

Prayer in Communion with Mary

Two Suggestions to Introduce Children to the Prayer of the Hail Mary and to the Holy Family



Two Suggestions to Introduce Children to the Prayer of the Hail Mary and to the Holy Family

Note: These programs were conducted and proved successful on three occasions.

Note: The Hail Mary is written here in the "you" form; adjust according to the custom in your parish.

Program One: Children (and parents) grades 1 – 3.

Estimated time frame 90 minutes, including a ten-minute snack break.

Preparation:

Space: 1) Tables and chairs. Ideal would be to have round tables or card tables in order for parents and children to be close enough to interact and speak quietly with one other.

2) On tables when families arrive.

A. Coloring picture of the Holy Family and crayons to be shared among families. If possible, the coloring picture could depict Jesus as a child in this age range.

B. Pencils, scotch tape, inexpensive wooden skewers or green pipe cleaners, pre-cut rose petals and leaves (five petals, three leaves, stamen) paper-clipped together in enough bundles for each person (see rose project below). If possible, prepare one sample for each table. Appendix: See pattern for rose petals.

3) On tables optional: Centerpieces or objects of a religious theme that could be a door prize. Note: At one location, statues of the Holy Family and the Madonna and Child were borrowed. At another location, a bouquet of flowers to honor Mary was prepared to take home.

3) A large statue or image of Mary as the central piece around which the children can gather (preferably a Madonna & Child or a Holy Family). If possible, the space around the image could be decorated as a garden. It would be ideal to have statues and/or images that portray cultural diversity as much as possible. One or two children's bibles could also be on display there with pages propped open to the Annunciation and Visitation verses. The "garden" should leave enough space for a child to move close to the foot of the large image.

Atmosphere: 1) If possible have background music (preferably just melodies, not words) of Marian hymns perhaps recognized by the family or familiar to the parish.

Equipment:

- 1) Large screen, laptop, digital projector
- 2) Sound system (depending on size of group)
- 3) CD player or via laptop (see music above)
- 4) See below for various options. It is essential that the film section function flawlessly. For vintage film clips: Family Theater (Father Peyton's Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary)

Welcome Table (registration):

- 1) Usual practice of the respective parish for sign-in.

Additional Props:

- 1) Costumes for three tableaux (simple rectangles of cloth with a hole in the middle will do; see photo below)
 - a. Annunciation: Narrator, Angel, Mary, 5 Shepherds (little choir)
 - b. Visitation: Narrator, Elizabeth, Mary
 - c. Chorus (preferably as shepherds): ca. 5 children who already know the Hail Mary
 - d. Note: To involve as many children as possible, select different angels and Marys for the respective scenes

Additional Gifts:

- 1) [Keep as a little surprise for when the time comes to pray a decade] Inexpensive rosaries for each child. These are usually obtainable from rosary makers. See Internet.

Snack for midway in the program: According the customs of the parish.



Presentation

At the registration table or as families take their places at the tables, instruct the parents to give the child(ren) the coloring page to do while waiting for everyone to have gathered. Parents are to instruct the children about the names of the persons on the page and work with the children to make it as a nice page, which they will take home and put in a place of honor.

Introduction: Preferably Pastor and/or DRE welcome families. DRE or designated person acts as moderator throughout to keep the structure flowing.

Moderator (text to be adjusted and spontaneous as needed):

[Keep in mind that the focus is on children ages 6-9. Use the question format as much as possible to have the children responsive and interactive.]

Has anyone here ever heard of the *Holy* Family? Do we know their names?[J, M, J]

Do we have a statue (picture) of anyone from that family in our parish church?

[What about at home?]

Do you know a story about the Holy Family?

Today, we are going to pretend that we will go on a trip to visit the Holy Family.

Do you know the name of the town where they lived? Let's close our eyes and imagine we are sitting inside a space shuttle that can travel far, far back a long time ago. Keep your eyes closed. Now look inside your heart. (A few seconds of silence). Okay, we landed! You can look now. Let's pretend that we are far away in a town named Nazareth. It looks different than our town! [develop as needed]

Now we are going to watch an old vintage film to learn about a girl living in the town of Nazareth. Mary is her name.

The film: The Family Rosary Crusade/Family Theatre has prepared clips for use with this program. See web address:

Option: Film or PowerPoint or old-fashioned filmstrip. Limit time to max 8-10 min.
[Note: This film should stay within the childhood of Jesus. Do not include the Finding in the Temple. If at all possible the words of the Annunciation and Visitation scenes should be precisely or as close as possible to the words of the Hail Mary prayer.]

Just after the film, thank the children for watching. Briefly ask children to share what they saw. For the little ones, it is not necessary to develop this further.

At this point, ask for some volunteer third grade children who would be willing to be actors after the break. The parent should accompany the child who would like to have a part. Caution: In one parish where this program was produced, although the children were 3rd graders, the reading level

was insufficient for the text. Be sure that the children can read. Have a parent listen to a reading at least once before the performance.

Then announce the break. During the break with family assistance, quickly prepare the three tableaux (see below).

Break – according to parish custom [juice and ? etc.]

Moderator gathers group:

Now, do we know who the Holy Family is – can we say their names? Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

Wouldn't it be fun to have them as neighbors? – to visit them every day? – to play with little Jesus?

Weeeelll, there is a way that we CAN visit them every day. We call it *prayer*!

Can someone show me how you pray? (Call for a couple of responses)

Wonderful! But now before we talk about praying to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, we are going to learn some words of the bible. Who knows what the bible is?

[Demonstrate using the a bible and, if possible, an example of a children's bible with pictures, but be brief. It is enough to say:]

This is where the stories about God and his favorite people are written down.

We have some volunteers who will help us remember some very special words from the bible.

[As quickly and smoothly as possible and with parental assistance to whisper words the children might stumble over...]

Tableau One – Annunciation: Reader, Mary, Angel, Shepherd Choir

[Luke 1: 26-38 – Interpreted for children]

[See attached script from which the children will read]

Reader: [T]he angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee named Nazareth. He came to visit a girl who was engaged to a man named Joseph. Joseph's great, great, great... grandfather was David. The girl's name was Mary. When the angel found Mary he said:

Angel: Hail Mary, full of grace! The Lord is with you!

[Mary should be acting like she is worried and a little bit afraid.]

Reader: Mary was very worried by the angel's words. She wondered what they meant. The angel told her:

Angel: Don't be afraid, Mary. God loves you very much. He would like you to be a mother and have a baby boy. You should name him Jesus. He will be very great and wonderful. He will be called the Son of the Most High [God]. The Lord God will make a king like David his great, great, great grandfather. He will be king forever and his kingdom will have no end.

Reader: Mary asked the angel:

Mary: How can this happen? I am not married yet.

Angel: The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. The baby will be called the Son of God. Just so you know this is true, your old relative Elizabeth is going to have a baby, too. She was too old to have a baby, but now she is six months pregnant. Nothing is impossible with God.

Reader: Mary said:

Mary: I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say.

Reader: With that the angel left her.

Moderator: Did you hear the angel say some very familiar words? Let's have our shepherd choir repeat them!

[The little choir comes forward and repeats the Hail Mary sentence.]

Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with you!

[For more specific response, divide the words among the shepherds: 1) Hail Mary / 2) full of grace / 3) The Lord is with you]

Moderator: [Then have all the children echo it together.]

Now we have another tableau from the bible.

Tableau Two – Visitation: Reader, Elizabeth, Mary [To give more children a chance to have a part, it would be best to have a new reader and new Mary.] [Luke 1: 39 – 49, 56 Interpreted for children]

Reader: After the angel left Mary, she got ready as fast as she could to go help her relative Elizabeth. Elizabeth lived far away in hill country of Judah.

[Note: If at all possible the reader should look up and not be reading this next part from the bible.]

It was a long hard trip about 70 miles away. The roads were only dirt trails and there were lots of big rocks and thorny bushes. It was very dangerous to go up to the hills in Judah. [see alternative *]

When Mary got to Elizabeth's house she called out to find her and to say hello. When Elizabeth heard Mary's voice, the baby inside Elizabeth jumped for joy. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and cried out in a loud voice:

[* alternative: It's important, for the parents especially, to note that the sentence about the 70 miles, etc. is *not* in the bible, but is a tradition assumed by the geography of the Holy Land. It might be necessary that the moderator inserts clarification on that part.]

Elizabeth: Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me? The moment your greeting sounded in my ears, the baby inside me jump for joy! Blest are you, Mary, because you trusted that the Lord's words to you would be fulfilled.

Reader: Then Mary sang a song with these words:

Mary: My being proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit finds joy in God my savior, for he has looked upon his servant in her littleness; all ages to come will call me blessed. God who is mighty has done great things for me. Holy is his name.

Reader: Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then returned home.

Moderator: Let's ask our shepherds to tell us some of Elizabeth's words again.
[The little choir comes forward and calls out:]

Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb!

Moderator: Can everyone repeat it? [repeat].
Now you have learned some very, very important and beautiful words from the bible. Let's listen to our shepherds put them together.

Choir: Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb!

Moderator: And who is that? Who was Elizabeth talking about when she said "fruit of your womb? Who was Mary's baby? [JESUS!] [Now ask everyone to say the first part of the Hail Mary with the word Jesus at the end.]

Now we know where that wonderful prayer comes from. The first part of the Hail Mary prayer comes from the bible!!!

For hundreds of years, Christians have praised Mary and thanked her for saying yes to be the Mother of Jesus. They wrote songs with those words to praise her! They say over and over again: Blessed are you!!! Blessed are you!

[Note: It is sometimes difficult to explain to little children what “blessed” means. For this age, it is good for the children to note that being blessed is wonderful and good and happy.]

Now we are going to give you a present and tell you about another prayer that is a whole bunch of Hail Mary’s: [Show a rosary and have someone pass them out. This is usually somewhat chaotic because the children love to select their favorite color. Try not to squelch the enthusiasm.]

Let’s pretend that you like someone a lot.

Let’s say that Ann likes Thomas very much, but she is shy. She doesn’t say she likes Tom, but she does nice things for him. She smiles at him and looks at him. Tom, on the other hand likes Ann a lot, but he is not shy. He tells her over and over: I like you. I like you... I like you a lot! He keeps on going and maybe says other nice thing to her. Maybe he even says: I love you!

Now, I have a question for you! Would Ann ever get tired of hearing those beautiful words over and over again?

[STOP!]

Like I told you already: Over the long history of our holy Catholic Church, people began to tell Mary over and over how much they loved her! They figured out that Mary would love to hear those beautiful words from the angel and from her relative again. In fact, she would never get tired of hearing them!

And that is how the Hail Mary AND THE ROSARY became a very special prayer to Mary! When we say those words over and over again, we remember Mary’s story and we praise her. We are telling her how much we love her and Jesus and all the other people in the story of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. When I say the Hail Mary prayer, I listen inside my heart and talk to Mary. I can do that every day! Every time I say those words I am visiting Mary and Jesus.

Let’s ask our shepherds to help us once more to say those precious words from the bible. [Repeat first part of the Hail Mary.]

[By now, everyone should have their rosary.]

Moderator: As time went on, people started to ask Mary for help. It’s like when you go visit your relatives. Don’t you talk to everybody in the house? People would visit Jesus in the

church. They would listen to him teach them. They tried to understand what he meant when he talked to them through the words of the bible. But sometimes, they would [so-to-say go in the kitchen and] ask Mary what Jesus meant. They would ask Mary to help them understand Jesus and to do what Jesus asked them to do. That is how the second part of the Hail Mary prayer got invented. The people would ask Mary to PRAY for them!

Let's have our parents say those words of the second half of the Hail Mary prayer:

Parents: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.
Amen.

[Note: For adults or older children, much more should be added here as to why we say "Holy" Mary and "Mother of God." However, for little ones It shouldn't be attempted here. It is enough to simply learn this part unless a question would come up. Briefly, this refers to the early discussion of the Church on whether Jesus was just a man or just a god. How could he be both! At a great council in the city of Ephesus in 431 A.D., the Fathers of the Church began to explain that Jesus was both God and man. It is through the virgin birth of Jesus from Mary that we know Jesus became a man. Later, his Resurrection proved that he was God. See reference note.^{1]}

Moderator: [Use the PowerPoint slide once as for this. When you begin to talk about the rosary, these few slides might be helpful and once again focus the attention of the children.]

Now you have a rosary. How many of you already have a rosary? For some of you, it's your very first rosary. And for others? [First Communion, etc?] Maybe someday you will have an even more beautiful rosary.

Rosary PowerPoint:

Slide 1: Title: The Rosary: A Garland of Roses for Mary [statue is a copy of the one in St. Teresa of Lisieux's bedroom as a child. When she was ill, she saw Mary smile. This statue has since been titled Our Lady of the Smile.

Slide 2: Roses are a beautiful creation of God. Wild roses grow in bushes out along the hedgerows of farmers' fields. Most of the wild roses are pink and have a wonderful fragrance. A long time ago, monks in monasteries learned how to tame the wild rose and make it perfect for decorating the church. Over time, roses of all colors became a favorite flower to give Mary. [For example: red for love, yellow for joy, white for purity]

The rose has come to be a sign of special love.

Slide 3: When we say the Hail Mary, it's like giving Mary a rose. [Painting: ??

Slide 4: Rose → Roses bundled together → ro sa ry

Slide 5: When we say the Hail Mary over and over we call this a rosary.

Slide 6: When we pray the rosary, we are giving Mary a crown or garland of roses.

Slide 7: Let's make Mary a special rose today!

Project [time permitting] Each family receives five petals, three leaves, a skewer or green pipe cleaner, (optional) a yellow stamen for the center, scotch tape, pencils or markers (crayons are too thick). Parents take the lead on helping the child to think of things to tell Mary.

Moderator: On each petal, write one thing for which we can thank or praise Mary.

Ideas: Thank you, Mary, for saying yes to the angel.

 Thank you, Mary, for bringing Baby Jesus to us.

 Thank you, Mary, for helping Elizabeth.

 Thank you, Mary, for going to Bethlehem with Joseph.

 Thank you, Mary, for taking care of your home.

 For cooking for your family,

 for making clothes for Jesus and Joseph,

 for welcoming Jesus' friends,

 for helping my family to love Jesus very much.



Demonstrate –

Moderator: Parents, please write the word faith on one leaf and briefly explain what faith means to your children]. Repeat for hope and for love.

Two alternative endings:

Small group: When the rose is finished, and the group is small enough, put the rose in the garden by the big Mary statue. Then stand (or sit) around the garden and pray the decade of the Annunciation. Children then pick up their own rose to take home.

Large group: When the rose is finished, pray the decade of the Annunciation.

Moderator:

Now we praise God for Mary: Everyone prays the Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be forever and ever. Amen

[Note: Count on the parents to join in the Glory Be prayer. Be demonstrative for the sake of the little children! Perhaps raise up our arms wide open to show praise.]

[NOTE: To stress all three persons of the Holy Family, this mention of Joseph, the foster father of Jesus, and Mary's husband can be included, perhaps mostly for the inspiration and sake of the fathers who have attended.

Moderator: Now dear parents, you who have shown so much care and love by being here today, allow me to speak precisely you!

When we began our program today, we asked the children if they knew who the Holy Family was. We told Mary's story, but Joseph is an essential part of Mary and Jesus' story. Joseph faithfully and lovingly took care of Mary and Baby Jesus. Mary was never abandoned and alone! Joseph stood by Mary and believed in her.

Mary and Joseph loved each other with all their hearts. That's why Catholics love Joseph, too! And, that's what it means to be a HOLY FAMILY.

Dear Children, Mary is like your mom; Joseph is like your dad; Jesus is like your very best brother. Maybe someday you will grow up to be part of a Holy Family, too! Pray the Hail Mary prayer every day so that your family will be a holy family.

CONCLUSION

[You may want to add acknowledgements and thank yous, especially to the children who volunteered for the tableaux – have them take a bow.]

Final Note to Catechists:

Since images are important teaching tools, every child ought to have a picture (or statue) of the Holy Family or a Madonna and Child image of their own – perhaps honored in their bedroom. It is important to show Mary in relationship with others, especially with Jesus. It could be an additional gift for the children to give them such a little picture (often called holy cards) at the end of this program.

Program Two: Children (and parents) grades 4 – 6 or 7.

Estimated time frame 90-120 minutes, including a ten-minute snack break.

Preparation:

Space: 1) Tables and chairs. Ideal would be to have round tables or card tables in order for parents and children to be close enough to interact and speak quietly with one other.

2) On tables when families arrive.

A. For this age group, have a puzzle or word search. Two suggestions:

- a. The Mary Page resources for children has a coloring book with various puzzles. Page 9 is geared to the Holy Family. These resources are free to download. Title: Mary, Mother and Believer.
[campus.udayton.edu/mary/resources/pages/page9_gif.htm]
- b. Create your own word search of relevant words from this presentation. There are free tools on the web that will make a puzzle of the words you submit.
- c. Note: Answer sheets are not available for either suggestion. Please provide your own.

B. Pencils, markers.

C. On tables optional: Centerpieces or objects of a religious theme that could be a door prize. Note: At one location, statues of the Holy Family and the Madonna and Child were borrowed. At another location, a bouquet of flowers to honor Mary was prepared to take home.

3) A large statue or image of Mary as the central piece around which the children can gather (preferably a Madonna & Child or a Holy Family). If possible, the space around the image could be decorated as a garden. It would be ideal to have statues and/or images that portray cultural diversity as much as possible. One or two children's bibles could also be on display there with pages propped open to the Annunciation and Visitation verses. The "garden" should leave enough space for a child to move close to the foot of the large image.

Atmosphere: If possible have background music (preferably just melodies, not words) of Marian hymns perhaps recognized by the family or familiar to the parish.

Equipment:

- Large screen, laptop, digital projector
- Sound system (depending on size of group)
- CD player or via laptop (see music above)
- Two large sheets of paper on easel or white board and markers. Two volunteers to alternately write down children's answers.
- See below for various options. It is essential that the film section function flawlessly. For vintage film clips: Family Theater (Father Peyton's Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary)

Welcome Table (registration):

Usual practice of the respective parish for sign-in.

Additional Props:

Costumes for three tableaux (simple rectangles of cloth with a hole in the middle will do; see photo below

- e. Annunciation: Narrator, Angel, Mary, 5 Shepherds (little choir)
- f. Visitation: Narrator, Elizabeth, Mary
- g. Wedding Feast of Cana: Narrator, wedding couple and some of their friends, a servant, Mary, Jesus and some of his friends, six big water jugs, some rustic cups to simulate wine mugs
- h. Note: To involve as many children as possible, select different angels and Marys for the respective scenes

Additional Gifts:

- 2) [Keep as a little surprise for when the time comes to pray a decade] Inexpensive rosaries for each child. These are usually obtainable from rosary makers. See Internet.

Snack for midway in the program: According the customs of the parish.

Presentation (estimated for two hours or less)

Introduction: Preferably Pastor and/or DRE welcome families. DRE or alternating moderators take the lead in keeping the structure flowing.

Lead instructor or moderators (adjust and be spontaneous as needed):

[Keep in mind that the focus is on children ages 10-12-13. It is recommended to use the question format to have the children as responsive and interactive. However, if the group has a tendency to make quips, *tell* the story rather than use a question format.]

Speaker: Has anyone here ever heard of the Holy Family?
Let's see what we know about this family.

[Elicit a variety of answers from the children: Names of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph; relatives Elizabeth, Zachariah, and John, towns and countries where they lived: Nazareth, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Israel, Egypt. What Joseph and Jesus did for a living, etc. As the children answer, the volunteers alternately write down the answers on sheets or white board.]

[Note: If military families are present, you could emphasize the many places where the Holy Family lived or traveled in reference to the experience of military families.]

It turns out that we know quite a bit about this family, don't we? But have we ever really met them and talked to them? [Solicit responses if appropriate]

Let's imagine that we really could travel back a long time ago. In school or on TV we learn about how people lived back then. Can you tell me some ways that were different back then? [Solicit responses]

Today, we are here to expand and understand something we already know. We are going to think about what it means to say the Hail Mary prayer. Most of you already know this wonderful prayer by heart. But do you know where the words of the Hail Mary come from?

Let's watch a vintage film and see if we can learn a little bit more about this prayer and about Mary, the wife and mother in this Holy Family. This is a very old film, but a truly precious classic. We will watch a short clip; then we will discuss it. After that, we will watch a second clip.

Film: Show Annunciation clip.

Moderator: Can you tell us what Mary asked the angel? What was his answer? What did Mary say next? [Affirm the answers – if the children did not mention the part about Elizabeth, then introduce and/or develop this aspect – that Mary immediately got ready to take this long and difficult journey to help her relative. This will be developed further after the break.]

After film, time for a snack/break (or according parish custom).

NOTE: Just prior to the break ask for volunteers/actors for the tableaux below. Caution: In one parish where this program was produced, although the children were 4th and 5th graders, the reading level was insufficient for the text. Be sure that the children can read. Have a parent listen to a reading at least once before the performance.

[These tableaux are most effective with costumes. However, if time is an issue, volunteer readers are sufficient.]

Tableau One – Annunciation: Reader, Mary, Angel, Little Choir of 3 or 4 dressed as shepherds.

[Luke 1: 26-38 – Interpreted for children]

Reader: [T]he angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee named Nazareth. He came to visit a girl who was engaged to a man named Joseph. Joseph's great, great, great... grandfather was David. The girl's name was Mary. When the angel found Mary he said:

Angel: Hail Mary, full of grace! The Lord is with you.

Reader: Mary was very worried by the angel's words. She wondered what they meant. The angel told her:

Angel: Don't be afraid, Mary. God loves you very much. He would like you to be a mother and have a baby boy. You should name him Jesus. He will be very great and wonderful. He will be called the Son of the Most High [God]. The Lord God will make a king like David his great, great, great grandfather. He will be king forever and his kingdom will have no end.

Reader: Mary asked the angel:

Mary: How can this happen? I am not married yet.

Angel: The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. The baby will be called the Son of God. Just so you know this is true, your old relative Elizabeth is going to have a baby, too. She was too old to have a baby, but now she is six months pregnant. Nothing is impossible with God.

Reader: Mary said:

Mary: I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say.

Reader: With that the angel left her.

Thank and acknowledge actors/readers.

Moderator: Did you hear the angel say some very familiar words? Let's have our shepherd choir repeat them!

[The little choir comes forward and repeats the Hail Mary sentence.]

Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with you.

[Have all the children echo it together.]

Moderator: [Note: Have the volunteers write these answers (as single words) on the white board/paper. This visually strengthens the answers and children this age range are usually proud to have their word written down.]

- 1) Can anyone describe what "full of grace" means? [filled with divine life]
- 2) When we say "the Lord" who do we mean? [God is with you!]

Moderator: Now we have another tableau from the bible.

Tableau Two – Visitation: Reader, Elizabeth, Mary [It would give more children a chance to participate if a new reader and new Mary played these parts.]

Reader: After the angel left Mary, she got ready as fast as she could to go help her relative Elizabeth. Elizabeth lived far away in hill country of Judah. [Note: the reader should look up and not be reading this next part from the bible.] It was a long hard trip about 70 miles away. The roads were only dirt trails

and there were lots of big rocks and thorny bushes. It was very dangerous to go up to the hills in Judah. [Alternative *]When Mary got to Elizabeth's house she called out to find her and to say hello. When Elizabeth heard Mary's voice, the baby inside Elizabeth jumped for joy. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and cried out in a loud voice:

[* alternative: It's important, for the parents especially, to note that the sentence about the 70 miles, etc. is *not* in the bible, but is a tradition assumed by the geography of the Holy Land. It might be necessary that the speaker inserts that part.]

Elizabeth: Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me? The moment your greeting sounded in my ears, the baby inside me jump for joy! Blest are you, Mary, because you trusted that the Lord's words to you would be fulfilled.

Reader: Then Mary sang this song:

Mary: My being proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit finds joy in God my savior, for he has looked upon his servant in her littleness; all ages to come will call me blessed. God who is mighty has done great things for me. Holy is his name.

Reader: Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then returned home.

Moderator: Let's ask our shepherd choir to tell us some of Elizabeth's words again.
[The little choir comes forward and calls out:]

Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb!

Everyone repeat it! [repeat].

Now you have learned some very important and beautiful words from the bible.
Let's listen to our shepherds put all the sentences together.

Choir: Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb!

Moderator: - Who knows what "blessed" means? [Or] What does Elizabeth mean when she calls Mary blessed?
- What does "fruit of your womb mean? [Caution! Be sensitive to your parish/families. Today, children generally know that "womb" is the word for carrying an unborn baby. But this may need to either be explained or dropped.]
- And who was Mary's baby? [JESUS!] [Now ask everyone to say the first part of the Hail Mary with the word Jesus at the end.]

For hundreds of years, Christians would praise Mary and thank her for saying yes to be the Mother of Jesus. They would write songs with those words to praise her! They would say over and over again: Blessed are you!!! Blessed are you!
When Catholic and Orthodox Christians said those words, they were talking to Mary! They were with her, in communion with her!

Now we are going to give you a present and tell you about another prayer: [Show rosaries and start to pass them out]

Speaker: Now we know a whole lot more about the Holy Family, don't we! I'll tell you a secret! When I was a little girl growing up with my little sister in Michigan, we would take long walks in the woods. We loved it. We would pretend that we were Native Americans who lived a long time ago. Some of our neighbors were from different countries and some were from the Chippewa and Ojibway tribes. We would make believe that we were settlers from France or Canada who were coming to live on our farm. We figured out that the hardest thing about being a settler was getting to know our neighbors. How should we talk to them? How should we introduce ourselves? Would they want to play with us? Would they like us? Has anyone here ever moved to a different town or neighborhood? Was it easy? Was it hard to get to know the strangers? [Optional: Let's have one boy and one girl tell us about how they got to know their new neighbors.] [Be careful that this doesn't drag out.]

Now let's pretend that we are moving to Nazareth and we want to meet the family next door. The man is a carpenter and is teaching his son how to make beautiful things out of wood for his home and family. The mother is a weaver of cloth. She takes wool and makes beautiful yarn out of it. Then she weaves it on a loom to make wonderful cloth for the family's clothes and blankets. The boy seems so very friendly and kind. It must be very nice to know him. Yes, we would really like to meet them. [Be dramatic here so that children notice!] Then suddenly we wake up. Our imaginations seemed so real. My sister and I realize we are only pretending. My little sister started to cry. She wanted to meet this beautiful family so bad it hurt in her heart. So, she ran to our mother and told her the whole story.

Guess what our mother did?! She stopped her work and sat down with us outside on the doorstep. Then she told us we really could meet this family. She said that we Catholics have a very special way to meet Jesus. We pray! We talk to him and we listen very hard inside our minds and hearts.

Every time we go to Mass we learn that this is what Jesus himself taught us to do. Yes, *Jesus* taught us how to pray! Who can help me out here and explain that? [Try to lead the older to tell what prayer it was that Jesus taught us. Lead to the *Our Father*]

Let's pray that prayer together: Our Father, who are in heaven... (All)

Jesus taught us that prayer is real! The Father in Heaven really hears us talking to him. He really listens and cuddles us close to his heart. Sometimes we talk to our Father in Heaven and to Jesus and we ask them to help us. Or we ask them: What is the right thing to do. If we are quiet in our hearts we usually know what the right thing to do is. Our parents and grandparents taught us to know right from wrong, but we also learn what is

right or wrong by praying! As we grow up and make our own decisions it is really important to know how to pray!

We can talk to our Father in Heaven and to Jesus about everything going on in our daily life! That is so, so wonderful. Prayer can truly be wonderful if we put our mind and heart to it! In our Catholic Church we have the greatest prayer of all: The Holy Mass! We come together once a week and we pray. We listen to Jesus teach us. We pray the Our Father prayer together. Most of all, we go to communion. [Hopefully, you have all received your First Communion with Jesus.]

Who can tell us what communion is?

[For catechist preparation and reflection, see CCC below.]²

PowerPoint: Communion of Saints – Prayer in Communion with Mary [For involvement, perhaps each slide could be read by a different child.]

- Slide 1: Look at the word. Now split it apart. Com = with / union = together
- Slide 2: Communion means to be together with someone or with many others.
- Slide 3: Communion also means to *belong* to someone. We belong to Jesus. We belong to our holy Catholic Church.
- Slide 4: What is the very most important and wonderful communion for us Catholics?
- Slide 5: To receive Jesus in Holy Communion! (Eucharist) We are so close to Jesus that he is inside of us! When we receive him in Holy Communion, we must remember to welcome him and talk to him and tell him how grateful we are that he came to us so we can be filled with his grace and gifts of love.
- Slide 6: It is really important for us to share communion with Jesus – to be together with him and to belong to him. Our Father in Heaven and Jesus are the ones who love us most of all.
- Slide 7: Think about it! Jesus loves his mother. He loves Joseph, his foster father. He loves each and every one of us! Now what does Jesus want in return? He wants us to love like he does.
- Slide 8: Jesus wants us to love Mary, his mother. Jesus is delighted when you visit her and talk to her. Jesus wants us to love Joseph and all the saints. And, Jesus wants us to love each other – just like he loves! – not just once in a while, but all the time.

Moderator: We are going to have one more tableau from the bible. This tableau shows us one way that Jesus loves his mother very much.

Tableau: The Wedding Feast of Cana

[Cast: Narrator, wedding couple and some of their friends, a servant, Mary, Jesus and some of his friends]

[Props: Six big water jugs, some rustic cups to simulate wine mugs, simple costumes]

Narrator: Jesus is God! He comes to us in Holy Communion. He listens to our prayers, heals our sicknesses, teaches us how to live a good life. But Jesus belongs to a family and he has many friends. He likes it very much if we also get to know his family, his mother and all their friends. Let's watch this tableau and see what we can learn:

John 2 [interpreted for children of the middle grades]

Reader: There was a wedding at Cana in Galilee.

[The wedding couple comes in; there are other people; they mime that they are congratulating the couple and having a happy time – adapt!]

And the mother of Jesus was there.

[Mary comes in; she goes a congratulates the couple and greets friends]

Jesus and his disciples had likewise been invited to the celebration.

[Jesus and disciples come in; they do what Mary had done.]

At a certain point the wine ran out, and Jesus' mother told him:

Mary: They have no more wine.

Jesus: Woman, how does this concern of yours involve me? My hour has not yet come.

Reader: Jesus' mother turned to the servant who was waiting on table and told him:

Mary: Do whatever he tells you.

Reader: As prescribed for Jewish ceremonial washings, there were six big stone jars nearby, each one holding fifteen to twenty-five gallons.

Jesus: Fill those jars with water. [The friends pretend to fill the jars.] Now pour some out and take it to the waiter in charge.

Reader: They did what Jesus told them to do. The waiter in charge tasted the water made wine, without knowing where it came from; only the friends knew, since they had drawn the water. Then the waiter in charge called the groom over and said to him:

Waiter: People usually serve the choice wine first; then when guests have been drinking awhile, a lesser kind. What you have done is keep the best wine until now.

Reader: Jesus performed this first of his signs in Cana of Galilee. This is how he revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

Narrator: [Settle children down] Who asked Jesus for help? [Mary] Let's think about it! Ever since the wedding at Cana, people have been telling Mary about their problems and asking for her help. Mary keeps her eyes on things. She knows when help is needed. She even comes down to earth once in a while to tell people about Jesus and to invite them to pray. Mary lives WITH us. *Mary lives in communion with us.*

Moderator: [Begin PowerPoint on Apparitions, Mary Visits Us – adapted for children]

One way that Mary actually shows her communion with us is through apparitions. Who has heard of apparitions? Can anyone tell me about one apparition? [Hispanic population may know of Our Lady of Guadalupe.] [At this point, show pictures of apparitions, but keep it very brief.] Very often when she comes, she asks us to pray a certain *special* prayer. By now you probably know what that prayer is since you each have one

[rosary]

Let's look at a few more slides.

Narrator: Slide 1: Title: The Rosary: A Garland of Roses for Mary [statue is a copy of the one in St. Teresa of Liseaux's bedroom as a child. When she was ill, she saw Mary smile. This statue has since been titled Our Lady of the Smile.
Slide 2: Roses are a beautiful creation of God. Wild roses grow in bushes out along the hedgerows of farmers' fields. Most of the wild roses are pink and have a wonderful fragrance. A long time ago, monks in monasteries learned how to tame the wild rose and make it perfect for decorating the church. Over time, roses of all colors became a favorite flower to give Mary. [For example: red for love, yellow for joy, white for purity]
The rose has come to be a sign of special love.
Slide 3: When we say the Hail Mary, it's like giving Mary a rose. [Painting: ??]
Slide 4: Rose → Roses bundled together → ro sa ry
Slide 5: When we say the Hail Mary over and over we call this a rosary.
Slide 6: When we pray the rosary, we are giving Mary a crown or garland of roses.

Moderator Let's pretend that you like someone a lot.
[Note: If there is a young engaged couple that could help here, it would be ideal to have them mime this part.]

Let's say that Joann likes John very much, but she is shy. She doesn't say she likes John, but she does nice things for him. She smiles at him and looks at him. John, on the other hand likes Ann a lot, but he is not shy. He tells her over and over: I like you. I like you... I like a lot! He keeps on going and maybe says other nice thing to her. Maybe he even says: I love you! Now, I have a question for you! Would Joann ever get tired of hearing those beautiful words over and over again?
[STOP!]

Like I told you already: Over the long history of our holy Catholic Church, people began to tell Mary over and over how much they loved her! They figured out that Mary would love to hear those beautiful words from the angel and her relative again. In fact, she would never get tired of hearing them!

And that is how the Hail Mary AND THE ROSARY became a very special prayers to Mary! When we say those words over and over again, we remember that Mary's story comes from the bible and we praise her. We are telling her how much we love her and Jesus and all the other people in the story of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

When I say the Hail Mary prayer, I listen inside my heart and talk to Mary. I can do that every day! Every time I say the words I am visiting Mary and Jesus.

Narrator: As time went on, people started to ask Mary for help. It's like when you go visit your relatives. Don't you talk to everybody in the house? People would visit Jesus in the church. They would listen to him teach them. They tried to understand what he meant when he talked to them through the words of the bible. But sometimes, they would [so-to-say go to the kitchen and] ask Mary what Jesus meant. They would ask Mary to help them understand Jesus and to do what Jesus asked them to do. That is how the second part of the Hail Mary prayer got invented. The people would ask Mary to PRAY for them!

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen. Will you say them with me?

[Note: For adults or older children, much more could be added here as to why we say "Holy" Mary and "Mother of God." It shouldn't be attempted here. It is enough to simply learn this part unless a question would come up. Briefly, this refers to the early discussion of the Church on whether Jesus was just a man or just a god. How could he be both! At a great council in the city of Ephesus in 431 A.D., the Fathers of the Church began to explain that Jesus was both God and man. It is through the virgin birth of Jesus from Mary that we know Jesus became a man. Later, his resurrection proved that he was God. See endnotes.]³

Moderator: Now you have a rosary. Some of you already have a rosary. You might have gotten it for your First Holy Communion. Maybe someday you will have an even more beautiful rosary. I know people who hang their rosary on the bed post so that they can say a decade before they fall asleep. Some of you might not like to say the rosary. Maybe it would help you to think about mysteries, the stories about Jesus and Mary. These stories we call mysteries they are so exciting and wonderful. Sometimes we don't understand everything that's happening, but as time goes on we will understand more and more.

Moderator: Our family day has come to an end.

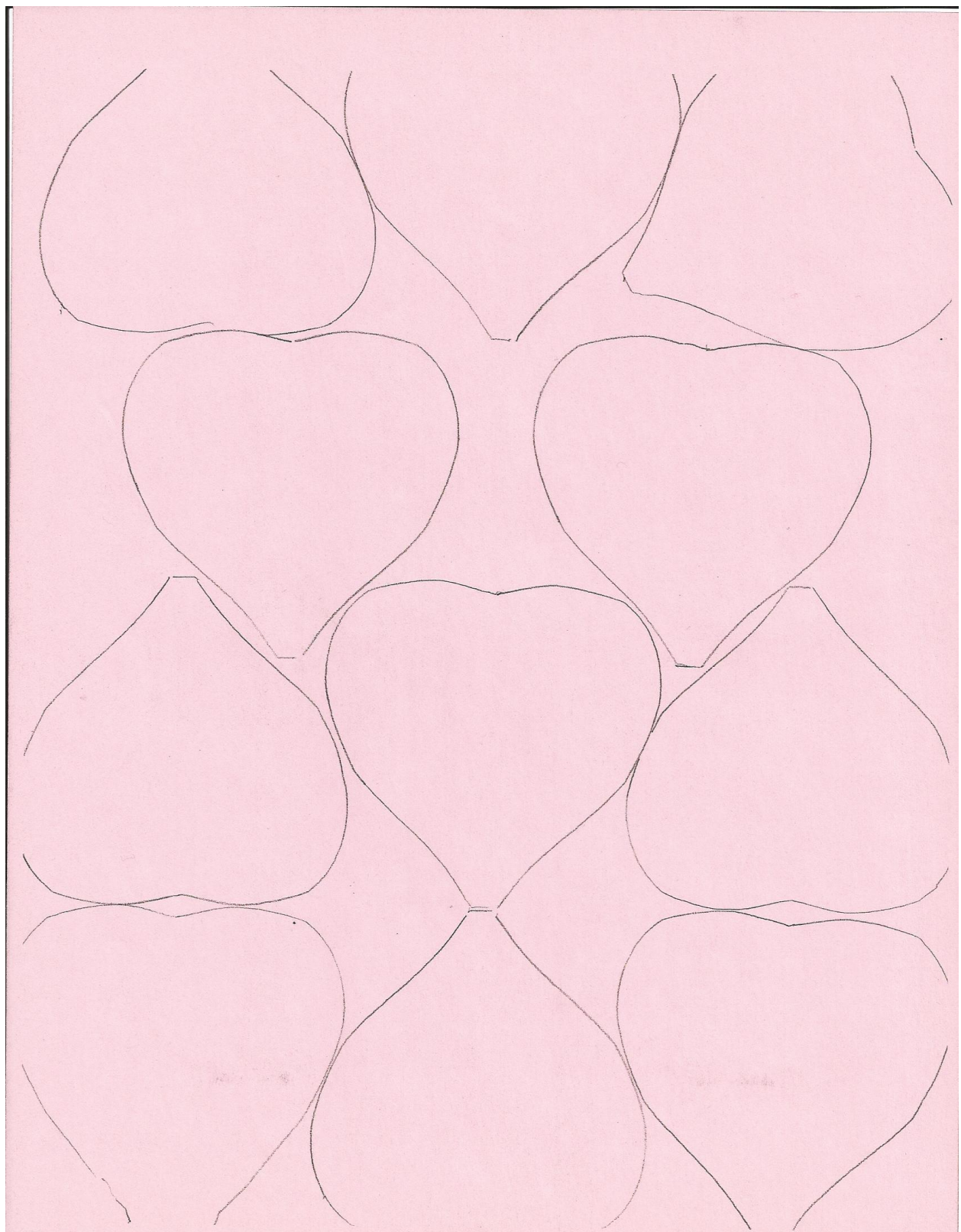
[Appropriate acknowledgments for actors, parents, helpers, etc.]
Before we go, there is one more thing to do. [If possible] Let's gather around our Mary Garden and prayer one decade of the rosary. [Chose one of the mysteries talked about: The Annunciation, The Visitation, or the Wedding Feast of Cana.





Rose Petals





¹ **Cyril of Alexandria:** "If we are to confess that Emmanuel is truly God, we must also confess that the Holy Virgin is Theotokos (Mother of God); for she bore according to the flesh the Word of God made flesh." At Ephesus, in 431 A.D the divine motherhood was defined in defense of the divinity of the Son of Mary. The title, "Mother of God" became a permanent part of the creeds and liturgies of the entire Church. 106. Christ is at the center of our faith; but He did not come among men without the Theotokos. Nor is He in glory now without His Mother, Theotokos still. [

² **Communion in the sense of Holy Communion – Eucharist**

Communion of the Lord's body and blood. **1097, 1382, 1384 - 1390**

³ **Quotes from the Catechism of the Catholic Church:**

Mary's importance lies in her relation to Christ: Jesus Christ is "born of a woman" (Gal 4,4). Mary is this woman (Read article 422 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC]). Jesus Christ was born a Jew of a "maid of Israel" (read CCC 423). Jesus Christ is "true God and true Man" (Read CCC 471-483). Mary is true Mother of God (Theotokos) according to his humanity. Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and was born of the Virgin Mary (Read CCC 484-512). Mary is all-holy and sinless (Immaculate Conception). She is the virginal mother (Ever-Virgin).