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# TEACHERS, SPIRITUALITY AND MARY: AN EXPLORATION OF MARY AS PERSON AND SYMBOL

This paper outlines the content and processes of a professional development/reflection day on Marian spirituality. The participants, approximately fifty teachers, exercised coordinating roles in primary school in a large Sydney diocese. The venue for this professional development day, reflecting its purpose, was a Spirituality Centre located within the diocese. Two foundational questions underpinned the approach taken: Who is the real Mary? and what is my relationship to Mary? The day was shaped by a systematic pattern of formal presentation, time and space for personal reflection, and small and large group discussions. Following a short introduction on Marian spirituality, participants completed a teacher reflection exercise. The morning session consisted of an overview of Mary in Western art with a discussion of selected images. The aim was to open up for participants a new understanding of the relativity of various cultural interpretations of the symbol of Mary and begin to explore some of the origins of their own understandings and images of Mary. An examination of Mary in scripture involving reflection, small and large group work occupied the first half of the afternoon. The next session had a theological focus and drew on the writings of Elizabeth Johnson, situating Mary in the Communion of Saints. A time of personal prayer and reflection concluded the day.

The major focus of the professional development day was reflection/formation. It began however with a meeting dealing with administration issues relevant to the assembled group. After a morning tea break the room was then rearranged with small groups around circular tables. A focus table was set up with a large contemporary coloured print illustrating an encounter/meeting between two women. Reflective music formed a backdrop as the participants reentered the room. After an initial personal introduction, a brief overview of the day was given, beginning with the following reflection.

There has been an explosion in interest in spirituality. This ranges from formula horoscope and feng shui readings in women's magazines through Hollywood celebrities like Richard Gere exploring Buddhism and Madonna promoting Kaballah. In Australian academic circles David Tacy and Paul Davies challenge their colleagues to look beyond a mechanistic or purely functional explanation of observed phenomena. Despite the plethora of products now available in the spiritual supermarket I wish to argue that authentic relationships remain at the heart of the human person and that the refinement, reflection upon and development of relationships form the core of what is popularly called spirituality. If this is the case then Marian spirituality centres around an individual's relationship to the person and symbol of Mary. Like all religious persons and symbols, Mary has the potential to lead us to a deeper self-knowledge and knowledge of the divine. This day, with a focus on Marian spirituality included a chance for participants to ponder the Mary that they related to and reflect upon what this Mary said about them and their relationship to God.

**Mary as Symbol**

Following the opening reflection the focus was on the relationship between sign, symbol and spirituality. Johnson (2003) writes that the symbol of Mary serves the life of faith because it is created from the church's experience of encounter with a gracious God. Drawing on Ricoeur, Johnson (2003, p. 98) explains, "unlike a sign, a symbol participates in the reality which it signifies ... furthermore, a symbol has a structure of double intentionality which carries the human subject beyond the literal intent of an image or word to the surplus of meaning conveyed by it." Symbols invite us into a larger reality, "one is carried through the literal reference by its surplus of meaning to what it signifies, which in the case of religious symbols is the infinite mystery of the living God " (Johnson, 2003, p. 98).

Mary is a powerful religious symbol. As a symbol she mediates attitudes around women and ecclesial authority. In some ways Mary is a litmus test for Catholicism. Amid feminist critiques, which elaborate ways that the Marian tradition has been used to limit rather than enrich the lives of real women, Mary continues to be a potent figure in the lives of many Catholics. People pray to Mary. There is a long tradition of invoking Mary as one who is a powerful and effective helper. The oldest known prayer to Mary, is written in Greek on an Egyptian papyrus, and probably dates from some time during the 4th-5th centuries. The prayer says, "Beneath your mercy we take refuge, O Mother of God. Do not reject our supplications in time of necessity, but deliver us from danger; you alone, pure, alone blessed."

A recent example illustrates the enduring relevance of Mary to people of all faiths and none. In an article in the *Good Weekend* magazine, a woman writes of her attempt to resolve her grief after the death of her son. Australian, Jeremy Little was 27 when he was killed while working as a sound recordists for NBC in Baghdad. His mother, Anna, undertook a 400 kilometre walk around England, to places familiar to her son. She writes

> Each day I passed through tiny villages built around an ancient church, which I'd make a point of visiting. Many of them were dedicated to the Virgin Mary, who'd also lost her son, and I felt close to her as I left prayers for Jeremy wherever I could. Remembering him in this way, I felt I was telling his story as I went, and sharing my sorrow with others. It was strangely comforting (*SMH*, 2004, p. 61).

**Mary as Person**

Because the symbol of Mary is open to individual, communal and cultural projections, which may or may not facilitate the liberating intent of the gospel and mission of Christ, there is a need to anchor Marian spirituality to the person, Mary of Nazareth, the mother of Jesus. However as Johnson points out, "even the gospel depictions, of course, have a symbolic character, reflecting the theology of the different evangelists" (Johnson, 2003, p. 101). The author of Luke-Acts for example, places on the lips of Mary, the Magnificat. This prayer has become one of the most memorable prophetic prayers of the Christian tradition in its echo of Hannah's Canticle in I Samuel.

Within the Catholic tradition, Marian spirituality, which includes the individual's relationship to Mary, must take account of a wider Christological and ecclesial context. Catholic teaching provides a framework for a devotee's relationship to Mary, with reference to Mary's relationship to God, in and through the person of Jesus Christ. Our knowledge and understanding of the person, Miriam of Nazareth, is informed by sources such as scripture, other ancient texts, archeology and cultural anthropology. The information gleaned from these sources is used to create an historical reconstruction of this woman in first century Roman occupied Palestine.

> Mary is a concrete woman of history who had her own life to figure out, a first century Jewish woman in a peasant village with a culture very different from twenty-first century, postindustrial society, though similar to peasant culture in those countries where it still exists. About the chronology and psychology of her life we know very little. We need to acknowledge this void in our knowledge, respect it, and inhabit it knowingly. Then we can rightly interpret the Christian discourse of the gospel writers who present glimpses of her life connected with the coming of the Messiah and his community (Johnson, 2003, p. 101).

Johnson advises about symbolic constructs of Mary, "because we are dealing with an actual person, however much unknown, her historical reality should tether down insight at every point" (Johnson, 2003, p. 101).

**Teacher Reflection Exercise**

After a short break the next phase involved a Teacher Reflection exercise. The purpose of this exercise was to assist participants to identify and gain a greater self-awareness of the origins of their own personal images/views of Mary. A sheet containing three questions for personal reflection was distributed. It asked participants to describe themselves in terms of ethno-cultural background, gender and age range and recall some early memories of family/parish/school religious practice. Question 2. invited participants to comment especially on their early memories and understanding of the Virgin Mary – prayers, hymns, statues, pictures, medals, rosary, novenas, feast days and so forth. The third questions focused on family and cultural and gender roles and expectations. The activity required that each participant complete individual written responses. Approximately fifteen minutes silent reflection/writing time was allocated. This was followed by small group discussion where the responses to the questions were shared.

**Mary in Art**

Many people have images of Mary that are vague and unformed. The next session involved presenting a range of images from the history of mainly Western Art. The purpose of the exercise was to invite points of recognition in the participants related to their own images of Mary, be they nascent, developing, undifferentiated or fully formed.

The process invited participants to recognise, identify, examine and reflect upon their own images of Mary. It should be noted that the context in which an image is viewed has an impact on its symbolic power. A sacred image displayed in a museum is approached, appreciated and understood differently from when it is located in a church, chapel or grotto. As part of a reflection day for Catholic teachers in Catholic schools the use of historical images of Mary is an appropriate means of encouraging reflection.

Coyle (1996) writes that generations of Christians have largely shaped their own image of Mary and adapted her to their religious needs in various times and places. How Mary is depicted often shows how different ages have conceived the ideal of Christian womanhood. The images were chosen around some specific themes, for example Mary as noble, imperial, protector, suffering, cosmic, domestic and so forth. A brief background was given to the paintings but essentially the images were allowed to speak for themselves in promoting a conversation both within and between participants.

The first image shown was from a fourth century catacomb fresco. Mary is dressed as a Roman maiden holding her child. She dominates by her jewellery and her size. Her hands are raised in the *Orante*, a praying position indicating ritual gesture. This woman has bold eyes, a strong nose, a round chin, long thick eyebrows and heavy curls. This Mary is a full-blooded peasant from the southern Mediterranean (Cronin, 1968). The second image was a 10th century mosaic, *the Virgin Protectress of Constantinople.* In this mosaic Mary is enthroned with Christ blessing. Mary is the important figure in this work as indicated by a caption 'Mother of God'. Constantine stands on her right holding a model of the city he founded; on her left is Justinian with a model of St Sophia. This close relationship between two emperors, (one not a saint), and Mary signals the idea of protective patronage. The emperors offer city and church to her, she gives her protection. The third image was from a genre of narrative cycles portraying scenes from the life of Mary. In this case it was a 12th century mosaic showing the *Dormition of Mary*, which almost parallels a nativity scene with the dormant Mary wrapped in (swaddling) cloth. "Here the artist seems to say, Christ is bringing to heavenly birth the soul of his own mother" (Cronin, 1968, p. 18).The next image *Our Lady of Montserrat*, Catalonia, a Black Madonna, is a statue of Mary Enthroned . The black skin of the Virgin and the solidity of the statue relate Mary strongly to earth and fecundity. Next was *the Vladimir Madonna.* This popular icon shows the Virgin and child with their faces touching tenderly. The emotional closeness in the mother-child relationship was something of a breakthrough in its era.

*The Annunciation* by Jan van Eyck, (1390-1441) from the late Gothic period, contains a number of motifs associated with Mary. She is in a church interior, which points to her later role as an archetype of the church. There is a lily in the vase as a symbol of purity. The angel of the annunciation wears a brilliant silken, pearl-encrusted mantle, whose beauty is meant to be an expression of divine harmony. Mary as portrayed in this work is a symbol appropriated by authority. The next image was the late Gothic woodcarving of Schramm (1480-1515) showing Mary gathering the people under her protective cloak. Widespread death forms the context of this work.

> Because of such natural disasters as the Black Death, the experiences of the Hundred Years War, and the Great Western Schism, people prayed to Mary, Mother of Mercy, for her protection from dangers pressing from every side. When one-fifth of the population of Europe was wiped out by the Black Death people sought consolation in the image of the sorrowing mother at the foot of the cross. The Franciscans encouraged the faithful to follow the Via Dolorosa, to journey with Mary to the cross. For Christians who could not afford to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, this was a way of sharing in the suffering of Mary and her Son (Coyle, 1996, p. 56).

Mathias Grünewald's *Isenhein Crucifixion* shows a suffering mother. Christ is on the cross and Mary is swooned in the arms of St John. In this image a realistic representation of suffering is depicted. Mary is shown as so grief-stricken that she has to be supported. "Her shroud-like dress, the hands raised in a gesture of wailing, the twisted mouth, the stiff helpless posture – Mary's suffering, we feel, is commensurate here with Christ's" (Cronin, 1968, p. 81). By way of contrast, the painting by Gerard David shows a domestic scene, *Mary Spoon-feeding the Child Jesus*. Mary is shown in a Flemish bourgeois home, feeding her child bread and milk. Through the window we see a neat village location. Cronin (1968) suggests the wooden spoon, which holds the child's interest is an illusion to the cross. "Thus the bread and apple are symbols, respectively, of the Eucharist and of Mary the new Eve: with a small hallmark they stamp the painting as an authentically religious work" (Cronin, 1968, p. 48).

Mary enthroned with the Christ Child has been an enduring cultic image in the West. The word *maesta* means 'majesty' and refers to a painting of the Madonna and child in which the figure of Mary is enthroned surrounded by angels. Giotto's *Madonna and Child,* painted around 1320/30 expresses feeling and significance. "Mary looks out on us with tender dignity, and the child, kingly in person, sits on her arm as on a throne. Yet we are not kept at a distance: we approach with reverence, but we do not stay shyly away" (Beckett, 1995, p. 46).

Leonardo da Vinci's *Virgin of the Rocks*, brings Mary together with the mysterious aspect of nature.

Cronin (1968, p.72) writes "For the first time we are confronted with a cosmic Mary. These huge shapes are more than mere rocks: they typify the world, a planet among other whirling planets and stars"

The Renaissance was characterised by the rediscovery of the dignity of humanity. Rather than as Queen of Heaven it was the humanity of Mary, depicted as a naturally beautiful woman who revealed the glory of God. With the rise of humanism it was taken for granted that Mary's spiritual grace should be expressed in physical beauty. In his *Madonna and Child with Angels*, Rubens surrounds Mary with the most human-looking angels, alive with joy. Mary became emblematic of Counter-Reformation theology and teaching. She became the symbol that embodied Catholic defence against the reformers.

The pictures of Mary as very human in heaven emphasised that the gap between the human and divine was not as great as the reformers would hold. Angels were portrayed as very human. Cronin (1968, p. 99) writes that Rubens painting contains a circular rhythm that makes it appear that "this garland of flesh actually seems to move through the air". Rubens's love of physical exuberance, says Cronin, "succeeds in making it an acceptable symbol of Mary's grace" (1968, p. 99). The theological framework is the interpenetration of heaven and earth, grace and nature. Mary is a human person like us, yet full of grace she has been raised to the glory of the Queen of Angels.

Rembrandt is an example of those whose depiction of Mary kept close to the text of the New Testament. His etching of *the Flight into Egypt* emphasises her ordinariness. The protests of the reformers influenced the type of images of Mary. There was a return to scriptural themes with the elimination of apocryphal elements.

Images of Mary by herself show her as the symbol of perfect humanity, "conceived without sin". Murillo's depiction (1650) of *the Immaculate Conception* shows the hovering figure of Mary without the Christ Child on the crescent moon as a cosmic Virgin framed by angels. Attributes from the Litany of Loreto, such as the rose without thorns, the lily, the branch of olive and palm, indicate the Immaculate Conception. The special Baroque dynamic and dramatic attitude make Mary appear now as radiant, potent Queen of heaven (Ebertshauser et al., 1998, p. 254 ).

**Contemporary Images**

A contemporary icon by Robert Lentz presents a new Mater Dolorosa, *Mother of the Disappeared* in Latin America. Wearing their white kerchief, Mary holds in her hands Christ's crown of thorns. Smeared across the side of the icon is a white handprint, the signature of the El Salvador death squads.

*The Pregnant Mary* by George Mung, a skilled woodcarver from the Warmun community at Turkey Creek, is acclaimed as a major Australian work of art and devotion. It reflects the creativity resulting from the meeting of Catholic and Aboriginal cultures in Australia. In this sculpture there is separateness yet interconnection of the mother and the unborn, a stark interdependence so lovingly captured as we are struck immediately by the dominant image of a fully formed child within. This image is portrayed in the opening page in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Australian edition.

The dominant image of Mary as a woman of power has been a constant in Catholic consciousness till the 1950s. Images of Mary comprise a continuum that range from Mary as Queen of heaven to contemporary artistic representations of Mary, woman of Nazareth. A wide variety of artistic representations of Mary now coexist in a postmodern culture. In the contemporary context images from the whole history of the church can be drawn upon to convey the meaning of Mary for different people in different circumstances and different cultures. The purpose of this session was to offer participants an opportunity to articulate who Mary is for them personally. A range of visual representations of Mary was shown. The process was invitational. Participants responded to particular images to varying degrees with some images "speaking" to them more than others. Participants were then asked to reflect upon why certain particular images (or elements of images) evoked a response, either positive or negative. Reflecting on all the images, participants were invited to reflect on the question, who is Mary for me? The process was intended to assist participants with regard to becoming intentionally aware of their partly articulated, sometimes unspoken understanding of who Mary is. Participants were then invited to ask themselves the following question, "How do I see Mary and how do I see myself in relationship to Mary, to Christ, to God, to others and to the world."

**Mary in Scripture**

The session after lunch was an opportunity for participants to engage with Mary as recorded in the Christian gospels. Four readers were given a specific text from each of the gospels: Mark 3: 21, 31-35; Matthew 1:18-21; Luke1:39-53; John 19:25-27. All four were asked to stand in the four corners of the room and in turn each reader proclaimed the gospel passage, followed by a short period of

silence. The next exercise was designed to assist participants to think about the life of this woman, who lived so long ago in a totally different time and culture to a twentieth-first century Australian city. To this end, an historical/cultural picture of the role and place of Jewish women in first century Palestine was outlined reflectively. What follows is an attempt to construct an historical picture of the Jewish woman who was Mary of Galilee – her background, village life, her role within the family, her probable tasks and responsibilities. A significant source for this reflection was the *Woman's Bible Commentary.*

**A Historical Picture of the Jewish Woman, Mary of Nazareth**

Nazareth in the 1st century is now known to have been an important village, a busy trade centre overlooking the main route that led south and west from Sepphoris to Caesarea. With a population of 1500-2000 people (Buby, 1995) who were probably familiar with and influenced by the dominant Greco-Roman culture. Given the male-centred concerns of the bible, little is written of the actual experience of women in daily life and especially the private life of the home.

Most Israelites lived in family households consisting of several generations. This complex family needed careful management. Often it was especially hard for a newly-wed bride to feel accepted in her husband's family home.

**The Embedded Identity of Women**

Our contemporary Western sense of individuality was not part of 1st century Mediterranean culture. Cultural anthropologists have identified core values such as shame and honour in trying to understand the way people related to one another and their community in the 1st century Mediterranean world. People were not seen as individuals, but were identified by their father or place of residence, for example Jesus of Nazareth or Simon son of Jonah. Sanders writes, "A personal identity separate from anyone else was impossible and unthinkable" (1996, p. 10). Thus maintaining honour in the eyes of the community was a powerful force.

Only males were accorded honour and women were recognised only in relationship to a man: a father; a husband; an uncle; a son. Women reflected the honour of their male sponsor. "Their primary role was to protect their sponsor's honour by behaving in a positive, virginal manner. They had to be careful that in public they dressed and behaved demurely, spoke to men only when spoken to" (Sanders, 1996, p. 8). Passivity, hiddenness, and receptivity of women were emphasised. Children belonged to their father, and the greatest gift a woman could give her husband was a son (Buby, 1995).

In a farming village like Nazareth, the women worked very hard in the grain fields (barley and wheat) for at least five hours per day. Women looked after the vines, gardens and fruit trees near their household while caring for children. Women were the food gatherers and preservers. "The plethora of store – jars and storage pits discovered in Israelite dwellings attest to the extensive efforts that went into transforming grains, olives, fruit, and herbs into forms that would not spoil" (Meyers: 1992, p. 247).

Women were also the clothes makers. Material that remains in Israelite settlements (spindle whorls and loom weights) suggest that each family produced its own cloth. Providing clothing was complex and time-consuming; it often involved "the shearing of wool or preparation of flax, the carding and spinning of thread, the weaving of cloth, and the sewing of garments" (Meyers, 1992, p. 247).

"Pottery, textiles and basket making were part of a woman's skill and artful labor" (Buby, 1995, p. 44). He cites Proverbs 31:10-31 in praise of the worthy wife as providing background to the tasks. Carrying out the life-supporting daily activities was extremely time consuming. It required much skill and technical expertise which meant women had responsibility for the critical aspects of household life. They exercised authority in the household (planning and managing the budget) and were responsible for interfamily arrangements.

The care, education and socialisation of children were a woman's responsibility. While the presence of sages and elders in scripture suggests a male monopoly on teaching traditional beliefs and practices, as Meyers (1992) points out, daily interactions of mothers with children were foundational for the transmission of Israelite culture and values. In Proverbs the personification of wisdom as female seems to come from the role of mothers in the care and socialisation of children (Proverbs 4:1-9, 6:20, 8:1-36, 31:10-31).

A Jewish woman faithful to the law did not participate in public life. Archaeological discoveries in households indicate religious family celebrations. As Buby (1995, p. 46) writes the scriptures attest to women's special role in funerals and even in major public events in composing music, dance (Ex. 15:20; Judges:5; Judges:21:21; 1 Sam. 18:6; 2 Cor. 35:25; Jer:9:17). The patrilineal structure of Israelite society with men controlling most economic assets suggests a gender hierarchy, which Meyers (1992) thinks must be weighed

against the relative social unity of men and women in household settings.

> All the evidence points to the fact that Miriam of Nazareth, wife of a carpenter in the farming village of Nazareth, lived the bulk of her childbearing years along the rigorous lines described here, engaged in the labour of maintaining a Jewish household in a rural village overlaid with the economic pressures of dominant Roman authorities and their Herodian client-kings. Once she was widowed, her situation would have become more precarious, depending on the composition of her household and the ability of others to assume her husband's share of the life sustaining work (Johnson, 2003, pp. 203-204).

After a short time of silent reflection, participants were asked to form small groups. An *Inform* article (No.58), "Mary in the New Testament", by Raymond E. Brown, offered an opportunity to explore and compare the differing scriptural perspectives on Mary in each of the four gospels. Participants were asked to choose (or were assigned) one of four groups, Mark, Matthew, Luke or John. Thirty-five minutes were allocated for reading and small group discussion. Each group reported back significant points identified in the article, some issues that were discussed and questions that arose. The group that focussed on Mark's gospel reported an understanding of the ambivalence to Mary in this gospel and the centrality of discipleship. The group examining Matthew's gospel saw a deeper understanding of Joseph's dilemma as a "just man" and Mary's precarious situation, being found pregnant, given the culture and the times. It is interesting to note that the group working on the gospel of Luke started to raise questions related to Mary's origins and the person of Mary. A central theme for the group working on John's gospel was the meaning of Mary's presence with the beloved disciple at the foot of the cross when Jesus died.

**Mary and the Communion of Saints**

The final task of the day was to bring together, and make connections between the hearing of scriptures proclaimed, reflections on the historical/cultural background of women's role in first century Palestine, the authoritative opinion of a recognised Catholic scripture scholar and the participants' own images/thoughts/views about Mary as stimulated by the work of art, with the central question, "What does this mean for me?" Participants were invited to engage the question, not just intellectually but existentially. How does this invitation to relationship with Mary (Marian spirituality) impact on me, how I see myself, and in my relationship with God?

Elizabeth Johnson's view about situating Mary in the communion of saints offers a possibility of creating a "graced connection" between Mary's life and our own (Johnson, 2003, p. 106). Johnson, aware of differing theological and doctrinal perspectives, sees that locating Mary in the communion of saints invites us to identify and examine our personal understanding of Mary in light of the Catholic tradition's communal symbol of a solidarity that transcends time. In the context of this reflection day on Marian spirituality participants were invited to think about themselves in the trans-historical, trans-geographical community, that is, the communion of saints. Our personal images of Mary are then given a bigger context where they may be challenged, extended, modified or affirmed. As with any spirituality, Marian spirituality, has need of critical self reflection. Johnson points out the importance of critical awareness of our own social location to avoid the tendency to project our own way of being in the world onto everyone else. As we acknowledge and explore Mary's difference from us, we can also gain a new understanding of her solidarity with us.

> The category of 'solidarity in difference' works to prevent memory from making women of old, Miriam of Nazareth, included, into merely mirror images of ourselves. It promotes appreciation rather than rejection of the otherness of their ways (Johnson, 2003, p. 107).

Johnson suggests that the little historical information we have about the life of Mary links her with "most women throughout history whose stories have not been preserved" (Johnson, 1993, p. 7). The following reading from *Praying: A Modern Mary, Sister, Companion, Friend* was used with a meditative rather than discursive approach. In a discussion of the meaning of Mary for a post Vatican II theology and spirituality, Johnson says:

> The little we have presents a woman free in her relationships. She appears intelligent, asking questions before giving her consent. She decides courageously without consulting male authority figures. As a result, she finds herself an unwed pregnant teenager at great social risk. She gets exasperated with Jesus, reprimands and challenges him. She has a brood of children to manage. She knows the loneliness of being widowed and the anguish of being the mother of an executed criminal. At the same time, she is a prophet who sings of justice

and gives herself wholeheartedly to the coming of God, choosing to keep faith to the end in the circle of women and men disciples. It does not escape notice that once she says yes to the divine invitation, she is never at home again.

> Here are glimpses of a life that is a sign of contradiction to the sexism in traditional Mariology. Mary embodies the last who will become first in the reign of God. At the same time Jesus embodies the self-emptying, loving service that ought to characterize the lives of the powerful. Together they signal a direction towards a community of the discipleship of equals ... The communion of saints is a doctrinal symbol that stands for the fact that all who are baptized are related to each other through being related to Christ. The bond with Christ is so strong that even death cannot break it; death does not cause one to leave the church. Thus the community extends not only in space all over the world, but also in time throughout all the ages. Those who have gone before us, however broken and sinful they may have been, have contributed by their ultimate faith and example to our own journey...In this context of mutuality centred on Christ, it is legitimate to ask a companion to 'pray for us', as indeed Reformation Christians do among the living. By such a request we dive into the community of saints, take refuge in it, strengthen the bonds among each other and thereby with Christ. As a preeminent member of the community, Mary too may be called upon in prayer. According to Catholic teaching there is not obligation to call upon Mary and the other saints, although it is encouraged as good and useful. If we do so, however, it does not necessarily overshadow the role of Christ; rather it can be an expression of our belonging to the communion of saints (Johnson, 1993, pp. 7-8).

This paper outlines a method of reflective analysis and prayer, with both content and process that can be adapted in various ways. It offers a model for use in school and parish contexts for education in ministry and professional development for teachers.

The day concluded with a litany of honour from Barbara Bretherton (1999):

***Mother of God*** We honour and praise you
***Mother of the Church*** We honour and praise you
***Mother of Jesus*** We honour and praise you
***Mother of all*** We honour and praise you
***Woman of strength*** Show us the way
***Woman of goodness*** Show us the way
***Woman of justice*** Show us the way
***Woman who listened*** Remember us to God
***Woman who suffered*** Remember us to God
***Woman who wondered*** Remember us to God
***Woman who loved*** Remember us to God

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