheet of flipchart paper to make a bouquet of thanks for Mary. Give limited instructions and encourage creativity! Only one flower each. Give about 10-15 minutes. A sample may be helpful to get people started.

Once time is up, each participant will join in a large circle around a table with the flipchart paper, on which you have already glued a vase cut from coloured paper. You will then call on each person, one by one, to share the blessing they are thankful for and glue their flower into place. As the flower is being placed, all respond **Thank you, Mary our Mother, for your blessings**.

Continue all around the group until all flowers have been placed and all blessings recognized. If there are more than 30 participants, you will have to consider two separate circles.

Closing Prayer

Our day has come to an end! Thank you, dear Lady, our Patroness and Mother, for the many blessings we have received this day through you. We love you and implore you to stay with us, guiding and directing us through the days ahead. Keep me close to you, and through you, to your beloved Son. Like you, Holy Mary, let me learn to say yes when called on to do the will of your Son! This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

A Day of Prayer and Reflection: Embracing Mary, Our Patroness and Mother

Evaluation Form

Please help us understand how we did in planning and executing your day by check marking your favourite parts of the day.

Morning Session _____

Woman's visit with Mary _____

Morning activity with pictures _____

Mary's Way of the Cross _____

Flower making activity _____

Counting your blessings _____

Please answer the following questions with a "Yes" or "No":

Did the day meet your expectations? _____

Will you rethink anything because of today? _____

Will you take any new thoughts or ideas home? _____

Would you come to another such day? _____

Any suggestions for the planning committee?

Appendixes

Litany of Our Lady of Good Counsel

Lord have mercy on us.	***Christ have mercy on us.***
Lord have mercy on us. Christ hear us.	***Christ graciously hear us.***
God the Father of Heaven,	***have mercy on us.***
God the Son, Redeemer of the world,	***have mercy on us.***
God the Holy Spirit,	***have mercy on us.***
Holy Trinity, one God,	***have mercy on us.***
Holy Mary,	***Pray for us***
Holy Mother of God,	***Pray for us***
Holy Virgin of Virgins,	***Pray for us***
Mother of Good Counsel,	***Pray for us***
Daughter of the Heavenly Father,	***Pray for us***
Mother of the Divine Son,	***Pray for us***
Spouse of the Holy Spirit,	***Pray for us***
Temple of the most Holy Trinity,	***Pray for us***
Dispenser of graces,	***Pray for us***
Gate of heaven,	***Pray for us***
Queen of Angels,	***Pray for us***
Honour of patriarchs,	***Pray for us***
Glory of prophets,	***Pray for us***
Counsellor of apostles,	***Pray for us***
Counsellor of martyrs,	***Pray for us***
Counsellor of confessors,	***Pray for us***
Counsellor of virgins,	***Pray for us***
Counsellor of all saints,	***Pray for us***
Counsellor of the afflicted,	***Pray for us***
Counsellor of widows and orphans,	***Pray for us***
Counsellor of the sick,	***Pray for us***
Counsellor of the sorrowful and of prisoners,	***Pray for us***

Counsellor of the poor,	***Pray for us***
Counsellor of the needy,	***Pray for us***
Counsellor in all temptations,	***Pray for us***
Counsellor of penitent sinners,	***Pray for us***
Counsellor of the dying,	***Pray for us***
In all affairs and necessities,	***Give us good counsel***
In all doubts and perplexities,	***Give us good counsel***
In all afflictions and adversities,	***Give us good counsel***
In all dangers and misfortunes,	***Give us good counsel***
In all undertakings and concerns,	***Give us good counsel***
In all our needs,	***Give us good counsel***
In all crosses and sufferings,	***Give us good counsel***
In all temptations and snares,	***Give us good counsel***
In persecution and calumny,	***Give us good counsel***
In all wrong suffered,	***Give us good counsel***
In all dangers of soul and body,	***Give us good counsel***
In all the events of our life,	***Give us good counsel***
In all sickness and infirmity,	***Give us good counsel***
In the hour of death,	***Give us good counsel***
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.	***Spare us, O Lord.***
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.	***Graciously hear us, O Lord.***
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.	***Have mercy on us.***

Our Father...

In all anxiety and trouble.	***Bring us good counsel,*** ***O Blessed Virgin Mary***

Prayer: O God the giver of all good and perfect gifts, let us, who seek refuge with Mary, obtain in all our wants, troubles and affairs, good counsel, help and assistance for the sake of Jesus Christ Your Son. Amen.

Bishop F.J. Klein, National Director CWL

The Litany of Loreto

Lord, have mercy.	**Christ, have mercy.**
Lord, have mercy on us. Christ hear us.	**Christ, graciously hear us.**
God the Father of heaven,	**Have mercy on us.**
God the Son, Redeemer of the world,	**Have mercy on us.**
God the Holy Spirit,	**Have mercy on us.**
Holy Trinity, One God,	**Have mercy on us.**
Holy Mary,	**Pray for us.**
Holy Mother of God,	**Pray for us.**
Holy Virgin of virgins,	**Pray for us.**
Mother of Christ,	**Pray for us.**
Mother of the Church,	**Pray for us.**
Mother of Divine Grace,	**Pray for us.**
Mother of Hope,	**Pray for us.**
Mother most pure,	**Pray for us.**
Mother most chaste,	**Pray for us.**
Mother inviolate,	**Pray for us.**
Mother undefiled,	**Pray for us.**
Mother most amiable,	**Pray for us.**
Mother most admirable,	**Pray for us.**
Mother of good counsel,	**Pray for us.**
Mother of our Creator,	**Pray for us.**
Mother of our Saviour,	**Pray for us.**
Virgin most prudent,	**Pray for us.**
Virgin most venerable,	**Pray for us.**
Virgin most renowned,	**Pray for us.**
Virgin most powerful,	**Pray for us.**
Virgin most merciful,	**Pray for us.**
Virgin most faithful,	**Pray for us.**
Mirror of justice,	**Pray for us.**
Seat of wisdom,	**Pray for us.**
Cause of our joy,	**Pray for us.**
Spiritual vessel,	**Pray for us.**
Vessel of honour,	**Pray for us.**

Singular vessel of devotion,	**Pray for us.**
Mystical rose,	**Pray for us.**
Tower of David,	**Pray for us.**
Tower of ivory,	**Pray for us.**
House of gold,	**Pray for us.**
Ark of the covenant,	**Pray for us.**
Gate of heaven,	**Pray for us.**
Morning star,	**Pray for us.**
Health of the sick,	**Pray for us.**
Refuge of sinners,	**Pray for us.**
Solace of migrants,	**Pray for us.**
Comfort of the afflicted,	**Pray for us.**
Help of Christians,	**Pray for us.**
Queen of Angels,	**Pray for us.**
Queen of Patriarchs,	**Pray for us.**
Queen of Prophets,	**Pray for us.**
Queen of Apostles,	**Pray for us.**
Queen of Martyrs,	**Pray for us.**
Queen of Confessors,	**Pray for us.**
Queen of Virgins,	**Pray for us.**
Queen of all Saints,	**Pray for us.**
Queen conceived without original sin,	**Pray for us.**
Queen assumed into Heaven,	**Pray for us.**
Queen of the most Holy Rosary,	**Pray for us.**
Queen of families,	**Pray for us.**
Queen of peace.	**Pray for us.**

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,	**Spare us, O Lord.**
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,	**Graciously hear us, O Lord.**
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,	**Have mercy on us.**
Pray for us, O holy Mother of God,	**That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.**

Let us pray.

Grant, we beseech Thee, O Lord God, that we Your servants, may enjoy perpetual health of mind and body; and by the glorious intercession of the Blessed Mary, ever Virgin, may be delivered from present sorrow, and obtain eternal joy. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

[Originally approved in 1587 by Pope Sixtus V]

History of the Picture of Our Lady of Good Counsel

In the small Italian village of Genazzano, some 30 miles from Rome, is the shrine of this Marian painting. This old sanctuary, which probably dated back to the 4th century when a church to Our Lady of Good Counsel is said to have been first built, was given by Prince Colonna to the Augustinians in the 15th century. By that time, it had fallen into disrepair and the monks set about rebuilding their church.

A wealthy woman named Petruccia came to their support in the restoration of the old church, Our Lady of Good Counsel. The work ran into difficulty, when Petruccia ran out of funds, and the villagers mocked the efforts of the monks. Before her death; however, Petruccia saw the opening of the church on April 26, 1467, at which time the picture of Our Lady of Good Counsel was unveiled.

The people stood in wonder before its beauty! Mostly peasants, they were convinced it had come from paradise. It is not clear from the historical record and the multiple versions of the story, exactly when and how the image came to be in the church in Genazzano. All agree that the image is in the style of a fresco, and most that it was not part of the rebuilding. Some say that the image was revealed when a statue of Madonna and Child was removed along with the wall behind it. Others say that it just appeared and was not attached in any way to the church itself.

To explain the appearance, many of the versions of the story then take the listener to Scutari, Albania, a short time before the image appeared in Genazzano. The Christians in Albania were being overrun by the Muslim Turks. The last stronghold, Scutari, was on the brink of falling and two men went to the local church to pray to a venerated image of the Blessed Mother and Child. To their amazement, the image came off the wall and floated above the town. The men followed the image all the way to Rome, where they lost sight of it. A few days later, they heard about the miraculous appearance of a beautiful painting in the church in Genazzano. They sought out the church and picture and confirmed it was the one they had followed from Scutari! The people of Genazzano were reluctant to accept the story that the beautiful fresco had come from the walls of a church in Scutari. There are some stories that Pope Paul II ordered an investigation into the story about the image coming from Scutari and that the investigators did find some evidence to support it. They say that when the investigators arrived at the church in Scutari, there was a blank space in a fresco there that was the same size and shape as the image now in Genazzano and descriptions from local people matched it as well.

A 20th century restoration on the painting adds more interesting details and seems to support the Scutari connection.

Restoration work was done on the famous painting by Professor de Compos between 1957 and 1961. At the time, letters were noticed on the edge of the child's robe that seemed to be a signature. They were deciphered as reading – "A. Vivanini made this." De Compos concluded that the fresco was the work of the illustrious Antonio Vivainni, a master of the Venetian school of art in the first half of the 15th century. His family's workshop did paintings in churches all along the Adriatic coast, so Scutari could certainly have been one such location. The picture reflects the formative period of the master's work and was probably painted between 1437 and 1440.

The original picture of the Mother and Child is painted on light plaster measuring 18" x 15". The style is oriental and Byzantine and shows evidence of moving away from the stylized rigidity of the east.

The original was brilliant and brightly coloured, the faces simple, pure, compassionate and devotional. The infant is so close to his mother that his simple and loving gesture draws us all to Mary, Our Lady of Good Counsel. The discovery of the signature confirms the authenticity of the artist.

The modern image of Our Lady of Good Counsel [*picture of modern image*] was painted by a 19th century Franciscan friar, Pasquale Sarullo.

The Perpetual Help Story

"Holy Mary of Perpetual Help" is the title that, according to an ancient document, the Blessed Virgin herself used in bringing her picture into the devotional life of Rome in the closing days of the 15th century. Thus, the perpetual help story is the story of a picture of Mary and her Divine Son, our Redeemer, and of the devotion to them which developed around it.

According to ancient documents, the icon was originally enshrined in a church on the island of Crete where it was famous for many miraculous favours. How it arrived in Crete and who painted this picture is uncertain.

What we do know is that, around the year 1450, the miraculous icon was stolen by a merchant of Crete and smuggled in his luggage by ship to Rome.

Some time after the merchant arrived in Rome, he fell seriously ill. On his deathbed he confessed his crime and begged a Roman friend in whose home he was staying to have the stolen picture given to a church where it could be enshrined for public veneration.

The friend agreed. But, after the death of the merchant, his friend's wife refused to surrender the picture. Even after the Blessed Virgin herself appeared to merchant's friend on four different occasions, he was unable to persuade his wife to give up the picture.

Eventually, he also died. Again the Blessed Mother appeared to his young daughter on two occasions and told her that the Blessed Mary of Perpetual Help wanted her picture to be enshrined in the church of St. Matthew on Via Merulana, between the Basilicas of St. Mary Major and St. John Lateran. After the second apparition, the girl's mother relented.

And so it was that on March 27, 1499, the miraculous icon of perpetual help was placed in the Augustinian church of St. Matthew in Rome. There, it was venerated for the next 300 years. ... There were many liturgies, impressive conversions, even miracles, so much so that the picture came to be called the miraculous image of perpetual help. However, in 1798 Napoleon's army began the occupation of Rome. In the following five years, besides carrying off the pope into exile, they ordered the destruction of some 30 churches. Among these was St. Matthew's. The Augustinian [monks] moved to other monasteries, and the miraculous picture went with them into obscurity. In time, the memory of the glorious days was all but forgotten. But not quite.

An old Augustinian brother named Augustino Orsetti had a favorite altar boy, named Michael Marchi, who came to serve mass at the monastery of Our Lady in Posterula. There, the brother, who had once been at St. Matthew's, often pointed to a picture in the sacristy and told Michael that it was the famous Madonna, made homeless by the army of Napoleon. "Remember, Michael," he would say.

Michael remembered. He grew up, became a priest in the community of the redemptorists... who had just bought property in Rome (1855) and built a church in honour of their recently canonized founder, St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori.

In tracing the history of their property, the redemptorists soon came upon the startling discovery that they had taken the place of old St. Matthew's and their church was now the "little church between the two great basilicas?," the very spot chosen by "Mary of Perpetual Help."

Now, if only they could find the missing Madonna. And, wonder of wonders, there was among them Father Michael Marchi, erstwhile altar boy, who had the answer.

After a year of prayer, Father Nicholas Mauron, redemptorist superior general, petitioned Pope

Pius IX for permission to have the miraculous picture enshrined in their church of Sant' Alfonso. [The pope, who had great devotion to Our Blessed Mother, agreed - with the provision that the redemptorists make her name known throughout the world.] The holy father was so pleased that he wrote the directive there and then to the Augustinians to arrange for the transfer of the picture from St. Mary's in Posterula to Sant' Alfonso.

Consequently the Augustinians and the redemptorists got together, and a great celebration was planned to welcome the picture home. A festive procession through the streets with a follow-up triduum was planned.

The date was set for April 26, 1866. Newspapers and wall posters throughout the city carried the announcement of the event and invited the faithful to participate.

The day dawned bright and beautiful and the line of march was aglow with flowers and banners and colorful tapestries. As the procession wound its way through the streets, crowds gathered to catch a glimpse of the picture being borne on a carrier lavishly decorated with flowers.

Along the way, many wonderful favours - even miraculous cures - were recorded. And once the picture was enthroned above the high altar at the church of San Alfonso, the miraculous favours continued.

... The redemptorists began shortly thereafter to preach on the history and meaning of the picture. In an amazingly short time, devotion to Mary under her title of perpetual help spread into northern Europe and here in America.

[This adapted version of the story comes from the website of St. Patrick Parish (Toronto, Ontario) and is used with permission.]

The Story of Our Lady of Guadalupe

On December 9, 1531, in Mexico City, Our Lady appeared to Juan Diego, an Indigenous man and early convert to the Catholic faith. He was walking from his village home to a church in the nearby city. As he was passing Teyapac hill, he heard beautiful music and saw a radiant cloud. Within the cloud was a beautiful woman who looked and was dressed like an Aztec princess. In his native language, the lady greeted him and told him that she was the mother of God and mother of all humanity. She asked Juan Diego to go to the bishop of Mexico—a Franciscan named Juan de Zumarraga. She wanted the bishop to build a chapel on Teyapac Hill, where she had appeared and where she said, "I will show and offer all of my love, my compassion, my help and my protection to my people."

Juan Diego went to the bishop and, through an interpreter, told him of the request from Our Lady. The bishop was skeptical and sent Juan Diego away. The next morning, Juan Diego again saw the beautiful lady and told her the bishop had not believed him. She asked Juan Diego to go again with the same request. Juan Diego spoke to the bishop, who this time asked him to bring a sign that would prove the message was really from the Blessed Virgin Mary.

On December 12th, Juan Diego again saw the Blessed Virgin and told her that the bishop wanted a sign from her. She told Juan Diego to go up the hill, gather the flowers that were blooming there and take them to the bishop.

The flowers were Castilian roses and were a miracle, blooming there on a frosty morning in December on land where only thistle and cactus grew. She helped Juan Diego arrange the flowers in his tilma (poncho) and told him to show them to the bishop.

Juan Diego brought the roses to the bishop, who was amazed at seeing them. Even more amazing was that right before their eyes, an image of Our Lady appeared on the cloth of the tilma where the roses had been. The bishop fell to his knees. He had the church built, as Our Lady had requested.

The image was very significant to the Indigenous people who had continued to resist the Spanish conquistadores after the fall of the Aztec Empire and the Catholic missionaries' efforts to convert them to the Christian faith. Within seven years of the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe, there were more than six million conversions in the former Aztec empire.

Our Lady of Lourdes—Lourdes and St. Bernadette Soubirous

In Lourdes, France, in 1844 a baby girl named Bernadette Soubirous was born. Bernadette's family was very poor, and Bernadette was responsible for looking after and caring for her brothers and sisters.

Bernadette was a good natured girl with dark eyes and a round face. The only education Bernadette received was the Catholic teachings which she studied faithfully in the evenings.

At the age of 13, Bernadette was preparing for her first holy communion. One of Bernadette's chores was to collect wood for the fire. On a cold day in February 1858, Bernadette and [two] companions headed off to the Gave River to collect pieces of wood. The companions ran ahead and left Bernadette struggling to keep up. As Bernadette was taking off her shoes to make her way through the river, she was startled by a peculiar wind and rustling sound.

Bernadette looked up towards the grotto and the caves on the riverbank. Near the opening of the grotto, Bernadette glanced and noticed the cave was suddenly filled with golden light. Lifting up her eyes, she saw a lady of great beauty, dressed in a pure white robe with a blue sash, a veil over her head, a rosary clasped in her hands and yellow roses at her feet. Bernadette rubbed her eyes. What a beautiful lady! But where did she come from? And what was she doing here?

The beautiful lady smiled at Bernadette and asked her to say her rosary. Bernadette said her prayers and when she was finished she looked up, the lady had vanished. Bernadette caught up to her friends and discovered that they were upset with her. What have you been doing? Playing in the river, while we are out here collecting wood? Bernadette told them about the vision she had just witnessed. The girls told Bernadette she was silly and probably just seeing things.

Bernadette felt drawn to the grotto and returned there on the next Sunday. Again, Bernadette saw the beautiful lady. The third time Bernadette went to the grotto, the lady spoke to her. The beautiful lady asked Bernadette to come here every day for fifteen days. She said that she wanted Bernadette to tell the priests to build a chapel there. [At the ninth visit, the lady told Bernadette] to drink water from the stream. [But there was no stream. Bernadette scraped in the gravel and dirt until water began to seep through.] The lady also told Bernadette to pray for the conversion of sinners. Bernadette followed the requests.

[At the 13th visit, the lady told Bernadette to tell the priests to build a chapel at the spot and for people to come in procession there.]

On March 25th, the Lady finally told Bernadette, ["I am the Immaculate Conception"]... .

Bernadette's daily visits to the grotto caused quite a stir in the countryside. Crowds of people began to gather and watch Bernadette as she examined the cave and obediently did the things the lady asked of her. They watched Bernadette scrape away soil beside the grotto until a spring of water started to trickle out. ...

At first, the priests, the town's folk, and the families doubted Bernadette's visions and the purpose in her activities. But Bernadette was stubborn and determined to follow Mary's plans for her. Eventually everyone did believe Bernadette and the grotto at Lourdes became a place of worship and the Lourdes holy water was sacred for performing miracles.

At the age of 22, Bernadette became a nun and devoted her life to Mary, to praying for the conversion of sinners and to the service of God. Bernadette died on April 16, 1879, at the age of 36.

... More than [three] million visitors, pilgrims and tourists come each year to the Grotto of Massabielle, where the Virgin Mary appeared to Bernadette 18 times in 1858.

[Four years after the apparitions, the local bishop officially recognized them as authentic. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception was defined in 1854 by Pope Pius IX. [Fewer than 70 miracles have been attributed to Lourdes.]

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The Story of Fatima
The Apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima

During World War I, Pope Benedict XV made repeated but forlorn pleas for peace, and finally in May 1917, made a direct appeal to the Blessed Mother to intercede for peace in the world. Just over a week later, Our Lady began to appear at Fatima, Portugal to three shepherd children, Lucia dos Santos, age 10, and her cousins, Francisco and Jacinta Marto, ages [nine] and [seven]. Fatima is a small village about 70 miles north of Lisbon.

The Angel of Peace

[However, in the spring of the previous year, 1916, the children had their first supernatural encounter as a means of preparing them for their meetings with the Queen of Heaven.] As they were looking after their sheep one day in the spring, a dazzlingly beautiful young man, seemingly made of light, appeared and told them, "Do not be afraid. I am the Angel of Peace." He invited them to pray with him...

[Later on in the summer,] the angel appeared to the children again... . He encouraged them to pray and make sacrifices as a way of drawing down peace on their country... .

The angel came a third time in the autumn. He appeared before them holding a chalice in his hands. A host was suspended above it, from which drops of blood were falling into the chalice. The angel left the chalice suspended in the air and prostrated himself before it in prayer. He taught them a prayer of Eucharistic reparation... . He then gave the host to Lucia and the chalice to Francisco and Jacinta, saying: "Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, horribly outraged by ungrateful men. Make reparation for their crimes and console your God."

The angel fell prostrate to the ground... and disappeared. [The children did not tell anyone about these visits of the angel, feeling an interior necessity to keep quiet about these events.]

May 13, 1917

On May 13, 1917, the three children took their flocks out to pasture in the small area known as the *Cova da Iria* (Cove of Peace). [After lunch and the rosary] they suddenly saw a bright flash of something akin to lightning, followed quickly by another flash in the clear blue sky.

They looked up to see, in Lucia's words, "A lady, clothed in white, brighter than the sun, radiating a light more clear and intense than a crystal cup filled with sparkling water lit by burning sunlight." [The children stood there amazed, bathed in the light that surrounded the apparition as] the Lady smiled and said, "Do not be afraid, I will not harm you... ." [Lucia, as the oldest, asked her where she came from. The Lady pointed to the sky and said] "I come from heaven."

[Lucia then asked her what she wanted. "I have come to ask you to come here for six months on the 13th day of the month at this same hour. Later, I shall say who I am and what I desire. And I shall return here yet a seventh time." Lucia then asked if they would go to heaven and was told "yes," she and Jacinta would go to heaven, but Francisco would need to say many rosaries first. The Lady then said] "Are you willing to offer yourselves to God and bear all the sufferings He wills to send you as an act of reparation for the conversion of sinners?"

Lucia, speaking for all three, said, "Yes." The Lady replied, "Then you are going to have much to suffer, but the grace of God will be your comfort."

Lucia recounted that at the same moment [she said these words, the Lady] opened her hands and streamed an intense light [on the children that allowed them to see themselves in God. The Lady finished with a request] "Say the Rosary every day to bring peace to the world and the end of the war." She then began to rise, moving towards the east until she disappeared.

[The children got together and tried to think of ways they could make sacrifices as the Lady had asked, resolving to go without lunch and to pray the full rosary. Francisco and Jacinta received more support from their parents than Lucia, but the attitudes of the local inhabitants ranged from skepticism to utter contempt, and the children thereby suffered many insults. They would have much to suffer, just as the Lady had told them.]

June 13, 1917

About 50 people turned up at the *Cova da Iria* at noon on June 13 [as the three children assembled near the holm oak tree where the Lady had appeared.] The children saw a flash of light followed immediately by the apparition of Mary, as she spoke to Lucia. "I want you to come on the 13th of next month, to pray the Rosary every day, and to learn to read. Later, I will tell you what I want."

[Lucia asked Mary to take them to heaven and was reassured in this way. "I will take Jacinta and Francisco shortly, but you will stay here for some time to come. Jesus wants to use you to make me known and loved. He wishes to establish devotion to my Immaculate Heart throughout the world. I promise salvation to whoever embraces it. These souls will be dear to God, like flowers put by me to adorn his throne." This last sentence is found in a letter written in 1927 by Sister Lucia to her confessor.]

... Lucia was sad at [the first part of this reply] and asked, "Am I to stay here alone?" Mary replied, "No, my daughter. Are you suffering a great deal? Don't lose heart. I will never forsake you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God."

[One of the witnesses to this apparition, Maria Carreira, described how Lucia then cried out and pointed as Mary departed. She herself heard a noise like "a rocket a long way off," and looked to see a small cloud a few inches over the tree rise and move slowly towards the east until it disappeared. The crowd of pilgrims then returned to Fatima where they reported the amazing things they had seen, thus ensuring that there were between two and three thousand people present for the July apparition.]

July 13, 1917

On July 13th, the three children assembled at the Cova and again saw Our Lady over the holm oak tree. [Lucia asked what she wanted, and Mary replied, "I want you to come here on the 13th of next month and] continue to pray the Rosary every day in honour of Our Lady of the Rosary in order to obtain peace for the world and the end of the war, because only she can help you."

[Lucia then asked her who she was and for a miracle so everyone would believe. "Continue to come here every month. In October, I will tell you who I am and what I want, and I will perform a miracle for all to see and believe."

[Lucia made some requests for sick people, to which Mary replied that she would cure some but not others, and that all must say the rosary to obtain these graces during the year. And she continued] "Sacrifice yourselves for sinners and say many times, especially when you make some sacrifice: 'O Jesus, it is for love of You, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.'"

The First and Second Parts of the Secret: A Vision of Hell and Prophecies

As she spoke these words, Mary opened her hands and rays of light from them seemed to penetrate the earth, revealing to the children a terrifying vision of hell full of demons and lost souls amid indescribable horrors. This vision of hell was the first part of the three-part secret of Fatima, [which was unknown until the writing of Sister Lucia's third memoir, dated August 31, 1941.] The children looked up to the sad face of the Blessed Virgin, who spoke to them kindly:

> "You have seen hell where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace. The war is going to end; but if people do not cease offending God, a worse one will break out during the pontificate of Pius XI. When you see a night illumined by an unknown light, know that this is the great sign given you by God that he is about to punish the world for its crimes, by means of war, famine and persecutions of the Church and of the Holy Father.

> To prevent this, I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays. If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred; the Holy Father will have much to suffer; various nations will be annihilated. In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me and she will be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world."

[This concludes the second part of the secret. The third part was not made public until the year 2000 at the beatification ceremonies of Jacinta and Francisco Marto.]

[Mary specifically told Lucia] not to tell anyone about the secret at this time, apart from Francisco, [before continuing] "When you pray the Rosary, say after each mystery: 'O my Jesus! Forgive us, save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to heaven, especially those who are most in need.'" [After assuring Lucia that there was nothing more, Mary disappeared off into the distance.]

August 1917

As August 13th approached, the story of the apparitions had reached the anti-religious secular press, and while this ensured that the whole country knew about Fatima, it also meant that many biased and negative reports were circulating. The children were kidnapped on the morning of the 13th by the mayor of Vila Nova de Ourem, Arturo Santos. They were interrogated about the secret… [but] despite his threats [and promises of money], they refused to comply or divulge the secret… . [In the afternoon they were moved to the local prison and threatened with death but determined that they would die rather than reveal the secret.]

Late in the afternoon of August 19th, the Virgin appeared to the children in a place called Valinhos, near Fatima. She told them to continue to say the rosary every day, and again promised a miracle in October, stating the miracle would have been greater had they not been kidnapped. Looking very sad, she said, "Pray, pray very much, and make sacrifices for sinners; for many souls go to hell, because there are none to sacrifice themselves and pray for them."

With that, she rose into the air and moved towards the east before disappearing.

By now the children had thoroughly absorbed Mary's plea for prayer and penance and did everything they could to answer it. They prayed for hours while lying prostrate on the ground and went long days without drinking in the [burning heat of the Portuguese summer. They also went without food as a sacrifice for sinners to save them from hell, the vision of which had so profoundly affected them.] They even knotted some pieces of old rope around their waists as a form of mortification, [not removing them day or night.]

September 13, 1917

On September 13th, very large crowds began to converge on Fatima from all directions. Around noon, the children arrived. After the customary flash of light, they saw Mary on the holm oak tree. She spoke to Lucia. "Continue to pray the rosary in order to obtain the end of the war. In October Our Lord will come, as well as Our Lady of Sorrows and Our Lady of Mount Carmel. St. Joseph will appear with the Child Jesus to bless the world. God is pleased with your sacrifices." [He does not want you to sleep with the rope on, but only to wear it during the daytime.]

[Lucia then began to put forward the petitions for cures, to be told, "Yes, I will cure some, but not others. In October I will perform a miracle so that all may believe." Then Our Lady began to rise as usual and disappeared.]

October 13, 1917 – the Miracle of the Sun

The prediction of a public miracle caused intense speculation throughout Portugal and the reporter, Avelino de Almeida, published a satirical article [on the whole business] in the anti-religious newspaper, *O Seculo*. People from other parts of the country descended by the tens of thousands on the Cova, despite the terrible storm that lashed the mountain country around Fatima on the eve of the 13th. Many pilgrims walked barefooted, reciting the rosary as they went, all crowding into the area around the Cova. By mid-morning, [the weather again turned bad and] heavy rains began to fall… . The children reached the holm oak around noon and then saw the flash of light as Mary appeared before them. [For the last time,] Lucia asked what she wanted.

"I want to tell you that a chapel is to be built here in my honour. I am the Lady of the Rosary. Continue always to pray the rosary every day. The war is going to end, and the soldiers will soon return to their homes."

Lucia made some requests for cures, conversions and other things. Mary responded, "Some yes, but not others. They must amend their lives and ask forgiveness for their sins."

[Sister Lucia tells us that at this point, Mary] grew very sad and said, "Do not offend the Lord our God anymore, because He is already so much offended." Then, opening her hands, she made them reflect on the sun and, as she ascended, the reflection of her own light continued to be projected on the sun itself. After she disappeared, as the people witnessed the predicted miracle, the children saw the visions foretold during the September apparition.

The Promised Miracle

The greatest miracle to occur since the resurrection is also the only miracle ever precisely predicted as to date, time of day and location. While popularly known as "The Miracle of the Sun," October 13, 1917 has come to be known as "The Day the Sun Danced" … .

[The solar phenomena included the dancing of the sun, its fluctuations in colour, its swirling and its descending toward the earth. There was also the stillness in the leaves of the trees, despite the howling winds. The complete drying of the rain-soaked ground and the restoration of clothes all wet and covered with mud so that, as eyewitness Dominic Reis, put it, "They looked as tho they had just come back from the cleaners."]

Many physical cures of the blind and the lame were reported. The countless unreserved public confessions of sin and commitments to conversion of life attest to the authenticity of what they saw. The miracle is reported to have been seen from as far as 15-25 miles away, thus ruling out the possibility of any type of collective hallucination or mass hypnotism. … Doubters and skeptics had become believers. Even the on-site report, Almeida, [now reported affirmatively and] stood by his story later on in spite of harsh criticism.

Adapted from "The Story of Fatima: The Apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima." World Apostolate of Fatima, USA. bluearmy.com/the-story-of-fatima/

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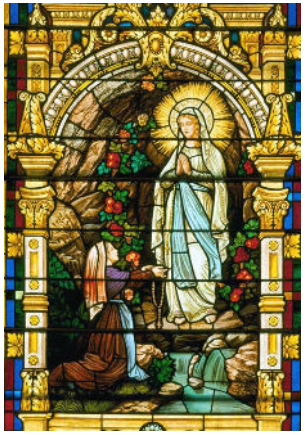

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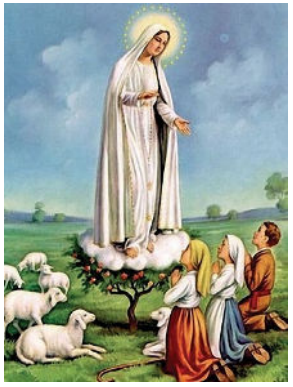

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