

# ST. MARY

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## CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Copies of the downloadable “622 service” and “Prayers & Thanksgivings” booklets
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader's notes
- OPTIONAL: Bibles (ESV or similar recommended)
- OPTIONAL: A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- OPTIONAL: Have notebooks on hand for teens to take home and use as prayer journals if they wish

## ICE BREAKER: SUPER-SIZE SKITS

In groups of two to four, ask your teens to come up with a brief skit about ordering food in a fast food restaurant. Most fast food chains tell their staff to suggest that customers increase their order by “upsizing” or adding French fries. Have your teens create skits where the staff try to persuade customers to make a healthier choice instead. Encourage them to be creative and have fun with it. Provide a few minutes for the teams to come up with their skit and then perform for one another.

## 622: BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Begin the formal part of the lesson by saying together the first part of the order for service for young people in the booklet, up to the middle of page 4.

AT THIS POINT IN THE LESSON, ASK IF THE TEENS SUCCEEDED IN DOING LAST WEEK'S CHALLENGE, HOW IT WENT, AND WHETHER THEY HAVE ANYTHING TO SHARE.

## DISCUSSION: WHO IS “NUDGING” YOU?

As an introduction to the lesson ask the teens to discuss the following questions.

DEPENDING ON THE COMFORT LEVEL FOR SHARING IN YOUR GROUP, IT MAY BE EASIER TO HAVE THEM VOLUNTEER ANSWERS WITH ALL RESPONSES WRITTEN TOGETHER ON A BOARD.

- List some different people and groups that would like to influence your choices. How do they try to do that?
- What motivates the people and groups that want to influence you? (For example, what is their ultimate goal?)

*A few things worth pointing out (if they don't otherwise arise during the discussion):*

- *We often think of peer pressure as an important source of influence for teens, but may overlook the companies that spend millions of dollars trying to market in a way that makes peer pressure work to their advantage. Advertising is just the tip of the iceberg. Point of purchase suggestions are one obvious way that stores try to get us to add to our orders. Governments also form policy with the intention of “nudging” our behaviour. For example, printing large graphic warnings on cigarette packaging is intended to discourage smoking.*
- *In some cases those seeking to influence us are interested in our wellbeing, but more often they are concerned with their own corporate profit or larger societal goals (which we may or may not agree with). It's worth pausing to ask ourselves who is seeking to influence our habits, behaviours and choices – and why – before allowing ourselves to be “nudged”.*

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## THE LESSON: JOHN 2

The first part of the lesson (below) can be read aloud. Then the teens are asked to read the Bible text (either silently to themselves or aloud together), followed by some additional questions for discussion.

St. Mary was very young when an angel appeared to her and told her she was to become pregnant by the Holy Spirit and give birth to Jesus, the promised Messiah. She was frightened, but her response was that of trusting obedience: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word” (Luke 1:38).

Scripture is filled with both positive and negative examples for us. Remember Adam and Eve? Their circumstances were idyllic and they were given just one rule, but they were persuaded to set aside obedience – with disastrous consequences. St. Mary and her fiancé St. Joseph did just the opposite. In challenging circumstances, they trusted in God and followed where he led.

Living in faithful obedience to God is rarely easy! In fact, often the “nudgers”, “persuaders” and “influencers” of our world are pointing us in the opposite direction. But this is when we must set our sights on better role models, like St. Mary, who understood firsthand the goodness, power and trustworthiness of God.

The Gospel of St. John tells us about Jesus’ first miracle at a wedding in a place called Cana. St. Mary was there. As we read the Gospel account, pay special attention to the way in which she points to Jesus, and the words, “Do whatever *he* tells you”.

Refer to John 2:1-11.

(THE TEXT IS PROVIDED ON THE BACK OF THE HANDOUTS AND IN THESE LEADERS’ NOTES SO THAT EVERYONE CAN MARK IT UP AND MAKE NOTES ON IT IF DESIRED. ALTERNATIVELY, YOU CAN READ OUT OF A BIBLE).

Read through the text. Then ask the teens to respond to what they’ve just read. Here are some questions to help guide the discussion.

- Why do you think St. Mary brought the wine problem to Jesus? Why do you think Jesus responded as he did?
- What was the result of this “sign”?
- What do you think this experience would have been like for the servants?
- What can we learn from this text?

*A few notes and reflections for reference:*

- *John’s Gospel tells us that this is the first “sign” Jesus performed. St. Mary may not have been expecting Jesus to perform a miracle, but was totally confident that he could solve the problem. Jesus’ way of addressing his mother – with the word “woman” – may sound odd to us today, but it was actually an address of respect. However, Jesus needed to remind his mother that there was a timetable set out by God the Father to which he needed to be obedient. It is similar to what he said as a child when his parents lost sight of him, and then found him teaching in the temple. In that situation, he said to them, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (Luke 2:49). It’s worth noting here that St. Mary was human, like us, and had a limited knowledge of God’s plan, but her faith prompted her to bring her concerns to Jesus.*
- *St. John’s Gospel refers to the miracles of Christ as “signs” because they were not ends in and of themselves, but pointed to something greater. “It may be said that each miracle displays some special ‘rays’ of our Lord’s glory” (W.H. Griffith Thomas). In verse 11, St. John specifically writes that this sign “manifested his glory” with the result that “his disciples believed in him”.*

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- *The situation – running out of wine at a wedding – must have been a crisis for the servants. And this crisis was beyond their ability or their master’s ability to fix in the moment. Yet into this situation comes St. Mary, a guest to the festivities, taking charge and pointing to Jesus, the one she knew could make things right. We can only guess at the thoughts and feelings of the servants, but we know that they did heed St. Mary’s instructions by doing everything Jesus said. Because they obeyed him, the servants got a front-row seat to a miracle.*
- *Firstly, we need to heed St. Mary’s words ourselves, by doing whatever Jesus tells us. If we do, then we too may get a front-row seat to watch him at work in the world around us. Secondly, like St. Mary, we should think about how we can point others to Jesus.*

DURING EACH LESSON, IF THE TEENS RAISE THEOLOGICAL OR BIBLICAL QUESTIONS THAT YOU DON’T FEEL CONFIDENT ABOUT ANSWERING, SAY SO, BUT LET THEM KNOW THAT YOU’LL FIND THE ANSWER AND RESPOND AT THE NEXT MEETING.

## PREVIEW: AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Take a brief moment to look at the at-home challenge together.

THE WEEKLY “AT-HOME CHALLENGE” IS TYPICALLY A SIMPLE ASSIGNMENT TO SPEND SOME QUIET TIME IN PRIVATE PRAYER. ENCOURAGE THE TEENS TO GET NOTEBOOKS THAT CAN BE USED AS PRAYER JOURNALS. ASSURE THEM THAT THEY WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO SHOW THEIR JOURNAL OR THEIR PRIVATE PRAYERS TO ANYONE.

**Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.**

(IF YOU DON’T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE “FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES”, WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON’T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer).)

Spend some time reflecting on the words “Do whatever he tells you”, listening for God’s direction. Taking St. Mary as a role model, spend some time asking God to show you how *your* life – your words and actions – can point to Jesus more.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through one or both of the following collects.

*O God Most High, who didst endue with wonderful virtue and grace the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of our Lord: Grant that we, who now call her blessed, may be made very members of the heavenly family of him who was pleased to be called the first-born among many brethren; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.* (SUPPLEMENTARY COLLECT OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, PAGE 309)

*O God Most High, who from the family of thy servant David didst raise up Joseph the carpenter to be protector of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of our Lord: Grant that we may so labour in our earthly vocations, that they may become labours of love and service offered unto thee, our Father; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.* (SUPPLEMENTARY COLLECT OF JOSEPH OF NAZARETH, PAGE 319)

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## CLOSING PRAYERS (622 AGAIN)

Close with any prayers that might be appropriate in the context of the discussion of the day.

AT THE END OF EACH LESSON, IF YOU FIND THAT YOU STILL HAVE LOTS OF TIME REMAINING, YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO TAKE SOME TIME TO EXPLORE THE "PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS" SECTION IN THE BCP (PAGES 39-62, OR YOU CAN USE THE DOWNLOADABLE BOOKLET). AS YOUR GROUP MEMBERS COME ACROSS PRAYERS THAT THEY FIND RELEVANT, PAUSE AND PRAY THEM TOGETHER. IF YOU'RE PRESSED FOR TIME, YOU MIGHT CLOSE WITH THE THEMED PRAYER FROM THE AT-HOME CHALLENGE.

Then finish with the "Grace", the final prayer in the booklet.

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### JOHN 2: **DO WHATEVER HE TELLS YOU**

<sup>1</sup>On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. <sup>2</sup>Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. <sup>3</sup>When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." <sup>4</sup>And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." <sup>5</sup>His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

<sup>6</sup>Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. <sup>7</sup>Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. <sup>8</sup>And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it. <sup>9</sup>When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom <sup>10</sup>and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now." <sup>11</sup>This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.