

# Family Faith Formation Study Guide

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## The Virgin Mary and Salvation



This month the children in Family Faith Formation will be studying the Blessed Virgin Mary as an example of discipleship and an important part of our understanding of the humanity and divinity of Christ. The Second Vatican Council addressed the imbalance that inserted itself into Marian Devotion. In *Lumen Gentium*, The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, (Chp. VIII on Our Lady) the Council Fathers reminded us that motherhood of Christ extends from the Annunciation to her time under the cross of her Son. Through her maternal care she cares for the disciples of her Son. She neither adds nor subtracts anything from the salvific work of the Son of God, but as his first disciple she shares in the grace that Christ brought to all of us. In a completely unique way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and charity in the work of her son, our Savior, in restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason, she is a mother to us in the order of grace.

Following up on *Lumen Gentium*, Pope Paul VI wrote *Marialis Cultis*, the Right Ordering and Development of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. He reminded the Church that every element of the Church's prayer life should have a biblical imprint and should be free of pious sentimentality and the temptation to see Mary as more compassionate than her Son. Marian devotion should harmonize with the liturgy and should not be inserted into the Eucharistic celebration. Marian devotions ought to be ecumenically sensitive and point towards Jesus Christ as our sole mediator with God. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin ought to be sensitive to the role of women in the Church and society. Devotion should emphasize Mary's roles as both Mother of God and her son's disciple. Far from being a timidly submissive woman, Mary celebrated the liberation of her people and was brave enough to stand at the cross while others ran.

## Marian Doctrines

**Immaculate Conception:** Refers to the conception of Mary free from original sin. Original sin is humanities' ancient alienation from God and each other. We probably are less aware of original sin than other generations, although the front page of the paper generally remind us of the effects of sin in personal and communal life. The Immaculate Conception is the dogma that God was present and moving in Mary's life from the beginning. God chose Mary and us for the life of grace, a life to be gifted and chosen to be with Jesus.

- What do you think: Can the world save itself or is help from the outside required?

**Incarnation:** God became a man and entered into the sinfulness, alienation and violence of the world. God moves in our lives to drawing us to recognize, welcome and respect life. The human race cannot produce its own savior.

- Do you think people put too much or too little hope in the capacity of politics, economics, war and technology to make the world safe?

**Assumption:** God fulfills his promises to all of us in the assumption of Mary. Jesus 'ascended;' Mary was 'assumed.' The Holy Father's encyclical proclaims that, "The Immaculate Mother of God, the ever-virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory."

- How does your family deal with death? What kind of questions do your children ask? How do you think your families understanding of death affects how they live their life now?

## The Spiritual Life of Mary

Fr. Rosica described Mary's spirituality using the Latin words *fiat*, *maginificat*, *conservabat* and *stabat*. Each word describes an action of Mary in regard to her discipleship. As you try to explain the connection between the Gospel and everyday life, consider how Mary's spiritual life might be an example to you and your family and useful as a common reference point in explaining life to your children.

### 1. Fiat – "let it be done" Lk. 1:34-38

In the beginning of the gospel of Luke, the archangel Gabriel appeared to Mary and proclaimed that she would be the mother of the Christ. Mary was confused.

"But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this

is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God.” Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May (“*fiat*”) it be done to me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her. Lk. 1:34-38

- Your child will not get very far in life unless they learn obedience. First to parents, relatives and teachers. Soon at work, a supervisor or employer will expect that they will follow instructions or find other employment. They ought to learn something about the dignity of obedience in the home otherwise, they might have a long and unhappy life. How do you teach them about the importance and dignity of obedience in this story? Is Mary just a doormat or is something else at play here?

## **2. Magnificat – “magnifies” Lk. 1:46-52**

After the angel appears to Mary, she goes to see Elizabeth, who is carrying John the Baptist in her womb. John leaps in the womb as Mary approaches Elizabeth, her cousin. Then Mary proclaims,

“And Mary said: “My soul (“*magnificat*”) proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid’s lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him. He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. He has thrown down the rulers from their throne but lifted up the lowly...” Lk. 1:46-52

- The Mary who said yes to the angel, now speaks about liberation, the arrogant and the ‘lifting up’ of the lowly. How do you explain faith and injustice to your child when they encounter it at school? How do you speak about injustice and their response, or do they have to learn it on their own? Do believers work for or against injustice?

## **3. Conservabat – “to preserve or conserve” Lk. 2:51**

After the annunciation by Gabriel to Mary, her visit with Elizabeth, the birth of John and Jesus, the visit of the shepherds, the circumcision of Jesus and his presentation in the temple, the prophecies of Simeon and Anna and, having discovered Jesus missing and finding him in the temple, Luke says of Mary, “his mother (“*conservabat*”) kept all these things in her heart. Lk. 2:51

- Mary had to learn hard things about her son. Faith is not an easy road. Believing in God doesn’t remove all the thorns in life. How do you teach your children to think about God in their life? How do you deal with the temptation to act like you don’t believe?

### **Stabat – “was standing” Jn. 19:25-27**

Near the end of John’s gospel, when Jesus is crucified, the focus shifts to two disciples standing at the foot of the cross; the beloved disciple (that is you) and Mary. The ‘beloved disciple,’ traditionally identified as John, is never actually given a name in the gospel. We believe that we were intended to insert ourselves there. John wrote,

“This is what the soldiers did. Standing by (“*stabat*”) the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.” Jn. 19:25-27

- Mary stood faithfully at the foot of the cross How do you teach your children how to deal with frustration and disappointment in life? What role do relationships, family and community play?