

Leader's Guide for
MARY: AN INTRODUCTION
We Learn from Mary: The Cloak of Many Colors

Mary helps us learn about God's love for us. We honor Mary and the way she lived. Through the delightful image of her Cloak of Many Colors, we are introduced to Mary as a girl, woman, mother, disciple and companion who hears and brings God's word to others.

How did Mary get her Cloak of Many Colors? How have we become a part of this cloak? These two questions challenge us as we respond with our students to this video. In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* we read: "In her [Mary] we contemplate what the Church already is in her mystery on her own 'pilgrimage of faith'" (972). With Mary and her cloak, may we warm our hearts and earth together on our faith walk.

1. What do you know about Mary? What image or word comes to mind when her name is said? Put responses on newsprint. What is your personal image of Mary? How does the image of Mary in the Gospels compare with the personal image of her you have had since your childhood?
2. Divide class into six groups and assign one of the happenings to each: "Yes" (Annunciation: Luke 1:26-38); Thanks (Visitation: Luke 1:39-56); Joy (Birth: Luke 2:4-19); Trust (Presentation in the Temple: Luke 2:22-39); Worry (Finding in the Temple: Luke 2:41-51); Faith (Wedding at Cana: John 2:1-12); Love (Death: John 19:25-27). Discuss. Pantomime the situations. Write prayer responses similar to those in the video. Choose one color and design words that express the event. In a ceremony, make Mary's Cloak of Many Colors.
3. Complete this phrase: "*If Mary was alive today...*" by making a collage from different magazine pictures.
4. St. Ambrose stated: "As Mother of God, Mary is a model of the Church and an excellent example of faith and charity." Talk about other models in your life, who, like Mary, listened to the Word of God and lived that word.
5. Recall past and present events in your life of "Yes," Thanks, Joy, Trust, Faith, Love. For each event try to recall the cause, the people present, what was said or done. How long did this feeling last? Note similarities in group experiences. Relate to Mary.
6. Choose three events in the life of Mary and make a triptych.

7. Visit your church and notice where Mary is depicted in stained glass windows, Stations of the Cross, statues, paintings, hymns. How do these speak to you of Mary?
8. Read the *Juggler of Our Lady*. Talk about gifts. With Mary, remember our common mother, the earth. Choose a way to express reverence and respect to creation.
9. Compose a group litany to Mary of your own experiences, e.g. "Mary, peaceful one, help us to stop quarreling."
10. Invite students to make their own booklet about Mary using Scripture, pictures, prayers, drawings, songs, stories and their own thoughts and ideas. Design a cover. Write and illustrate prayers. Describe Mary as in the opening of the video. Choose a title you would give to Mary. Share completed booklets.

Leader's Guide written by: Gaynell Cronin

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For use with:

We Learn From Mary: The Cloak of Many Colors on VHS (K1001) and *Mary: An Introduction* on DVD (D2309)

St. Anthony Messenger Press

28 W. Liberty St.

Cincinnati, OH 45202-6498

800-488-0488

www.AmericanCatholic.org

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We Pray With Mary: The Cloak of Many Colors

Mary's cloak of many colors—warm, protecting, comforting, sheltering patches of different colors and shapes—speaks of her life and ours too. Through the delightful image of a cloak we are introduced to the way Mary prayed and how we pray with her today.

1. What do you know and feel about Mary and how Christians honor her? List on a chalkboard. Name Mary's prayers that you know.
2. Mary is known by many titles and attributes. Have students discover some of these attributes in the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Ask them to compose their own litany to Mary and pray it in class.
3. Thomas Merton says that to love Mary and know her is to discover the true meaning of everything for, in her, Christ can be heard, and the voice of God becomes an experience. Divide the class into groups. Assign to each group a line from Mary's Magnificat. Through pictures have them show the meaning of this line.

Consider the meaning this Canticle of Praise has for us today. Ask: What great things has God done for you? Write and pray your own hymn of praise with tambourines. Listen to a sung version of this thank you of Mary. Teach motions for each line for a body prayer.

4. Learn the Hail Mary by heart. Reflect on the meaning of each line. Look up in Scripture the greetings of the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:28) and Elizabeth (Luke 1:42). Say the prayer together for the sick or a specific need in your family, class or community.
5. In the pastoral, *Behold Your Mother*, the U.S. bishops encourage creative freedom in adapting the rosary to pastoral needs and suggest that new sets of mysteries are possible.

In addition to the traditional mysteries, have students name other events in the life of Mary and Jesus and how they touch their lives today.

Review with students how to pray the rosary. Make a living rosary where each student speaks one of the prayers.

6. Invite students to pray the Angelus at breakfast, lunch and supper or to simply say the Hail Mary before each meal.

Seventy-six times during the Church year we celebrate Mary. Have students recall from the video one of these days and when and why it was celebrated. Ask them to choose a sign that would represent this day. Give special emphasis to those feasts celebrated by various ethnic groups. Plan to celebrate these days of Mary whenever you can.

Being a mother and needing mothering changes with each season of our lives. Think of your own mother or someone who cares for you. Write a note thanking that person for being in your life. Also thank Mary, as your mother, for her presence in your life. What note do you think Jesus would write to Mary?

7. Create a Marian shrine in your classroom with a picture, statue or icon of Mary. Include whatever is meaningful for the class—flowers, candle, holy water, incense. Hold a May crowning. Name some shrines to Mary. Share a book about Mary's appearances at Fatima or Lourdes, or the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe.
8. Visit and explore a church for signs of the importance of Mary. Ask where Mary's name is carved or printed, where there are pictures or statues of Mary, stained glass windows, Stations of the Cross or anything showing that Mary is respected and loved. If you could add something to the church as a sign of your appreciation for Mary, what would it be and where would you place it?

Ask students to name some churches and shrines in honor of Mary. Have students discover classmates' names and names of well-known places that are derived from Mary.

9. Introduce students, through your parish hymnal, to some traditional and contemporary hymns written in honor of Mary, or bring music for listening.
10. Bring in some postcard-size reproductions of some of the masterpiece paintings of Mary. Distribute and have students consider what the artist is saying about Mary in that picture. Do the same for sculpture pieces.

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For use with: *We Pray With Mary: The Cloak of Many Colors* on VHS (K2309) and *Mary: An Introduction* on DVD (D2309)

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Cincinnati, OH 45202-6498
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Leader's Guide for
MARY: AN INTRODUCTION
Our Lady of Guadalupe: A Story of Faith...and Liberation
and
Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe

Theological Orientation

"We expose ourselves to poor people's faith so that we can share something common to us all and equip ourselves better for the battle against the powers who keep poor people poor." —Harvey Cox

What is the significance of the Guadalupe event for 20th century American Christians? What is the "something common to all of us" in the appearance of a beautiful lady to an illiterate Mexican Indian almost 500 years ago?

It is too easy to ascribe the tremendous power of the Guadalupe image among Latin Americans to a kind of naive piety. The proliferation of that image in everything from wall hangings to plastic decals does not cheapen it; instead, it bears mute testimony to the significance of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

That significance cannot be removed from its historical context. When we really look, we see that Guadalupe is less a crude image of religious fervor than a powerful symbol of liberation, the liberation which is at the root of our Christian belief. In a very real sense, the event was an explosion into the consciousness of the New World of God's plan of salvation.

Just as Jesus was incarnated among an oppressed people, bringing to them and to the world God's message of care and liberation, so the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared to one of the lowest of the low—an Indian peasant named Juan Diego, whose country was but 10 years under the yoke of the Spanish conquistadores, and whose own people had been slaves for centuries before that. Her message was not what would be expected by the powerful, convinced that God was on their side. She did not say to Juan Diego, "Be still. Submit to your betters." She did not speak of heavenly rewards to make up for a life of miserable poverty. The Lady of Guadalupe came to Juan Diego in the humble dress of his own people. Her message was simple: "Build my church here."

That message is the element common to all of us. It is, simply, an echo of the words of Jesus: "The kingdom of heaven is in your midst." In the midst of the poor, the suffering, the oppressed, the simple, the broken—that is where the Church must be built and must continue to dwell.

It is a radical message, a message of hope. And it is an affirmation of the guiding belief of the

theology of liberation—that a loving God interferes in human history, interposes himself in human life on the side of the oppressed, the weak, the “anawim” or little ones. And he chooses to act in clear and unmistakable ways. The message came to the oppressed Mexicans in their language, gently, embodied in the form of a woman who stressed both a mother’s compassionate strength and the fertility symbolized by roses in the desert.

It is important to note that the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, which was imprinted on Juan Diego’s tilma, is wearing the black band which symbolized pregnancy among the Indians. Certainly, the Guadalupe event was the birth of the gospel of hope in the New World. The church built on Tepeyac hill might well be considered the first church of the Americas, since it stands as testimony to a faith which embraces all of God’s “little ones.”

It is a birth, an embrace, which we must continue to participate in. We must examine very carefully where we build our church (both literally and symbolically). We must be certain that we reach out in love to break the bonds of misery which shackle our brothers and sisters. It is too easy to forge those bonds through our ignorance and unconcern.

The Virgin of Guadalupe did not confine her care to Juan Diego, to his family or his people. She is the patroness of all the Americas, of all of us in our ongoing struggle to overcome “the powers who keep poor people poor.” In a world grown too complex for miracles, each one of us must carry the message of Tepeyac. We must cultivate the rose of hope and freedom in the desert of oppression.

Media Orientation/Storyline

This is a very simple film, based on a very simple story.

On December 9, 1531, 10 years after the Spanish conquest of Mexico, a Mexican Indian named Juan Diego saw a “beautiful lady” standing on the deserted hillside of Tepeyac. The lady called him by name, referred to herself as the Queen of Heaven, and entrusted the astounded young man with a message for his bishop: the bishop was to build her a church.

Juan Diego went immediately to Bishop Zumarraga, the Spanish Franciscan who had spiritual charge of the area. At first the bishop was doubtful. It was not uncommon for the uneducated peasants to superimpose the images of the new religion over their memories of the old, and the hill of Tepeyac had for many centuries been sacred to an Aztec goddess. Indeed, Juan Diego’s description of the beautiful lady sounded far more like an Indian woman than the glorious Mother of God. Thinking to dismiss Juan Diego, the bishop asked for a sign.

Three days later he received it. Juan Diego returned to the bishop, his tilma (the loose, woven garment worn by the Indians) full of perfect roses. This seemed miracle enough in a land where scrub oak and mesquite were the most common plant life, but there was more. Across the front of the tilma

was displayed the image of a beautiful woman, dressed in the clothes of a peasant and wearing the black band which denoted pregnancy among the Indians, her hands folded in prayer and her feet resting on a crescent moon.

These are the bare bones of the story, conveyed in this film with a kind of quiet dignity. There are few cinematic images in the film—the stark Mexican landscape, the contrast between the luxurious quarters (for that age) of the conquering Spaniards and the poverty of the oppressed. The characters are almost legendary: the simple peasant whose shuffling gait is the legacy of centuries of slavery, the proud Spanish governor who fears those he must rule, the noble bishop who must walk a thin line between his authoritative role and his concern for God’s children.

The best way to present this film is as a straightforward dramatic narrative. You can enhance the experience for those viewing the film if you make sure that all video equipment is in good working condition, and that the place where you are showing the film is dark, quiet and well-ventilated.

Suggested Procedure

1. Divide the class into groups of three or four. Ask the groups to imagine that they have been sent to announce that God’s Kingdom has arrived. Let the groups discuss the following points:
 - Who would they bring the message to? How would they do it?
 - What is God’s Kingdom? How will its coming change the world?
2. After a short time, end the discussion. Ask the groups to remember the ideas they came up with.
3. Let someone read Matthew 18:1-4 (“you must become like children”) and then Revelation 12:1-2.
4. Show the video program.
5. Spend a few moments sharing the ideas from the small groups and relating them to the video. Use the suggested Discussion Questions to enlarge the area of the discussion.
6. Work together (either in the small groups or as a class) to discover one or two concrete ways in which the message of Guadalupe could be communicated today.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared to Juan Diego, rather than to the bishop? Why did the bishop’s assistant find it difficult to believe Juan Diego? What was it about the whole experience which seemed to threaten the Spanish governor?
2. How is Juan Diego similar to other people who have communicated God’s message? Who are the “Juan Diegos” of our world today?

3. What forces in today's society continue to lay a cross on the shoulders of the poor? What does it do to people when they are put down and oppressed?
4. With whom do you identify most in the story? If you were given a similar message today, would you believe it? How does God communicate today?
5. What does this story tell us about where the Church should be present in today's society?
6. What qualities can we find in "folk religion" or "ethnic religion" which can help us become more in touch with our own humanity?

Other Uses and Activities

1. Use the film as part of a celebration of the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, December 12. If you live in an area where there are many Spanish speaking people, you might attend an authentic Guadalupe celebration (there are special dances, food, decorations). Or you may wish to create your own Guadalupe Day celebration, basing it around the message of God's liberating love which is characterized in the readings for December 12.
2. Many Latin American homes feature wall hangings depicting the Virgin of Guadalupe. Make a wall hanging for your classroom or church, basing it on the original design and adding elements which are characteristic of your community. You can use any materials, from cloth scraps to mosaic.
3. Show the film as part of a celebration of the ethnic traditions present in your parish or community. Invite families or groups to display their own religious folk art, share special songs and dances, have a potluck of special foods.
4. Invite a speaker to talk to the class about the ways in which the Church today works with the oppressed people of the world. Missionary groups working in Latin America, Asia and Africa can share their work in helping people gain physical as well as spiritual liberation, or you can contact some of the many Church-related groups working to end hunger and oppression.

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