

Faith Sharing/Discussion Questions

Mary

By Kathy Coffey

These faith sharing/discussion questions accompany *Mary* by Kathy Coffey. Ms. Coffey is a distinguished writer and speaker on topics of spirituality and faith formation. The Catholic Press Association has honored her work with thirteen awards; she has also received the Foley Poetry Award for her work. Among her works are the best selling books *Hidden Women of the Gospels* and *Women of Mercy*. Kathy is the mother of four children and currently lives in Denver, Colorado.

The author provides reflection questions at various places throughout the book. These questions supplement those.

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

- What are my thoughts about Mary as I begin this book? (Page 11)
- What are my thoughts on the statement that Mary is God's "feminine, sisterly face"? (Page 12)
- What in my life brings Mary's experience to mind? (Page 13)

CHAPTER ONE—MARY FOR ALL SEASONS

- What do I know about Mary's life? With which of those moments do I most identify? Which of her experiences do I find most foreign? (Page 17)
- Based upon my own experiences, but looking through Mary's eyes, what would I have felt during the various events of Jesus' life? (Page 21)
- What can I learn about a child's parents or family from looking at the child's life? What can I learn about Mary from the life of Jesus? (Page 21)
- What are some of the ways that I make Mary into an icon (a holy image) instead of allowing her to be a real human person? Why do I do this? How does this realization affect my relationship with her? (Page 22)
- What role does Mary play in each season of my own life?

CHAPTER TWO—A CLUSTER OF IMAGES

- What can I learn from Mary's willingness to listen and think about what she heard? (Page 30)
- What does it mean to me that Mary was "attuned to reality" and that she accepted reality as "coming from God's hands"? How does Mary's behavior and attitude serve as a role model for me? (Page 30)
- What can I learn from Mary about trusting in God? What can we learn from Mary about building trust in others? (Page 32)
- Think of all the names and roles given for Mary today. Are there any that surprise me? What modern images would I add to the ones presented in this section? (Page 36)
- What do I learn about God from Mary? In what ways does Mary serve as the feminine face of God for me? (Page 37)
- The author describes various ways that Mary served as a vessel for God to fill. Which of these images resonate best with you? In what ways am I a vessel for God to fill? (Page 41)
- What does it mean to be a "wise-fool" before God? What thoughts does this idea cause me to have about how I should feel, be, and act? (Page 44)

CHAPTER THREE—MARY AROUND THE WORLD

- Think about the definition of the word “ponder: to hold something precious like a stone in the hand . . . letting it communicate its essence to us.” How does this image help me to “ponder” what God has planned for me? (Page 46)
- What do I learn about Mary by how she has been depicted by people around the world? What do I learn about these cultures by how they depict Mary? (Pages 48–56)

CHAPTER 4—SHE WHO HOLDS THE TENSION

- What were the tensions that Mary experienced in her life? How are these similar to or different from the tensions I experience in my life? What insights can Mary’s life provide for me? (Page 59)
- What does it mean to me that Mary is called the Mother of God? (Page 61)
- Each Marian devotion expresses in a unique way how a particular group of people have experienced Mary as a symbol of God’s presence with them. How might a modern devotion to Mary look? (Page 63)

CHAPTER FIVE—THE EARLIER TRIPTYCH: ANNUNCIATION, VISITATION, BIRTH OF JESUS

- Reflect on Mary’s experience during the Annunciation. What emotions would she have felt? What lessons can I take from this period of Mary’s life? (Pages 68–75)
- Mary was called to be an active participant in the redemption of humanity. What can I do to actively participate in that redemption? (Pages 75–77)
- What unexpected gifts has God sent in my life? What do these gifts mean to me? How do I show thanks for God’s role in my life? How have these gifts transformed my life? (Pages 78–81)
- What kind of a person does Mary inspire me to be?

CHAPTER SIX—THE LATER TRIPTYCH: CANA, CALVARY, AND EASTER

- What do I learn about Mary from the story of the Wedding Feast at Cana? How can what I’ve learned help me to live a better life? (Page 82)
- Think about Mary experiencing Jesus’ passion and death. How would I feel if Jesus had been my son? (Pages 84–87)

CHAPTER SEVEN—MARY AS MOTHER AND HER LONG MATERNAL LINE

- What do I know of my own female ancestors? How have they shaped my life? How have my female ancestors in faith shaped my faith? (Page 91)
- What gifts of herself does a mother give her child? (Page 96)
- What does it mean to me that Mary is called the Mother of the Church? (Page 97)
- Who are the older women in my life on whom I can rely? How am I gifted by them? How am I gift to them? How do I provide nurture and support to younger women? (Page 98)
- How do I feel about being the “daughter” of Mary? How will this knowledge shape my attitudes and actions? (Page 106)

CHAPTER 8—PRAYING WITH MARY

- Say the “Hail Mary” slowly, thinking about each word as it is said. What new meaning do I find in each word? How do these words bring me closer to Mary and, through Mary, closer to God? (Page 110)
- Where is my “home”? How do I feel God’s presence in this “home”? How has God “pitched a tent” in my “home”? What can I do to make God more welcome, more present in my “home”? (Page 113)
- What do I think about Mary’s trust in God? How well do I trust in God? What can I learn from Mary about trusting God? (Page 115)
- In what ways do I present “sacraments of the ordinary” to others? What can I do to offer these “sacraments of the ordinary” more frequently? More intentionally? (Page 116)
- In what ways does Mary model God for me? What have I learned from her about how to model God in my own life? (Page 118)

AFTERWORD—A LATER CONVERSATION

- How has my understanding of Mary been changed by this study? How has this change affected the role Mary plays in my life? (Page 121)