

MARY

Session 3: God Asks Us to Be Faithful; Mary at the foot of the Cross

Prayer

O God, Father of mercies,

Your only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
whole hanging on the cross,
appointed Mary, his mother,
to be our mother also.

Like her, and under her loving care,
may we grow day by day
as your devoted children
in order to draw to her embrace
all the families of the earth.

(Adapted from the Opening Prayer for
Mass of Mary, Mother of the Church)

Song

Immaculate Mother (The Lourdes Hymn)

Immaculate Mary, thy praises we sing
Who reignest in splendor with Jesus our King
Ave, ave, ave, Maria!
Ave, ave, Maria!

In heaven, the blessed thy glory proclaim
On earth we, thy children, invoke thy fair name
Ave, ave, ave, Maria!
Ave, ave, Maria!

We pray for our Mother, the Church upon earth
And bless, dearest Lady, the land of our birth.
Ave, ave, ave, Maria!
Ave, ave, Maria!

Video Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EsoVBQvaLDM>

Faith



Strength

Surprise



Scripture

John 19:23-27

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier.

They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it." This was to fulfill what the scripture says,

"They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots."

And that is what the soldiers did.

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.

Teaching from Pope Francis:

When Mary said her "yes" to God, she threw her simple life in Nazareth into turmoil, and not only once. Throughout her life Mary has to constantly utter a heartfelt "yes" at moments of joy and sorrow, culminating in the "yes" she spoke while standing at the foot of the Cross. Let us imagine the full extent of Mary's faithfulness to God: seeing her only Son hanging on the Cross. The faithful woman, still standing, utterly heartbroken, yet faithful and strong.

Let us ask ourselves: Am I a Christian by fits and starts, or am I a Christian full-time? God asks us to be faithful to him, daily, in our everyday life. He goes on to say that, even if we are sometimes unfaithful to him, he remains faithful. In his mercy, he never tires of stretching out his hand to lift us up, to encourage us to continue our journey, to come back and tell him of our weakness, so that he can grant us his strength. This is the real journey: to walk with the Lord always, even at moments of weakness, even in our sins.

Based on the Homily of [Pope Francis](#).

Activity Theme: Being a Christian is a full time vocation (Perseverance)

Activity:

Create a small obstacle course in your meeting space. It could be chairs, tables, ropes, or a simple physical challenge (doing 10 push-ups). Ask the participants to try getting from point A to point B with the obstacles in play.

Next ask them to try again while carrying another member of the group. Be sure the obstacles are hard enough that it slows them down a little. Alternatively, they can have some kind of disability like blindfold or 2 people with legs or hands tied together. After they've given it a try, ask them some questions.

Questions:

Why is it easier to do things with no hurdles to jump?

Why do you think God gives us obstacles in our faith?

Do the hurdles in life make us stronger or weaker?

Would I (or whoever you chose) have been able to make it through the obstacle course without your help? What was it like to carry a classmate through it?

Who in your life has jumped hurdles to make your connection with Christ a reality?

There are a lot of people who are very influential in our journey of faith. Those people not only help our faith to grow but also support us when we are in doubt or facing personal challenges. Ask the group to take some moments to remember some of them now. Then ask: how might we be able to help others with life's hurdles and accompany them in their faith journey?



Tools: Mary's Way of the Cross

(Appropriate during the Season of Lent)

Mary standing at the foot of the cross was the culmination of her lifelong perseverance to devote herself completely to her Son. The Way of the Cross is a journey of pain and suffering but it was also a journey of love and selflessness. To reflect on the stations from Mary's point of view will help us have a unique insight into Mary's emotions and feelings during that first Good Friday.

Give your group plenty of time to fully grasp the experience and use the Stations of the Cross inside the Church if you can. If a Church is not available, make sure that your meeting place has a reflective mood appropriate to the occasion.

First Station: Jesus is condemned to death

Opening Prayer: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You, because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

Meditation:

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.

Prayer:

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

Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory Be...

Second Station: Jesus carries his cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You, because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

Meditation:

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.

Prayer:

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 like Mary, always seeking to lighten the crosses of others. Forgive me, Jesus.

Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory Be..



Third Station: Jesus falls the first time

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You, because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

Meditation:

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.

Prayer:

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.

Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory Be...

Fourth Station: Jesus met his mother

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You, because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

Meditation:

I had 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 of 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.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, forgive me the many times our eyes met and I turned mine away. Forgive me for the times things did not go my way and I let everyone know about it. Forgive me for 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.

Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory Be...

Fifth Station: Simon of Cyrene helped Jesus carry his cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You, because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

Meditation:

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.

Prayer:

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.

Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory Be..



Sixth Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You, because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

Meditation:

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.

Prayer:

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.

Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory Be...

Seventh Station: Jesus falls the second time

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You, because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

Meditation:

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.

Prayer:

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.

Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory Be..

Eighth Station: Jesus met the women of Jerusalem

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You, because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

Meditation:

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.

Prayer:

My saviour, many times have I acted like these women, always seeing the faults in 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.

Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory Be...



Ninth Station: Jesus falls the third time

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You, because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

Meditation:

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.

Prayer:

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.

Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory Be...

Tenth Station: Jesus clothes are taken away

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You, because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

Meditation:

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.

Prayer:

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.

Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory Be...

Eleventh Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You, because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

Meditation:

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.

Prayer:

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.

Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory Be...



Twelfth Station: Jesus died on the cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You, because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

Meditation:

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.

Prayer:

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.

Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory Be...

Thirteenth Station: Jesus is taken down from the cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You, because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

Meditation:

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.

Prayer:

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.

Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory Be...

Fourteenth Station: Jesus is laid in the tomb

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You, because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

Meditation:

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.

Prayer:

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.

Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory Be...



Fifteenth Station: Jesus is raised from the dead

We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You because by Your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Meditation:

I could only be most grateful for the sacrifice of my son for us. Yet, what emptiness I felt trying to live without him whom I loved so! But, only two days later that emptiness was filled beyond belief ---- he had risen! Our saviour had opened the doors to a new life. That is the way it had to be ---- because his undying love for you would not stop at anything less. I could rejoice forever, but not in silence.

Prayer:

My saviour, thank you! Thank you for such endless love that helps me to rise out of my own sinfulness. I will try again to live a better life. Help me to always remember that love. Mary, mother of our risen saviour, teach me to be like you, and in my love for others, love him in return.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be

Prayer with the Mother of Jesus

Mary, Mother of the Yes
You listened to Jesus and
Know the sound of his voice
And the beating of his heart.
You Morning Star, speak to us about him
And tell us how you follow him
On the way of faith.

Mary, you lived in Nazareth
Together with Jesus.
Imprint on our lives your feelings,
Your docility, your silence,
That listens and,
In truly free decisions,
Brings the Word to blossoming.

Mary, tell us about Jesus,
So that our faith in its freshness
May shine from our eyes
And warm the hearts of those we meet,
Just as you did when you went to
visit Elizabeth
And she, old as she was,
Rejoiced with you over the gift of life.
Mary, Virgin of the Magnificat,
Help us to bring joy into the world
And, as you did in Cana,
Encourage all young people

Engaged in the service of their brethren,
To do only what Jesus tells them.
Mary, turn your gaze upon young people,
So that they may become a fruitful soil of
the Church.

Pray that Jesus, who died and rose again,
May be reborn in us and transform us,
In a night full of light, fully filled by him.
Mary, Mother of God and gate to heaven,
Help us to lift up our gaze.

We want to see Jesus; to speak with him;
To proclaim his love to all.

POPE BENEDICT XVI
YouCat Prayer Book

