

“The Tender Way of Mary” A Witness to the Dignity of Life
Virtual Retreat Meditation Guide

For each life topic of Mary’s Tender Way there is a section listed below which you can use as you reflect during this Virtual Retreat. There will be a section for (a)scripture contemplation, (b)meditation on our Blessed Mother’s thoughts and (c)reflection on the current life issues. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you as you consider these topics and their influence in our daily lives and world. It will be helpful to have your bible with you if you want to read the entire reading from Scripture.

1. TRUST IN GOD

a. **Lectio Divina:** Read the Gospel **Luke 1: 26-38** You are encouraged to read it several times, aloud or silently as it connects to your heart. Take your time to reflect and pray on a verse, phrase or word that you are drawn to. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you make this scripture part of your life.

b. **Mary:** Mary was willing to say yes to God. What have I said YES to our Lord about, and did I/do I trust like Mary that God is with me in that yes? Our Lady of Life, show me your tender way.

c. **Reflection:** Is there anything in my life that hinders me from trusting God, from trusting others? Ask our Lord to show you how to trust.

2. POVERTY AND LOVE OF NEIGHBOR

a. **Lectio Divina:** Read the Gospel **Luke 1: 39-56** You are encouraged to read it several times, aloud or silently as it connects to your heart. Take your time to reflect and pray on a verse, phrase or word that you are drawn to. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you make this scripture part of your life.

b. **Mary:** Mary put the needs of Elizabeth before her own comfort and needs. When have I been willing to be a “Mary” for another person, and did that experience change me? Mary, Blessed Virgin, show me your tender way.

c. **Reflection:** Who is God calling me to reach out to in their need: a person I may know or an organization that has outreach to people I may be unfamiliar with? What could my involvement be? What hinders me from giving of myself? Ask our Lord to show you how to love those who are in need. .

3. SANCTITY OF LIFE

a. **Lectio Divina:** Read the Gospel **Luke 2: 1-20.** You are encouraged to read it several times, aloud or silently as it connects to your heart. Take your time to reflect and pray on a verse, phrase or word that you are drawn to. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you make this scripture part of your life.

- b. **Mary:** Mary understood the sacredness of the gift of life in any and all circumstances. Are there beliefs that I hold on to that do not recognize or value the sanctity of every person's life? Blessed Mother, show me your tender way.
- c. **Reflection:** I am created in the "image and likeness" of God and how can I help myself believe this or others to see a broader way of thinking in recognizing the dignity of every human person and that all life is holy and everyone has the right to life? Ask our Lord to show you the image of God in each person you encounter.

4. ELDERLY/END OF LIFE

- a. **Lectio Divina:** Read the Gospel **Luke 2: 22-35** You are encouraged to read it several times, aloud or silently as it connects to your heart. Take your time to reflect and pray on a verse, phrase or word that you are drawn to. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you make this scripture part of your life.
- b. **Mary:** Mary was amazed at the wisdom and sincerity of this older man, Simeon, as he gazed upon her baby. Have you felt the same as you look upon those younger than you, recognizing them for the beauty and hope they bring into the world? Can you see them as God sees them? Do you see God at work in them? Mother of Wisdom, show me your tender way.
- c. **Reflection:** Am I fully present to those in my life that are older or may be near their time of death? Do I see the face of Christ in them and are they able to see the face of Jesus in me? If not, how can I facilitate that transformation of hearts? Am I patient with them as they wait upon the Lord? Ask our Lord to give you the grace to see Him in all people, and for them to see Him in you and your life.

5. IMMIGRATION

- a. **Lectio Divina:** Read the Gospel **Matthew 2: 13-15** You are encouraged to read it several times, aloud or silently as it connects to your heart. Take your time to reflect and pray on a verse, phrase or word that you are drawn to. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you make this scripture part of your life.
- b. **Mary:** Mary knew what it meant to take drastic measures to protect the family and fleeing in the middle of the night was needed. Imagine if your family needed to leave quickly from your home? What would you do? How would you cope? What would you take and how do you explain it to your children? Our Lady of Guadalupe, show me your tender way.
- c. **Reflection:** How can I as an individual welcome the stranger among us? How would I feel if I had fled to another country to seek refuge and was accepted and shown respect? What if I was treated harshly without compassion or caring? Where would I find Jesus? Ask our Lord to give you the insight and compassion to be prayerfully accepting and loving of all travelers and seekers of hope.

6. HUMAN TRAFFICKING

- a. **Lectio Divina:** Read the Gospel **Luke 2: 41-53** You are encouraged to read it several times, aloud or silently as it connects to your heart. Take your time to reflect and pray on a verse, phrase or word that you are drawn to. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you make this scripture part of your life.
- b. **Mary:** Mary's motherly love turns to looking everywhere for her missing child. Have you ever experienced the feeling of a child or loved one being lost, or maybe you were lost? What about the child who is left alone? What runs through your mind, through their mind? In the middle of the fear and panic do we call out to God and what do you say? Mary, Helper of all in danger, show me your tender way.
- c. **Reflection:** What do I know about the trafficking of human beings around the world? Am I aware of any signs of human trafficking in my own community? Have I done anything to try to correct the problem, even to learn more about it? How can I help others when they are robbed of their dignity and rights? Ask our Lord to help you with insight and discernment in these difficult situations.

7. RACISM

- a. **Lectio Divina:** Read the Gospel **John 1: 43-46** You are encouraged to read it several times, aloud or silently as it connects to your heart. Take your time to reflect and pray on a verse, phrase or word that you are drawn to. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you make this scripture part of your life.
- b. **Mary:** Mary knew and saw prejudice and hatred yet she did not allow that to be a part of her. How can I learn from Mary and look to Jesus for healing and strength in the face of such anger and painful acts of injustice and racist ideals? Mary would never accept or tolerate these, do I? She saw her son reach out and love, do I? Mother of Divine Grace, show me your tender way.
- c. **Reflection:** Our world, our country is bombarded with images of racist and prejudicial acts and assumptions through the media and often we may hear it in our daily conversations. Have I ever seen someone's dignity be undermined by others through their actions and words? Have I seen violence inflicted on another because of their race or culture? Have I experienced this violence in my own life? How do I help others heal and how can I stop discrimination from taking place? Am I in need of healing? Ask our Lord to help you understand injustice in all of its forms, hidden and obvious so that you may transform your heart and others as He did.

8. MENTAL HEALTH

- a. **Lectio Divina:** Read the Gospel **Luke 2: 1-11** You are encouraged to read it several times, aloud or silently as it connects to your heart. Take your time to reflect

and pray on a verse, phrase or word that you are drawn to. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you make this scripture part of your life.

b. **Mary:** Our Blessed Mother saw a concern, and she took that concern to her Son and completely trusted his ability to handle and care for the matter. Have people ever asked me to help them? Have I intervened on their behalf? Did I understand what was happening and the consequences of what could occur if it were left to continue like Mary did? Have I ever gone to Mary to ask her to help me with a concern? Imagine as she whispers your name and needs into her Son's ear. Mary, Consoler of the Afflicted, show me your tender way.

c. **Reflection:** So many people in our world today need a listening presence, a patient friendship, and an understanding heart who will intercede on their behalf when needed. Have I ever needed someone to pray for me or to listen to my worries? Do I know anyone that may be misunderstood or is struggling with a physical or emotional or mental health concern? Have I had these concerns and did someone give me that acceptance and love? How can I become more open to being able to affirm another person's dignity and self assurance? Ask our Lord to give you a heart of compassion and attentiveness.

9. DISABILITY

a. **Lectio Divina:** Read the Gospel **Matthew 12: 9-12** You are encouraged to read it several times, aloud or silently as it connects to your heart. Take your time to reflect and pray on a verse, phrase or word that you are drawn to. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you make this scripture part of your life.

b. **Mary:** Why would praying for and healing a person ever be questioned? Mary gives insight on the dignity of every person, with or without a disability or any kind of challenge. She points to how Jesus looks to the person, an ideal of creation and loves. Do I follow the tender way of Mary in recognizing the wholeness of each person I meet? Do I respect and treat them equally? What are my challenges in life? Have others treated me differently because I may have challenges or disabilities? How do I treat others? What kind of language do I use when speaking with or about a person with disabilities? Mary, Mother of the Church, show me your tender way.

c. **Reflection:** Jesus heals from within the person. He accepts and loves and his heart is moved with compassion in another's need. Am I able to say the same? How completely am I able to love another person, with or without disabilities? Do I make a stand for the rights of my brothers and sisters with disabilities? Do I understand what those rights are and how important it is for everyone to have a voice and be heard? Ask our Lord to show you if there are any areas in your life that need to be healed and that you may be given/strengthened in the wisdom to treat all people as children of God, and to see the dignity of life in each person.

10. DIGNITY OF LIFE

a. **Lectio Divina:** Read the Gospel **Matthew 5: 3-12** You are encouraged to read it several times, aloud or silently as it connects to your heart. Take your time to reflect and pray on a verse, phrase or word that you are drawn to. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you make this scripture part of your life.

b. **Mary:** Mary sees how Jesus looks at every moment in life as a prayer. Am I able to see that in my own life? Do I pray without ceasing as our Blessed Mother? Do I see the dignity of my life? Is there dignity in what I may be experiencing at this very moment and if not, how can that dignity be found and returned? Our Lady, Queen of All Saints, show me your tender way.

c. **Reflection:** St. John Paul II tells us we need to celebrate life, and God is the giver of that life. How do I celebrate and respect life? Do I consider all life holy and blessed? Do I reverence life at all stages? Ask our Lord to instill in you a heart felt wonder and awe of the blessings of each moment and each life.

11. VIOLENCE

a. **Lectio Divina:** Read the Gospel **Matthew 26: 47-56** You are encouraged to read it several times, aloud or silently as it connects to your heart. Take your time to reflect and pray on a verse, phrase or word that you are drawn to. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you make this scripture part of your life.

b. **Mary:** Mary had seen all kinds of violence and lived through the horror of violent and torturous acts inflicted upon her Son. The violence of that night in the garden was masked in a sign of friendship and greeting. How and why do people turn on another human being? How do I respond in the face of blatant violence? What do I say and do? Have I ever been a victim of an act of violence, whether it be a person or group of persons known or unknown to me? How did that shape me? Mary, Queen of Peace, show me your tender way.

c. **Reflection:** Is violence becoming commonplace in our culture and media? Is it a learned behavior? How can I help our society overcome its tendency towards violence? What makes it seem contagious? As a Christian how do I stand for moral truth and become a peacemaker instead of a peace-taker? Ask our Lord to give you the courage to be a witness to life's dignity and to end the violent behavior, actions and rhetoric.

12. DEATH PENALTY

a. **Lectio Divina:** Read the Gospel **Mark 14: 53-65** You are encouraged to read it several times, aloud or silently as it connects to your heart. Take your time to reflect and pray on a verse, phrase or word that you are drawn to. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you make this scripture part of your life.

b. **Mary:** Mary watched as her Son was accused, tried and convicted and sentenced to death. Have I tried and convicted others in my thoughts and in these thoughts decided

their guilt and then acted upon it by treating them less than a human? Have I ever experienced this towards me? Mary, you witnessed violence escalate through fear, anger and turn into condemnation. Yet Jesus' mercy and love never were put to death. Can I extend that loving forgiveness to others? Our Lady, Refuge of Sinners, show me your tender way.

c. **Reflection:** Taking the life of another human being is not life-giving. It obliterates another person's dignity. Do I see other people, no matter what they have done or are believed to have done, as a sum of their behaviors, or do I see them as a child of God and deserving of worth and compassion? Do I recognize life from the moment of conception to a natural death? Ask our Lord to help you in your journey to be a witness to the dignity of everyone's life.

13. SUFFERING

a. **Lectio Divina:** Read the Gospel **Mark 15: 21** You are encouraged to read it several times, aloud or silently as it connects to your heart. Take your time to reflect and pray on a verse, phrase or word that you are drawn to. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you make this scripture part of your life.

b. **Mary:** Mary, you saw Simon get pulled from the crowd to keep Jesus moving. How did that make you feel? Jesus was always ready to help others during his life but now everyone was too afraid to even act like they knew him. Have I been hesitant to offer aid or show respect for another person in need for fear of what others might think of me? Why? Jesus was suffering and even in those final moments to be able to help carry his cross to relieve even a bit of the pain would have been some relief for Him. Is it hard for me to watch someone suffer, let alone join them in that suffering? Our Lady of Perpetual Help, show me your tender way.

c. **Reflection:** Do I see my own suffering, or that of others, as being united to the suffering of Jesus through his passion and death? How can I be a presence to others in their time of need? Is it hard for me to ask for another person to journey with me in my suffering? Am I willing to open myself up to someone's compassion? How do I move from suffering to suffering in union with Jesus, redemptive suffering? Ask our Lord to show you how to see and experience suffering in prayer, as an offering, in unity with him at his greatest moments of trial.

14. ADOPTION

a. **Lectio Divina:** Read the Gospel **John 19: 26-27** You are encouraged to read it several times, aloud or silently as it connects to your heart. Take your time to reflect and pray on a verse, phrase or word that you are drawn to. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you make this scripture part of your life.

b. **Mary:** Jesus cared for his mother and in his dying moments made sure that she would be taken care of. Mary's well-being was on his mind, but also our well-being and

he gave Mary to the world as our mother -being placed in the home of another to be loved and safe. Have I experienced complete acceptance like that? Have I welcomed others into my home/life and considered them as family? Do I put the needs of others as important as my own? Our Lady of Bethlehem, show me your tender way.

c. **Reflection:** Adoption is an act of love and selflessness. This difficult decision requires one to be looking into the future to see what is best and to seek holiness and life for another. How can I personally live out this kind of selfless love, and also to encourage it in others? Ask our Lord to bless you with the gift of sacrificial love.

15. GRIEF

a. **Lectio Divina:** Read the Gospel **Luke 23: 50-56** You are encouraged to read it several times, aloud or silently as it connects to your heart. Take your time to reflect and pray on a verse, phrase or word that you are drawn to. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you make this scripture part of your life.

b. **Mary:** Mary was grieving the loss of her only child. She was confused and sorrow filled her soul. She didn't know what the future would bring. What are some of the losses that I am grieving - loss of a loved one, loss of a marriage, loss of a job or home, loss of a friendship or companionship? Mary knows about grief and the sense of insecurity and fear that surrounds and overshadows the sorrow. Where do I find consolation in my grief? Our Lady of Sorrows, show me your tender way.

c. **Reflection:** There is no timetable for grief. It does not pay attention to calendars or clocks, because it can appear at any time. However it does pay attention to love, support, mercy, and community. When I know others have suffered a loss, what are some ways I have reached out to show mercy and care? How have others shown that to me? How does my Church family support me and others in our grieving processes? Do I know where I can go to get grief support or who I can ask about it? Ask our Lord to comfort you and those you know who are grieving, and ask to be open to being able to help others in their need.

16. SANCTITY OF LIFE

a. **Lectio Divina:** Read the Gospel **Mark 16: 9-11** You are encouraged to read it several times, aloud or silently as it connects to your heart. Take your time to reflect and pray on a verse, phrase or word that you are drawn to. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you make this scripture part of your life.

b. **Mary:** Mary had to be elated to hear Jesus had risen from the dead! God is ever loving and merciful and his resurrection shows that there is more to life after our physical death. Life is indeed sacred. How do I show my belief in the sanctity of life? Do I strive for holiness? Do I lead others in holiness? Can I have the complete trust in God's plan like Mary did, even when I don't know the end of the story? Mary, Cause of our Salvation, show me your tender way.

c. **Reflection:** From conception to natural death, we know that life is sacred and holy. Jesus becoming human shows the sanctity of each of our lives, regardless of our circumstances, race, culture, abilities or religion. We are all made in God's image and likeness. What does that mean to me? We all seek to have our rights be safeguarded and respected, but am I willing to stand for the right to life in its completeness? Ask our Lord to show you the ways in which He calls you to holiness and to His heart of compassion.

17. EVANGELIZATION, WITNESS TO LIFE

a. **Lectio Divina:** Read **Acts 1: 13-14, 2: 1-4** You are encouraged to read it several times, aloud or silently as it connects to your heart. Take your time to reflect and pray on a verse, phrase or word that you are drawn to. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you make this scripture part of your life.

b. **Mary:** Mary experienced strength and unknown courage at the most unexpected times as she waited upon her Son to send a Counselor, the Holy Spirit to guide them and light a new fire within each of them. She had complete faith and trust in God and was Jesus' first disciple by saying YES to becoming His mother. At the beginning of this retreat, we heard Mary's fiat and how she placed her complete trust in God. Am I now encouraged to follow her tender way as a witness to the dignity of every person's life? Am I able to, in my own station of life, be that person who stands for life, prays about life issues, be a loving, compassionate support person rooted in prayer and faith and moral choices? Sanctuary of the Holy Spirit, show me your tender way.

c. **Reflection:** Through the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Wisdom, Counsel, Understanding, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, Fear of the Lord), we are strengthened in our efforts to stand for life. How are you being called to witness? Ask our Lord to show you how to call upon these gifts in your daily witness to all life issues and to unite your heart with his Sacred Heart and our Blessed Mother's Immaculate Heart so that our empathy, beliefs, faith and compassion are rooted in their loving hearts.