

# Francis and the Blessed Virgin Mary

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## FRANCIS AND THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

*"The Virgin Mary, humble servant of the Lord, was open to his every word and call. She was embraced by Francis with indescribable love and declared the protectress and advocate of his family. The Secular Franciscans should express their ardent love for her by imitating her complete self-giving and by praying earnestly and confidently" Rule, Article 9.*

*Mary, Mother of Jesus, is the model of listening to the Word and of faithfulness to vocations. We, like Francis, seek all the gospel virtues realized in her. The brothers and sisters should cultivate intense love for the most holy virgin, imitation, prayer, and filial abandonment. They should manifest their own devotion with expressions of genuine faith, in forms accepted by the Church.*

*Mary is the model of fruitful and faithful love for the entire ecclesial community. Secular Franciscans and their fraternities should seek to live the experience of Francis, who made the Virgin the guide of his activity. With her, like the disciples at Pentecost, they should welcome the Spirit to create a community of love. OFS Constitutions: Article 16.1, .2*

To develop a true understanding and love of Jesus Christ, the Son of God made Man, requires a sincere devotion toward His mother. Mary was with Him from the womb to the tomb. She responded to God's call. The Holy Spirit came upon her and the power of the Most High overshadowed her (Luke 1:35). She gave birth to him. She and Joseph presented him at the Temple. She raised him and taught him, with Joseph, how to pray. She sought him until she found him in the Temple. She was with him when He left us at Calvary. Saint Francis recognized Mary's powerful and extraordinary relationship with her son in light of our salvation. Therefore, Francis implored his followers to love her as their self-effacing gentle queen and mother.

### **The Role of the Blessed Virgin in the Plan of Salvation:**

The role of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and our Savior in salvation is illustrated in both the Old and New Testaments, as well as in esteemed tradition. The books of the Old Testament describe the history of salvation, by which the coming of Christ into the world is slowly revealed. The earliest documents in the Church are understood in the light of further and full revelation. A woman, Mother of the Redeemer, is gradually brought in clearer light. Considered in this light, she is already prophetically indicated in

the promise of victory over the serpent which was given to Adam and Eve after their fall into sin (Gen.3:15). She is the virgin who shall conceive and bear a son, whose name shall be called Emmanuel (Is.1:14; Mic.5:2-3; Mt.1:22-23).

Mary stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord, who confidently hopes for and receives salvation from him. She is the exalted Daughter of Zion.

The plan of salvation is established when the son of God has taken human nature from her, so that he might in the mysteries of his flesh free man from sin (Lumen Gentium, 55). Saint Irenaeus says, "Being obedient became the cause of salvation for her and for the whole human race."

The early Fathers asserted in their preaching: "the knot of Eve's disobedience was united by Mary's obedience: Eve was bound through her disbelief, while Mary was loosened by her faith." Mary is compared to being the new Eve and our mother. *Lumen Gentium, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, 56.

A document of Vatican II from *Constitution of the Church: Paragraph 55, Vatican II in Plain English*, Huebsch/Thurmes, page 62-63. states:

*Mary is acknowledged as both the Mother of God and Mother of the Redeemer. Because of this, she has a place of honor both in the Church and in heaven.*

*She has a unique relationship to God and a special relationship to the Church. And although she is unlike us in these ways, she is also like us in the most fundamental aspects of her nature: She is in need of salvation, not because of any sin, but simply because she is human. Mary does not stand above Christ, but stands with all of us who need a savior. What a remarkable relationship this is! Jesus depended on Mary for the things of this earth. Mary depended on Jesus for the things of heaven.*

*This, of course, means that Mary is a member of the church and an excellent example of faith and charity. We Catholics, therefore, honor her with childlike affection.*

The church has granted her several titles of distinction. Some of those titles include: Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatory. Other titles will be discussed later. Mary is our helper on the road to salvation; she always points the way to Jesus, never to herself. She is a model for the universal Church, leading others to Christ. Mary's title as "Mother of God," or *Theotokos* (literally the "God-bearer") was declared at the Council of Ephesus in 431. An explanation of why Mary is referred as "Mother of God" can be found in the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI *Marialis Cultis, For the Right Ordering and Development of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary*, disseminated on February 2, 1974. Pope Paul VI goes into depth concerning Mary's place in liturgical worship, and proper

mention of her in the Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of the Eucharist, and Liturgy of the Hours. Her prominent place on the liturgical calendar is explained as well.

Mary, a young, Jewish woman, obedient to the Lord, does hold a special place in the life of the Church. Mary, the mother of Jesus, is given honor because of her closeness to Jesus. She is a strong woman of faith and accepts responsibility for her service to God who calls her. Her role is clearly described in this text:

*Christ is the one Mediator between God and humanity. Because of the Holy Spirit we have a direct friendship with Jesus, who can bring us into an intimate relationship with God. Our devotion to Mary must never diminish that. But since she played such a pivotal role in the life and work of Christ, we now realize that she is the first to receive the grace we seek. And even though Mary's place is subordinate to Christ's, nonetheless, we still understand her to be a great helper on our way to holiness. Constitution of the Church: Paragraph 60-62, Vatican II in Plain English, Huebsch/ Thurmes, pages 65-66.*

### **The Role of Mary to Franciscans:**

Mary's role to Franciscans is to lead us to her son. She is not to overshadow Jesus or the work of the Holy Spirit in our Franciscan's life. Jesus and Mary belong together. The mother continuously points to her son and brings us to him. Mary then holds an extraordinary yet subordinate role in our Franciscan life.

As Franciscans we live our Rule. The OFS Rule identifies qualities we might emulate:

*humble servant, open to Jesus' every word and call, complete self-giving, earnest and confident prayer.*



We do not know a great deal of Mary's life but what we do know is that she lived an ordinary life, performing the services of family life. Her heart was open to God's word when the Angel Gabriel visited her. At the Annunciation, Angel Gabriel tells Mary "Behold, you shall conceive in your womb and shall bring forth a son, and you shall name him Jesus...The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Luke 1: 31; Luke 1: 35). She immediately, responded to God's call. She replied to Angel Gabriel, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1: 38).

She was a prayerful woman and recited the daily prayers said by all Jews. Through prayerfulness she became receptive to the call of God in her life. She would have recognized, as at the Annunciation, that God's ways may be mysterious, but faith allows them to be embraced.

In the Magnificat, we see her inner manner of trusting God and looking for the ways God acts on behalf of the poor. She did inquire about the angel's message because of her innocence. By placing herself in the hands of God she becomes the first Christian disciple. She is the model for all.

Her response is continuous. In the Infancy narratives, Mary is provided with testimony that God is doing something amazing. She was concerned about her cousin Elizabeth who was much older and pregnant so she traveled over 60 miles to serve her. She left the comforts of her family during her late part of her pregnancy and gave birth in a strange place with no comforts of home or basic amenities. She cared for her newborn. She allowed shepherds to view the baby Jesus. She allowed Joseph to take her and baby Jesus to a strange land, fleeing from Romans whose only purpose was to kill children because they were threatened by a new "king" being born. She constantly was concerned about her son's welfare. As an ordinary mother she cleaned and cooked, cared and protected him.



Throughout her life Mary was constantly attentive to Jesus. Nothing separated her from Jesus. They were united even when she did not understand some of the things he said and did. She listened attentively to his words and pondered what they might mean.

When she said yes to the angel, she said yes to be with Jesus at every step of His life on earth. The "yes" meant she would be completing self-giving and do whatever was necessary to fulfill the word of God. She said "yes" to visit Elizabeth. She said "yes" to leave her family. She said "yes" to attentiveness to Jesus' words and directions. She said "yes" to conversion; to be willing to do what her son knew must be done. Jesus' teachings provided her the opportunity to allow her son's perspectives to bring her to new understanding of her faith. She said "yes" to allow her son to do things in his time as in the wedding of Cana, where Jesus performed his first miracle (John 2:1). She directed others to do what her Son asked of them. She said "yes" to watch her son be tortured and brutalized and marched through the public to be placed on the cross to die a slow and agonizing death. Even near Jesus' death, Mary said "yes" to be the mother of John. (John 19: 26).



**Reflect on your life.** Are you willing to say “yes” to God’s call, especially when the call comes from people we may not trust or may not understand the mystery of the call? Are you willing to say “yes” when the timing is not convenient for you? Are you willing to say “yes” when others may not understand you or perhaps even mistreat or disrespect you? Do you say “yes” even though you think your authority has been compromised or even ignored? Are you willing to say “yes” even when you probably know that you may not receive any recognition for your efforts and work? Do you say “yes, Lord, here I am.”

Imitating this humble service is completed in the ordinary places of everyday life. The spirit of humble service needs both nourishment and expression to grow. Reflect on your daily life. How do you replicate this humble service of Mary? Humble service is a key word for Secular Franciscans. We do not seek to dominate even when we must advise and correct. Whatever we share is done to serve others and not to illustrate how smart or how witty we are. We imitate Mary by humbly serving others without fanfare or detection.

Mary’s life was one of obedience, open to the call and word of her son. No matter what the suffering and pain it might bring, Mary would never evade the call even when the call brought her to witnessing her son being condemned as a criminal and put to death on the cross. She understood the importance of Jesus’ words and call.

She respected the words of her son and did not misinterpret them to her improvement or benefit. She was never the queen waiting to be served. She ignored earthly power and material possessions and rewards. She was and continues to be the humble servant, always building up the body of Christ. Can we do less?

Mary gives Franciscans a model to follow by how she embraced the changes in her life. We face many changes in our faith. Vatican II, as well as many other events in recent decades, have invited us to new perspectives in our faith. We are well aware of the declining numbers of men entering the priesthood and women entering religious orders.

We know that closing and combining parishes sometimes brings distress and apprehension to those parishioners in those parishes. The sexual abuse scandals and loss of trust are serious issues to confront and work through in our lives. The violence we read or hear about in our world increases fear among us and sometimes the violence exists within our immediate neighborhoods and community and sadly we are sometimes the victims of violence.

New findings which bring new insights into scripture are not always easy to accept. The rapid and invariable growth of technology brings us sometimes to crossroads in our faith. These and other events in our world challenge us. By studying and accepting Mary as a model for embracing change, we find a safe harbor, “a Star of the Sea”, to reflect and to move on through the changes in our lives.

### **Our Franciscan Heritage:**

As Franciscans we are called to serve. The spirit of humble service needs both nourishment and expression to grow. Reflect on your life.



*Francis embraced the Mother of our Lord Jesus with indescribable love because, as he said, it was she who made the Lord Jesus our brother, and through her we found mercy. After Christ, he put all his trust in her and took her as his patroness for himself and his friars. In her honor he fasted every year from the feast of Saints Peter and Paul until the Assumption. ( Major Life IX, 3. Omnibus, p.699)*

*As he was living there by the church of our Lady, Francis prayed to her who had conceived the Word, full of grace and truth, begging her insistently and with tears to become his Advocate. Then he was granted the true spirit of the Gospel by the intercession of the Mother of Mercy and he brought it to fruition. (Major Life III, 1. Omnibus, p.646)*

*Toward the Mother of Jesus he was filled with an inexpressible love, because it was she who made the Lord of Majesty our brother. He sang special praises to her, poured out prayers to her, offered her his affections, so many and so great that the tongue of man cannot recount them. But what delights us most, he made her the advocate of the order and placed under her wings the sons he was about to leave that she might cherish them and protect them to the end. (II Celano 198, Omnibus, p.521), also Writings of Saint Francis 4 Salutation of the Blessed Virgin (p.135); Celano, First Life 24 (248); Legend of the Three companions Ch.V 15 (905); Mirror of Perfection 55 (1177).*

**Reflect on how you serve others.**



**How do you nourish your spirit in order to serve others more humbly and express your service more deeply?**

Consider how Our Blessed Virgin Mary is protectress of Franciscans and how does she nourish you to do more for others in the name of Jesus Christ.

**Franciscan Reverence and Devotions:**

Francis was known for his great devotion, reverence and imitation of Mary, the Mother of God. He acknowledged the unique position given her by God. Mary's Immaculate Conception makes her the daughter of the Father, the virgin mother of the Son, and spouse of the Holy Spirit.

From the titles Francis has attributed to Mary in the Praises, we can see the great respect and devotion he had for the Mother of God. The first titles share with us the ways in which Francis envisioned Mary as holding within herself the Son of God. Palace, Dwelling, Robe, and Tabernacle are all words that invoke thoughts of enclosure. Mary held within her, both physically and spiritually, the Word of God.

One of the first examples of Mary that Francis tried to emulate was her hearing and obeying the will of God.

In addition to the titles for Mary mentioned earlier, other titles have been given to Mary through the centuries, but not necessarily by Franciscans also reflect her role in the salvation of us. Those titles speak to our Franciscan spirituality. Some include, Mother of Sorrows, Queen of the Universe, Queen of Peace, Woman Clothed with Sun, Refuge of Sinners, and Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

As humans, we experience our share of sorrows. Mary did not allow her sorrow to conquer her when she witnessed her Son being ridiculed or his life threatened (Luke 4:28) or his eventual public humiliation and death among throngs of people.

She understood her Father's Will would triumph and she accepted both the happiness and sadness when she first listened to God's voice. We can offer our torments and sufferings through the heart of Mary because she clearly remembers how it is to suffer.

We long for one universal church. Through the close connection between God's abundance of love of sending his Son and Mary's obedience, we understand that Christ is King of all creation. Mary is Queen of the Universe.

Although in our world those titles conjure ideas of those who govern with great material wealth, both came to serve. Both the Son and His Mother intercede for us. We strive to serve Jesus through Mary. Both continue to serve through their virtues. Her mission is to unite all human kind with the heart of Jesus.

Franciscans strive to live peacefully in all they do. Our lives are to be lived as prayers. Mary, Queen of Peace is given this title because her life exuded peace. Her inner focus on our Father enabled her to live through many troubles and difficulties. As Jesus addressed his disciples *“Peace be with you” (John 20:21)* our Queen of Peace, the first disciple of Jesus, seeks to intercede on our behalf to obtain the peace of Jesus. She has continually called for our prayers through her appearances on earth.

In Revelations, 12: 1, Mary is presented as *“A woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.”* Mary, is robed with brilliance of Christ’s gift of grace. She is clothed in the sun, but she is also clothed with the Son. The book of Revelation concludes the prophecy of *Genesis 3:15*, in showing Mary engaged in the final battle between the Woman and Satan.

Mary, Refuge of Sinners, helps us to quickly flee to her when we sin. She is our comforter and protector. She encourages us to resume the path to her Son, Jesus Christ. She never turns away but is constant in her desire to bring us to Jesus. As Franciscans we repeatedly strive to do the will of God. We are called daily to conversion and when we fall short, Mary is there to intercede for us.

Francis persistently turned to Mary for everlasting help. As Mary never turned away from her Son, but always toward Him, so did Francis always seek Mary and Jesus. Can we do less?

Several Marian traditions have been attributed to the Franciscan charism. Legend holds that the Angelus might be one of them. While visiting the Sultan in 1219, Francis was inspired and awed by the Muslims call to Prayer five times a day. On his return home, in a Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples, he exhorted them: *“that every evening an announcement be made by a messenger or some other sign that praise and thanksgiving be given by all people to the all-powerful Lord God.”*

As stated previously by Pope Paul VI, our own Franciscan tradition holds up for our consideration two devotions to Mary as alternative means of praying the Liturgy of the Hours: the Franciscan Crown Rosary and the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin. Francis noted Mary to be the first disciple of our Lord. He followed her example unreservedly. He urges us to do the same.

In the Office of the Passion, Francis made an exception. He wrote an Antiphon to the Blessed Virgin to be prayed before and after each psalm. In it, he praised Mary in her tri-fold role as Mother, Daughter and Spouse. He also petitioned her to pray for us from her privileged place at the side of her Son.

A deep and abiding love for Mary, the mother of Christ and our spiritual mother, is a characteristic mark of the Franciscan Order. The constitutions of the OFS fix this love in Secular Franciscan life (Article 16). Saint Francis himself prayed to her before each hour of the Office:

*“Holy Virgin Mary, there is none like unto you born in the world among women, daughter and handmaid of the most high king, the heavenly Father! Mother of our most holy Lord Jesus Christ, spouse of the Holy Spirit, pray for us with Saint Michael the Archangel and all the virtues of heaven and all the saints, to your most holy, beloved Son, our Lord and Master. Amen.”*

Francis devoted to Mary, praised her in his Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (*Francis of Assisi: The Saint, Volume 1, page 163*):

*Hail holy Lady, most Holy Queen, Mary, Mother of God, you are the Virgin made Church, chosen by the most Holy Father in heaven, whom he consecrated with his most beloved Son and with the Holy Spirit the Paraclete, in whom there was and is all fullness of grace and every good. Hail, his tabernacle! Hail, his dwelling! Hail, his vesture! Hail, his handmaid! Hail, his Mother – and all you holy Virtues that by the grace and light of the Holy Spirit are infused into the hearts of the faithful, that from faithless souls you may make souls faithful to God!*

Mary calls us to come to Jesus. She calls us to radical conversion by holding her hand and we holding her – the Rosary.

The Franciscan Crown also shows honor to the Blessed Virgin Mother. It is the rosary of the seven joys of Mary and is appropriate for Franciscans to recite. The story behind the Franciscan Crown Rosary came about in the year 1422 when a young man who daily adorned a statue of Mary with a wreath of flowers was upset that he could not continue to do so since he had entered the friary. As the story is told, Mary appeared to him and asked him to give her a crown of flowers in the form of reciting seven decades of Hail Marys in honor of her seven joys: The Annunciation, the visit to Elizabeth, the Nativity, the adoration of the Magi, locating Jesus in the Temple, experiencing the Risen Jesus on Easter and her Assumption. This devotion quickly was said through the Franciscan family. At a later point in time, the seven decades were followed with two Hail Marys in honor of the seventy-two years that it is believed she lived. One Our Father and Hail Mary were also added for the intention of the pope.

## Franciscan Doctors, Philosophers and Theologians:

Following Francis' devotion and footsteps, the members of the Franciscan Family have always held Mary in high esteem. Two followers in particular have championed her cause. One is the beloved Saint Anthony of Padua, the "Evangelical Doctor." In his many sermons, Anthony praises Mary for her role in our redemption, from her initial "Yes" to her stalwart stance at the foot of the Cross.

A second Franciscan worthy of mention in regard to Mary is Blessed John Duns Scotus. He was a Franciscan Philosopher and theologian who, against most of the prominent voices of his time, including Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Bonaventure, held firm to the concept that Mary was conceived without the stain of Original Sin. Duns Scotus' argument for the Immaculate Conception was very simple. In Latin, "Potuit, decuit ergo fecit;" translated, "God could do it, should do it and so he did do it." It was possible for God to grant this favor to Mary, her release from Original Sin before the actual act of redemption, and he deemed to do so. These two teachings held so firmly by our Franciscan forbearers are two of the three dogmas proclaimed infallible by the Church, Mary's Immaculate Conception on December 8, 1854 by Pope Pius IX and her Assumption on November 1, 1950 by Pope Pius XII. These dogmas were reaffirmed by the Council Fathers of Vatican II *Lumen Gentium, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*.

## Franciscan Spirituality:

From the beginning of time, God loved us and continues to love us even after we commit sin. The primacy of Christ (Bl. John Duns Scotus OFM) is one key element to Franciscan spirituality [ the other key and major focus of Francis is the Primacy of the Father in Trinity & simple unity).

Jesus was sent because of the love God has for us, not because we sinned. Creation is based on God's absolute freedom and love because God's very nature is love. (Col 1: 12-20). He needs nothing. The Incarnation is the single most defining act of God's love. Love is more powerful than anything. He sent His only son to be with us and live with us and show us how God loves us. He accepts us as we are. He calls us by name. In Mary, God provided an act of perfect redemption. She was preserved from a sinful state and did not commit sin. (*Franciscan Spirituality Presentation* by Fr. Joseph Schwab OFM).

Our love for Jesus includes his mother. Saint Francis loved Mary as a devoted son. As the spouse of the Holy Spirit, she not only made Jesus, the Son of God, our brother, but Francis saw how she shared his poverty and suffering. Being our mother too, she gives her example to strengthen us in our efforts to be poor and humble servants of the Lord.

Mary is the mother of the whole Church, of all those baptized into the death of her Son. Through her union with his sufferings on Calvary, she gave birth to his Body the Church. Francis wanted us to be like Mary... a mother.

We are all mothers pregnant with Jesus. “*We carry him in our heart and body*”, (c.f. 1 Cor.6:20). He awaits us to “*give birth to Him*” in order to “recreate” with Him the world (*Rule, Prologue, Ch.1; c.f. Mt. 5:16*).

Francis called Mary the Queen and Mother of his Franciscan Order. He wanted her to love and protect those of her children who give her honor by serving the Church according to a life-style that reflects her Son’s earthly life - and hers. Francis loved her so much because he felt she showed him how to fulfill his desire to follow wherever Christ would lead him. Mary was the model of strength, gentleness, trust, patience, openness and perseverance (Luke 1: 26 – 38; Luke 1: 46-56).

### **Mother of the Franciscan Order:**

The poverty of our Blessed Mother is her royal cloak and crown.

The cradle of the Franciscan Order was the Portiuncula (“The little Portion”), the poor little church outside Assisi which was dedicated to Our Lady of the Angels. It was no accident that this greatest of mothers should stand again at a poor cradle. To Francis, Portiuncula was a royal castle, such as the other one at Bethlehem, for poverty was the badge of the noble children of God. He said, “*Poverty is a royal virtue, because it shone so brightly in the King and Queen*” (Celano, *The life of Saint Francis*)

Like all good mothers, Mary teaches us. Above all, she teaches us humility. It is beautifully expressed in the song of Mary, the Magnificat. Mary was humble in recognizing her complete unworthiness before God. She trusted confidently in the perfect love of God always eager to lift his creatures up to divine childhood and perfect joy.

The Magnificat shows us what Mary valued and lived by in her life. She prays: He has brought down the powerful from their thrones... He has sent the rich away empty (Luke 1:52-53). Mary’s insight into the true meaning of being God’s handmaid is evident in “he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts (*Luke 1:51*). She joyfully prays:

His mercy is for those who fear him... He has lifted up the lowly. .... He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and his descendents forever (*Luke 1:50, 52, 54-55*).

Her prayer provides us a momentary look into her approach to life.

Her prayer shows us her trust in the Lord. She invites all of us to trust our loving God, made present in Jesus, who gifted us with the Spirit.

Mary by her example invites us as Franciscans to surrender and follow her earnestly and confidently in prayerfulness. *Let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do (OFS Rule, Article 8).*

Wherever Mary has appeared, whether at Lourdes, Fatima, Mexico, her message helps us realize that God's love is always with us. We are called to passionately follow Jesus and the Gospel. We cannot isolate Mary from her son, our Father or the Holy Spirit.

Francis and the Blessed Virgin Mother, Mary, did indeed have a very exceptional relationship. Francis understood she was the model for Christians and therefore she is the "virgin made church." She is the protectress of our Franciscan Family. She is directing us to her son, "do what he tells you."



### Reflection and Discussion Questions:

1. What qualities or attributes of Mary most stir you? How do you imitate those qualities/attributes in your daily routines?
2. How is the Magnificat a world-shattering prayer? What is it calling us to do?
3. What is Mary's role in the life of the Church? Explain why we honor Mary so much?
4. Why is Mary the Mother of the Franciscan Order?
5. How did Don Scotus contribute to argument for the Immaculate Conception?
6. Identify events in Mary's life which brings you closer to her as your mother?
7. Reflect on how often you recite the rosary. What does it mean to you to recite the rosary? What part of the rosary speaks to you the most and how does it apply to our Franciscan lives?
8. How do you, such as Mary, welcome the Spirit to create a community of love? (*OFS Constitutions, Article 16.2*) What steps do you take to help your fraternity to be a community of love? What steps would you need to work on more diligently to help your fraternity be a better community of love?
9. Compare and contrast the text from Luke 1:46-55 and Luke 2: 41-52. Offer your own reflections on what the texts say about Mary and her perspectives.
10. Mary was the first Christian, disciple and apostle. Explain how she became this and what it means for the Franciscans.

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