

## Session #14 Mary, Mother of Jesus

### Overview

The story of Mary, mother of Jesus, is told in a beautiful book with each page framed in gold. This is the story from her birth to Anna and Joachim, the visit by the angel Gabriel, the Christmas story and the childhood of Jesus. Finally we join with Mary as she experiences the sorrow of the cross and her crowning as Queen of Heaven, the eternal face of compassion.

**Goal:** Children are reminded that there is a female presence in the Christian story and that U.U.'s value stories about boys and girls, men and women in our tradition.

**Principle:** Each person is worthwhile

**Source:** Jewish and Christian teachings

**Belief:** We learn best in community.

**UU Identity:** Women and men are important.

**Holiday/Theme:** Christmas/Easter.

### Supplies:

Book

Copies of Take Home Page

Supplies for the activities you chose

Sharing circle supplies –

chalice

candle

match

match holder

snuffer (optional)

polished rocks

bowl of water

decorative tray

talking stick – a flower this time.

**Set Up:** Locate images of Mary, such as

1) a “Virgin of Guadalupe” or “Blessed Virgin Mary” candle, sometimes found in the Hispanic foods section of a grocery store.

2) a library book of Marian Art.

3) Web pages of Marian art.

Ask your congregation if anyone has access to a rosary. Would they like to visit and say the rosary for the children?

**Entering Activity:**

Coloring pages of Mary may be found below.

See also Mary as Queen at <http://tiredtwang.blogspot.com/2009/08/queenship-of-mary-coloring-page.html> . Note: on the right hand column there is a list of all of the author's coloring pages, including a very nice one of the "Virgin of Guadalupe." I recommend them!

**Sharing Circle:**

After the children have arrived, invite them to tidy up and gather in a circle around the chalice for the chalice lighting and the story.

**Chalice Lighting:**

Bring out the chalice and candle, matchbook, match holder, and snuffer. Set out the chalice and the water bowl with rocks to drop in for sharing "Joys and Concerns."

Invite the children to recite with you the following chalice lighting words:

"To this quiet place of beauty we come from busy things, pausing for a moment for the thoughts that quiet brings."

Light the match and hold it to the candle wick.

"We light this chalice for the warmth of love, the light of truth and the energy of action."

Invite the children to share important things that have happened in their lives, passing a flower to indicate whose turn it is to share. Have each child share a joy or a concern by dropping a small polished rock into the water bowl.

Say something like: "We will now share our joys and concerns in our sharing circle. Each of us will have a turn to speak while the rest listen. You don't have to share, you can always say, "pass."

After everyone has shared who wishes to, add one more rock and say, "For all the joys and concerns which remain unspoken, we add this rock."

You may prefer to extinguish the chalice flame with the snuffer at this point saying "Though we extinguish this flame, we kindle the flame to carry in our hearts together."

Read "Mary."

**UU Identity teachable moment:**

Ask the children for their reflections on the story. Say something like, “Our first principle states that “Each person is worthwhile.” Show them the poster of the Do-Re-Mi Principles with the Principles in children’s language, below. Sing it if you wish. “In this story, we learn about Mary, mother of Jesus. We Unitarian Universalists want to include stories of boys and girls, men and women in our religious stories. We believe that all people are worthwhile.” Describe the activities that you have prepared and invite the children to engage in them.

**Activities:** Choose from the following options.

**1) Create a bouquet of flowers for Mary.**

Cut out picture of flowers and greenery, or find real flowers to create a bouquet.

Vase

Pictures of Mary with flowers as part of the picture.

Here is a list of colors and shapes as suggested by traditional symbolism (see Teacher Background).

Lay out the flowers and greenery and invite the children to gently observe them. As a child picks up each piece, share the symbolism, and invite them to create the bouquet.

- 1) White: the stars, purity, and humility. (Note that Mary’s cape often shows stars on a night sky)
- 2) Deep blue: the night sky, faithfulness.
- 3) Sword shaped leaves: Mary’s sadness.
- 4) Evergreen: eternity, forever.
- 5) Heart Shaped leaves: love
- 6) Gold: the value of the family.
- 7) Pinks and reds (traditionally carnations or roses): love and life, compassion.
- 8) Rose with thorns: the beauty and the sorrow.

Share images of Mary with flowers.

The Wikipedia site has a compilation of Marian Art at

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman\\_Catholic\\_Marian\\_art](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Marian_art)

See especially such images as:

Virgin of the Lilies by Bouguereau, 1899

Madonna and the Five Angels by Botticelli (roses in background)

Madonna of the Carnation by da Vinci

Benois Madonna by da Vinci (white lily)

Madonna by Giotto (with vases)

You may wish to share pictures from a book of Marian art, or from various websites and share them on a laptop computer, if you have a wireless connection in your facility.

**2) Create their own art featuring a part of Mary’s story.**

Gold, white, deep blue, green, pink and red colors of art medium (paint, paint pens, markers, crayons)

Review the book, as desired, to remind them of Mary's story. Invite them to illustrate their own version of a part of Mary's story.

Would they like to draw a picture of her birth to Anna and Joachim, the Annunciation by the Angel Gabriel, the Christmas Story, living in Egypt, the death of her son, Jesus, her ascension into heaven?

### 3) **Rosary/ Hopscotch**

Show an example of a traditional Catholic rosary, either in a picture or asking if someone has one to share. The rosary is a way to remember their prayers to Mary, Jesus Christ, and God. If you have a visitor who can recite the prayers of the rosary, invite them to do so. Invite the children to make a giant U.U. Hopscotch game as a way of remembering our principles and sources.

Visit the instructions from a Catholic school for making a Giant Rosary, so that you can see how a Marian Rosary might be made.

[http://catholicism.suite101.com/article.cfm/childrens\\_rosary\\_projects](http://catholicism.suite101.com/article.cfm/childrens_rosary_projects)

How about a walkable way to remember our own UU principles and sources? Here's how to make a giant walkable U.U. Hopscotch:

Option 1: Stepping stones outdoors

Create two chalices about 7 feet apart, outlined by small stones about a foot in diameter, so they are large enough for a child to stand in. Connect the two chalices with two curved lines of commercially available pavers or stepping stones, or similar items found in nature, such as flat pieces of bark.

Option 2: Chalk outline outdoors

Draw the U.U. Hopscotch out of chalk on a sidewalk. Draw two chalices about 7 feet apart. Draw seven circles in one curved line connecting one side of the chalices, and then draw another seven circles in a curved line on the other side to create a rosary shaped chalk "hopscotch."

Option 3: Paper stepping stones indoors.

(Keep the paper circles closer together as they may slip if the children have to leap more than a foot.)

Cut out 14 paper circles, the size of the lid of a large tub of margarine. Draw two chalices on an 8 ½” by 11” piece of paper. Place the two chalices about 7 feet apart and link them with the paper circles, one row on each side, in a curved line.

Say or sing each principle in child’s language as the children skip from circle to circle (to the tune of “Do Re Mi”)

Start on the first chalice and say “The Principles!”

Then step on each of the seven circles on one side signifying the seven principles, singing or saying:

One: Each person is worthwhile.

Two: Be kind in all you do.

Three: We help each other learn.

Four: And search for what is true.

Five: All people have a say.

Six: Work for a peaceful world.

Seven: The web of life's the way,

That will bring us back to me and U.U... (Jump onto the second chalice)

Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do... Ti....Do!

Turn around and face the next set of seven circles. This signifies the “Seven Sources.” Invite the children to say “The Sources!” and then skip onto the Sources circles. Sing or say each source in child’s language (to the tune of “Do Re Mi.”)

One: The wonder we all share,

Two: The voices of the people,

Three: Religions of the world,

Four: The synagogues and steeples,

Five: We use our minds and reason,

Six: Earth-centered love of seasons,

Seven: Our own UU tradition,

That will bring us back to me and U.U...

Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do... Ti....Do!

4) If there were any family rosaries that were brought in by congregants, share them and their stories with the children. You may wish to invite the owners to share the stories with you or stay and share them with the children.

**5) Take digital or Polaroid pictures for the session on “Our Own Picturebook.”**

Digital or Polaroid camera

Film or photo developing  
Take pictures of the participants and their activities for inclusion in their own storybook at the end of the session.

**Background for Teachers:**

Mary's flowers from: <http://www.wf-f.org/MaryFlowers.html>

Flowers are included in works of Christian art not only because they are pretty and decorative, but also because they had a particular meaning. ("Iconography" is the word used by art historians for the study of symbolism in works of art.) The symbolism of flowers was used especially in medieval and renaissance paintings and tapestries to reinforce the message of the main subject. Sometimes the background of a tapestry would be carpeted with symbolic flowers. In paintings, a bouquet in a vase might be included, or the Virgin or another person might hold flowers. Elaborately embroidered vestments often had floral decorations, and the borders of illuminated manuscripts were very often embellished with symbolic floral ornaments. The significance of the flowers was generally known at the time these works were originally produced for the decoration of churches or private dwellings (most are now in museums).

Children are usually very interested in deciphering the message contained in these art works. And they may enjoy using this "code" themselves. A bouquet or wreath to honor Mary can be made of real or silk flowers, and could include those that traditionally symbolize Mary and her virtues and attributes. Here are some examples:

Lilies (Easter or Madonna lilies and lilies-of-the-valley) -- white color and sweet fragrance symbolize Mary's purity, humility, loving obedience to God's will. (Jesus is also called Lily of the Valley.)

Iris (old-fashioned names were "flag" or "sword lily"): the deep-blue color symbolizes Mary's fidelity, and the blade-shaped foliage denotes the sorrows that "pierce her heart". The iris flower is the "*fleur-de-lis*" of France. This symbol of the Blessed Virgin is also the symbol of the cities of Florence and of Saint Louis.

Gladiolus (name comes from Latin word for sword): Sword-shaped leaves also symbolize "piercing sorrows"; also martyrdom especially red gladiolus (a palm branch also signifies martyrdom.)

Baby's Breath symbolizes innocence and purity; also the breath ("inspiration") and power of the Holy Spirit.

Ivy (evergreen): The ivy stands for eternity, faithfulness.

Violets: The violet's delicacy, color, sweet scent and heart-shaped leaves, refer to Mary's constancy, humility and innocence.

Blue Columbine: The columbine (from the Latin word for dove, *columba*), is a circlet of petals thought to resemble doves. The blue columbine is a symbol of fidelity, and often appears in paintings of Mary.

Marigold (calendula, "English" or "pot marigold" and common garden or "French marigold"): both flowers were used as gold-colored dye for wool. Named in honor of Mary ("Mary's gold"), symbolize her simplicity, domesticity. Marigold also sometimes denoted Mary's sorrows, perhaps because its strong scent was associated with burial ointments.

Carnations (or "pinks"): pink or red color symbolizes love, life. Carnations' color and spicy fragrance refers to the crucifixion, "love unto death". The name "carnation" also suggests the Incarnation of Christ.

Rose: The rose is regarded as the "queen of flowers", and often symbolizes Mary, the Queen of Heaven. Also an almost universal symbol of perfect love, its color, perfection of form, and fragrance, as well as its thorns signifies Mary's role in salvation history as the Mother of God the Savior who was crowned with thorns and shed His blood on the Cross for love of mankind. The rose, arising from a thorny bush, also signifies Mary, the Mystical Rose, "our fallen Nature's solitary boast", who alone of the human race was conceived without sin. It also may contain a parallel with the fiery thorn bush from which God *spoke* to Moses: Mary, immaculately conceived, was the means through which God *became* Man, The Word made flesh.

The Rosary, of course, takes its name from the rose. Saint Louis de Monfort, in his devotional book, *The Secret of the Rosary*, speaks symbolically of the White Rose of purity, simplicity, devotion; the Red Rose of the Precious Blood of Our Lord (he refers to Wisdom 2:8, which speaks of sinners heedlessly indulging ourselves and "gathering rosebuds while we may.") He also speaks of the Rose Tree, symbolizing the Mystical Roses of Jesus and Mary. He compares the rosebud to a rosary bead, and urges children to regard the prayers of the rosary as "your little wreath of roses for Jesus and Mary."

### **Chronological list of Feast Days of Mary**

January 1 - Solemnity of Mary  
January 8 - Our Lady of Prompt Succor  
February 2 - Presentation of the Lord  
February 11- Our Lady of Lourdes  
March 25 - Annunciation

May 31 - Visitation  
June 27 - Our Mother of Perpetual Help  
July 16 - Our Lady of Mount Carmel  
August 15 - Assumption  
August 22 - Queenship of Mary  
September 8 - Birth of Mary  
September 12 - The Most Holy Name of Mary  
September 15 - Our Lady of Sorrows  
September 24 - Our Lady of Walsingham, England  
October 7 - Our Lady of the Rosary  
October 8 - Our Lady of Good Remedy  
November 21 - Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary  
December 8 - Immaculate Conception  
December 12 - Our Lady of Guadalupe

-The Month of Mary is May.

-The Month of the Rosary is October.

-Mother's Day is the Second Sunday of May.

-The Feast of the Immaculate Heart is the Saturday following the Second Sunday after Pentecost.

-The Saturdays are also dedicated to Marian Devotions.

**Note about the Sources:**

It is time we added a seventh source, our own UU history and heritage! Where else does the story of the first and only Unitarian king (King John Sigismund) fall as a source? Or the Transcendental movement in New England?

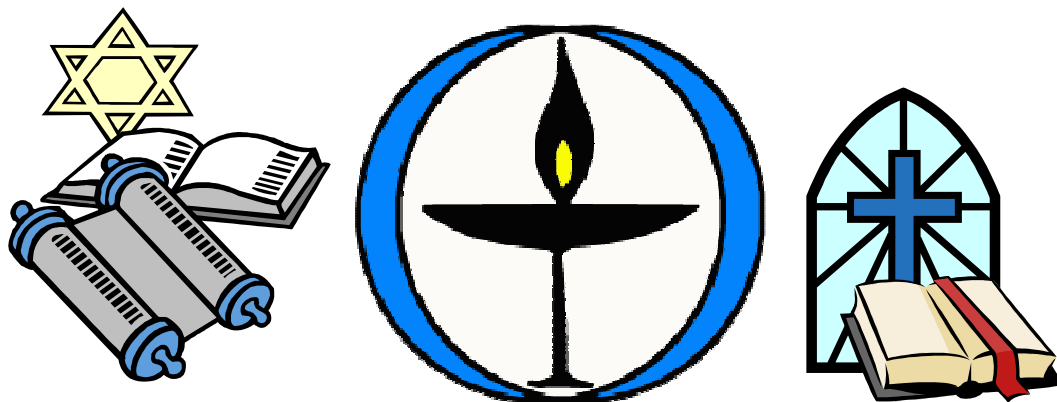
The sources are an important part of our religious “personality” as a faith. They define us as a living, changing tradition. I’d like our children to know them as well as they know our principles.

Coloring Pages from the public domain, referenced at <http://karenswhimsy.com/blessed-virgin-mary.shtm>









## Picture Book Bible Tales: **Mary**

Today we read **Mary** by Brian Wildsmith the story of Mary, mother of Jesus told in a beautiful book each page framed in gold. This is the story from her birth to Anna and Joachim, the visit by the angel Gabriel, the Christmas story and the childhood of Jesus. Finally we join with Mary as she experiences the sorrow of the cross and her crowning as Queen of Heaven, the eternal face of compassion. Children are reminded that there is a female presence in the Christian story and that U.U.'s value stories about boys and girls, men and women in our tradition.