

Mary, model of missionaries

Workshop / Liturgy Notes



SLIDE ONE – HOLDING SLIDE

TEACHER'S NOTES

This workshop / liturgy lasts up to 20 minutes. **Though we'd recommend you deliver the whole workshop, please feel free to use the material as time and circumstances allow.**

This resource has been prepared by **Missio**, Pope Francis' official charity for overseas mission.



START OF WORKSHOP / LITURGY

SLIDE TWO

Let's start this session with a couple of questions.

Q. Who is the woman on the screen?

A. Mary, the mother of Christ.

Q. Who is the man?

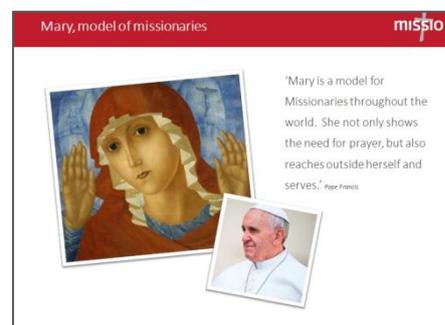
A. It is Pope Francis and he is the patron of the charity Missio, whose logo is in the top right corner. Missio is the Pope's charity for overseas mission and supports missionaries across the world.

A. Can anyone explain what a missionary is?

A missionary is somebody who brings God's love into the world. They do this by providing practical support, for example missionaries help run schools, health centres, orphanages.

Missionaries also provide emotional and spiritual care. They share God's love through their lives of love and service and by witnessing to their faith, often in very difficult and dangerous situations.

Pope Francis has often stated that Mary provides us with the best example of a missionary. First, because she brought love into the world through the birth of Christ, but also because, by following her virtues, we will be better able to bring God's love to others.



Q. Can anyone explain what a virtue is?

A. A virtue is a quality considered morally good or desirable in a person.

So what are the virtues Mary held that make her the model of missionaries? Are they virtues we possess and if so, do we use them to bring love into the world too?

SLIDE THREE

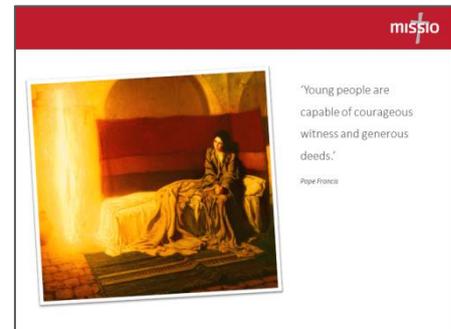
The image on screen reminds us how **courageous** Mary was. She was a young woman from Nazareth, a small town in Israel. Uneducated and with little money, she was nervous of the mission God was asking her to fulfil.

Mary must have asked herself if she would be capable of such a task and if she could protect and care for Jesus.

Pregnancy at any age is scary, but for a young woman who was not sure if she would be supported by Joseph, her fiancé, or by her family, Mary's courage to say yes to God's plan was great.

Any young woman who decides to carry a child amidst fear of rejection, and any young man who chooses to take on his responsibilities as a father, deserves our respect and support. It is a brave decision and a reminder that, just as God gave Mary the courage she needed, God can strengthen and guide us in the difficult situations we have to face.

Mary's yes also evidences the virtue of generosity: by agreeing to be the mother of Jesus, Mary gave her entire life to follow God's will.



SLIDE FOUR

The Bible reveals Mary's **generosity** in other ways too. We learn how she travelled a long and difficult journey in the early months of her pregnancy to stay with, and support, her older cousin, Elizabeth, who was also expecting a baby.

We can see an image of Mary's visit to Elizabeth on screen.

Mary's great generosity was motivated by another virtue: her sense of **compassion**.

Q. Can anybody explain what compassion means?

Compassion means identifying with the struggles or suffering of another. It means that we feel for them and as a consequence we are moved to act. Compassion makes us want to reach out and help.



Mary's compassion and generosity show us that the greatest offering we can make, far greater than material gifts or money, is to give ourselves in love and service of God and others.

It's good to ask then; how compassionate and generous are we? Do we go out of our way to help another? Do we freely share our possessions and time to make people's lives better?

The quotation on screen reminds us that when we stay close to God through prayer and by reflecting on God's Word, we, like Mary, become capable of great things. God will give us the courage to step out of our comfort zone in our attempts to make his love known in the world.

SLIDE FIVE

Mary's courage, generosity and compassion were supported by the virtue of **faith**.

The word 'faith' comes from the same origins as the word fidelity, which means commitment. Mary provides a wonderful example of faith because she committed to God's plan, even though she could not fully understand it.

The Bible tells us that Mary pondered the things she couldn't understand 'in her heart.' It tells us, too, that on those occasions when she was confused; such as when her son was rejected and made to suffer, she took time to pray for understanding, reflect and find guidance from the scriptures.

Maybe there is something we struggle to understand. It could be an aspect of our faith or a difficult relationship. Like Mary, let's not ignore it or allow it to overwhelm us, let's do our best to reflect on it, to look for answers, to share our struggle with someone we trust and with God through prayer.



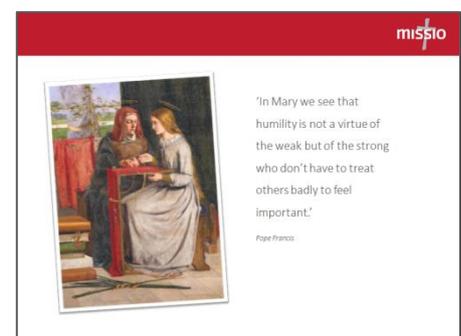
SLIDE SIX

The Bible shows us that in spite of her chosen-ness Mary never became proud or domineering. In this she demonstrates the virtue of **humility**.

Q. Can anyone explain what humility means?

Humility is about believing that we are no better than other people. It is about recognising that we don't have all the answers and so not being ashamed to learn from others and ask for help, as Mary is doing in the image on screen.

Humility is also about never thinking ourselves too important or special to serve others, especially those in need.



It's important to remember that humility **is not** about having a low opinion of ourselves, or appearing weak. On the contrary, the quotation on screen from Pope Francis reminds us that the virtue of humility is an indicator of true inner strength.

'In Mary we see that humility is not a virtue of the weak but of the strong who don't have to treat others badly to feel important.'

Do we have the virtue of humility? Are we okay with not always being right and asking for help? Do we ever think we are too special or important to reach out and help others?

SLIDE SEVEN

Although Mary, as we have heard, is one of the most famous religious women in history, there are very few words of hers recorded in the Bible.

This is a reminder that confident people don't always have to be noisy or talkative, strength can be expressed in silence too.

But of the few words Mary spoke, those recorded in the Gospel of Luke; help us to understand further why Pope Francis believes her to be the model of missionaries.

Let's hear these important words now:

*Mary said "My soul glorifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.
For he has looked upon his servant in her littleness.
From now on all generations will call me blessed.
The Almighty has done great things through me. Holy is His name.
God's mercy extends from age to age, to all who praise him.*

Luke 1:46-55

This reading is known as Mary's Song and within it are two more virtues that help anyone who wants to share God's love. Does anyone have any ideas?

They are **joy** and **gratitude**.

Both are important. Glum and ungrateful people will not convince others that God wants them to be happy and fulfilled.

Mary knew the value of noticing the good in life, even small blessings; appreciating them and thanking God for them. And she knew the value of joy; finding it within herself and sharing it with others, too.



Inspired by Mary, let's ask ourselves:

Are we grateful for the many blessings we have?

Can we think of them now? *Allow a few moments for reflection.*

Do we notice goodness and beauty in the world?

Can we think of anything we have seen today? *Allow a few moments for reflection.*

Are we happy to share God's love with others through acts of generosity and compassion?

How might we do this today? *Allow a few moments for reflection.*

If we do this we allow ourselves to become like Mary, missionaries of love in our own time and place.

SLIDE NINE

As we have heard, Mary was a person of prayer, so let's ask her to join us now as we pray together:

Leader read non-bold text. All read the bold text.

Hail Mary, model of missionaries.

Pray with us for those who suffer,

inspire us to reach out and ease their struggles.

Pray with us for those who rely on our generosity,

help us to share freely.

Pray with us for those who lack humility,

may we learn the value of asking others for help.

Pray for us that we might be

courageous witnesses of your Son's love,

joyfully carrying into this world

Christ's light and hope.

Amen.

