

## How to become an Official Member of the VMY, “The Promise”

Dear Members of the Vincentian Marian Youth Association (VMY)

It is a great pleasure for me to place in your hands these four presentations related to a very important theme of our Association: the Marian Consecration.

We, together with the members of the International Council of the VMY, have been involved in this work for some time. We have also relied on the collaboration of various members of the Congregation of the Mission.

The first two processes are very important with regard to your immediate preparation and your necessary formation for said consecration. Thus the first presentation, “**Live our Baptismal Commitment**”, seeks to deepen, from a scriptural perspective, your understanding of this consecration which you make to Mary and also seeks to help you reflect on this consecration as it is related to your baptismal commitment. As we know, any consecration to Mary means a greater commitment to her Son, Jesus Christ. Therefore, the first presentation focuses on the Word of God and examines Mary’s role from the perspective of her commitment to her Son ... various significant events in her life are reflected upon as they relate to the life of Jesus. At its deepest level, consecration is a consecration of love, a profound love that is offered to God, to his Son, Jesus Christ, and to Mary. As a result of this we offer the same love to our neighbor which, in our particular situation as members of the Vincentian Family, is a love toward the poor, our lords and masters.

The second process, “**My personal plan for life**”, will help you reflect on and deepen the consecration that you profess to the Virgin Mary from the very depths of your being, from the depths of your humanity, from what makes you a human person, from the true meaning of life that results from this commitment that is made to God and to the neighbor. Beginning with the text of the Angel’s announcement to Mary and her response as a model for our response, this presentation, through a series of questions, leads us to a better understanding of this step that you are taking, a step that is a “yes” to a commitment that you, as a young man or young woman, are making as a member of this Association. At the end of this presentation it is hoped that you will clearly know how to live this consecration in light of your own plan for life.

The third and fourth processes will help you to reflect on and deepen your understanding of the process that follows your consecration. The third presentation: “**Evaluation of Our Journey within the Association**”, invites you, from the perspective of the Word of God, to evaluate your life within the Association and to do this in light of your experience of your relationship with God and Mary and Catherine Laboure and the other saints who share our Vincentian spirituality. In this presentation you are also invited to engage in this evaluation in light of the characteristics proper to the Association, namely its notes which are: ecclesial, lay, Vincentian, Marian as well as other aspects proper to the formation process.

The Marian Promise is a great gift and treasure that God gifts to us through the Virgin Mary. Therefore it is necessary that we evaluate how we are using this gift and treasure as we journey through our life as members of this Association.

The fourth process, "**Renew your Marian Consecration**", is intended to help you understand that your consecration is not a singular event that is completed on the day that you profess it ... rather it is an event in which you make a lifelong commitment, one that you constantly renew. We are called to live, to contemplate, to love and to serve God with Mary and in the manner that Mary did all of this. Renewal occurs through deep contemplation and prayer that helps us to live, in all its fullness, the blessings that God has bestowed upon us. Once again the Word of God helps us to walk firmly in the midst of the difficulties and the "deserts" of our life and give a continual "yes" throughout our life.

Once again I encourage you to value this document which is placed in your hands. It is an instrument that will help us to be faithful to the option which we have made during our life and that is reflected in the consecration that we have professed. Above all else it is an instrument that leads us to live our Christian faith from the perspective of our Marian identity and to serve our sisters and brothers, the poor, in a Vincentian manner and as members of the Vincentian Marian Youth Association.

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Director General Marian Promise Processes

## I- Lesson Plans for the Marian Promise

### LIVE OUR BAPTISMAL COMMITMENT

#### THE BIBLICAL WITNESS

*You are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises” of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Pet 2:9)*

This description of the baptized Christian community expresses the intimate link between consecration and mission. It is true for us as well.

#### Reflection Areas:

- 1) As a baptized Christian, do you feel special? You should! Peter reminds his community in the text above about how special they are to the Lord. Remember that special blessing, be grateful, and think of what it can mean for you.
- 2) With special gifts come added responsibilities. As you consider how blessed you are, reflect on your call to witness to the praises of God in word and deed. Where is that practical and possible in your family, at your Church, among your friends?
- 3) Are you ready to take another step: a special dedication, a consecration to Jesus through Mary? What does that mean to you?

### INTRODUCTION

The VMY consecration “to Jesus through Mary” signifies the personal commitment to live out one’s baptismal promises in an explicit way by dedicating oneself to service and the evangelization of the poor. In this effort, Mary is embraced as both mother and model. Marian Consecration Presentations

“Seen in the light of Christ's words (cf. John 19, 25-27), the act of consecration is a conscious recognition of the singular role of Mary in the Mystery of Christ and of the Church, of the universal and exemplary importance of her witness to the Gospel, of trust in her intercession, and of the efficacy of her patronage, . . . she is a true mother in the order of grace to each and every one of her children.” (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy, 2001, # 204).

The story of the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan offers to the Christian an important lesson about baptism. The Lord speaks to each of us at that important moment as we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit: “You are my beloved son/daughter; with you I am well pleased” (Mk 1:11). This first and foundational consecration reminds us that we are God’s children, loved by God, and pleasing to him. In response, we consecrate the whole of our lives to draw closer to him through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In this effort, Mary is our guide and our inspiration. No one embraced the gift of the Holy Spirit more than she from the Annunciation to Pentecost. No one knew Jesus better than she from the moment of the Incarnation to the glory of his Death and Resurrection. No one consecrated his/her life to God more than she from her Immaculate Conception to her Assumption. When we speak of our baptismal consecration, our consecration to Jesus, we do so through Mary. She is our mother and model.

Several biblical passages emphasize the importance of Mary in showing the way to this consecration as a fulfillment of our baptismal promises. It was the way in which she lived her own life with both simplicity and fidelity. I will highlight three elements which call to mind the baptismal commitments of obedience, prayer, and service. They point the way for us for both prophetic witness and action.

Reflection Areas:

1) “You are my beloved son.” Those words spoken to Jesus at his Baptism are also spoken to us at our Baptism. From the first, we are consecrated to God and pleasing to him. Think about yourself as God’s beloved son/daughter and what that means for you. Recognize that you are gifted with the presence of the Holy Spirit.

2) Mary is our mother and model. She knew Jesus better than anyone.

She seeks to guide us to him both by her words and example. How important is Mary in your life? Are you ready to accept her intercession and loving guidance?

3) To consecrate—totally dedicate—ourselves to Jesus through Mary, we need to know her ways. What were they? What was important in her life?

## **1. THE ANNUNCIATION: MARY’S OBEDIENT “YES”**

At the heart of baptism is the truth that we are God’s children, and as his children we are called to obedience to God’s will in our lives. In the story of the Annunciation, Mary is greeted by the words of the angel and told that she has found favor with God (Lk 1:28-30). The angel asks her if she will be the mother of Jesus. Once Mary knows what is God’s will for her, her response is immediate: “Behold, the handmaid of the

Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:39). This response is often captured in the word “fiat,” and we might summarize it simply as “Yes.” Mary says “yes” to God’s request simply and without qualification. She will do whatever God asks of her.

We can identify two parts in her response. In the first part, “Behold, the handmaid of the Lord,” she agrees to do everything which needs to be done as a mother to Jesus—whatever carrying, teaching, cleaning, and preparing. She willingly commits herself physically to do the work of a mother. She also says: “be it done to me according to your word.” This is the passive acceptance of God’s will in her life. Not only is she willing to do all that is necessary to be a mother and wife, she is also willing to accept

whatever else comes into her life as a result of this decision. She has no idea where all this will lead, but she is willing to accept God's will in whatever form which it takes. She will be an obedient daughter of Israel and of the Lord. With the gift of the Holy Spirit, her "yes" brings Jesus into our world and to us.

Mary's fiat leads us to our need to say "yes" to God in our lives. That positive response opens us to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and to the Marian Consecration Presentations presence of Jesus within us. We are willing to live faithfully as sons and daughters of God who are obedient to his call wherever it leads. In this commitment, we steadfastly carry out our baptismal consecration.

Reflection Areas:

1) Mary knew how to say "yes." When she says it, she means it. That is at the heart of a consecration. Her "yes" was an acceptance of God's will in her life; she consecrated herself to the accomplishment of this will as the mother of Jesus. Can you say "yes" with a similar willingness and dedication? What helps or hurts your commitment?

2) Mary's "yes" focused both on what she will do and on what she will accept. If you could say this kind of "yes," what would it mean in your life?

## **2. THE VISITATION—MARY AT PRAYER**

At the heart of one's relationship with a loving Father is the ability to talk with one another. With God, this communication is prayer. After Mary has said "yes" to God in accepting the call to be the mother of Jesus, she goes to her cousin Elizabeth to help in the last months of her pregnancy with John the Baptist. One can imagine the joy with which these holy women embraced one another. Elizabeth affirms Mary: "Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled" (Lk 1:45). Elizabeth knows that Mary is an obedient daughter of the Lord.

Mary's heart is so filled with thanks and wonder that she pours out the prayer which we have come to call the Magnificat. It proclaims the greatness of God in Mary's life, in the care of the poor, and in the experience of her people. Listen to the way in which it begins:

*"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name."* (Lk 1:46-49)

Mary's prayer starts with the praise of God and deals in a personal way with how God has acted in her life. Gratitude fills her words. Her prayer is a true and heartfelt conversation with God which is characterized by joyful acceptance and recognition of God's dynamic presence. Behind it, we can hear many such conversations and a loving confidence.

One can imagine the way in which Mary taught the child Jesus to pray and we can see the evidence of that instruction in Jesus' life. She also teaches us how to pray, to pray with praise and out of the depths

of our experience. Our prayer emerges from our life and relates back to our life. It reflects a vision which sees God at work and rejoices in his action. In this way, we respond to our baptismal call to enter into a loving relationship with our God. As we consecrate ourselves to Jesus through Mary, we enter into that intimate conversation which draws us closer and binds us more powerfully to the One who made us. It is the simplest of relations with the One who always listens.

Reflection Areas:

1) Prayer is supposed to be simple, and for some of us it is. It is, at heart, a conversation with God, a conversation that flows from our life. It was so for Mary. How easy is prayer for you? Why? Look at the way in which Mary's prayer is a combination of praise and joy.

2) Our prayer can lead us to a consecration as we desire to grow closer to Jesus. Mary can teach us to pray as she taught Jesus as a boy. What would you like to learn?

### **3. THE WEDDING FEAST AT CANA—MARY'S CALL TO SERVICE**

Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth was not simply to share the wondrous news about the new life which grew within each one of them. Mary went there because the angel had told her that Elizabeth was six months pregnant (Lk 1:36). In her old age, the preparations for the birth of John would have been difficult for Elizabeth, but the young and strong arms of Mary would now take Marian Consecration Presentations away that concern. Mary came to serve and she remained with Elizabeth for three months (Lk 1:56). Service comes naturally and easily to Mary and is another way in which she leads us to Jesus who came to serve (Mk 10:45).

The wedding feast at Cana also demonstrates Mary's role as one who serves. We know the story (Jn 2:1-11). Mary and Jesus are attending a wedding. The host family runs out of wine. Mary notices and seeks Jesus' help. One can hardly think that Mary knew what Jesus would do, but Mary has a trust in her Son which goes beyond concrete knowledge of how he will act in a particular case. Mary knows only that she senses a need, and she wants to do something to help this family. And so, she does the only thing which seems to make any sense to her: she goes to Jesus.

Jesus' response to her does not seem encouraging, but she is not put off. Her instruction to others is "do whatever Jesus tells them to do" (Jn 2:5); it is not very specific but full of confidence. Jesus' actions with regard to the jars of water and the provision of the wine is more than anyone might have expected, but it begins with Mary's attentiveness to human need, and then her willingness to bring it to the Lord, and then her inviting others to be part of this service. She leaves it to Jesus to bless her actions.

In her journey to the care of Elizabeth, we see how Mary carries out the role of service in her own life. In the wedding feast of Cana, we see how she encourages others to this same attitude of obedience to Jesus in service. As we look to her as our model, we can see how Mary sees people in their need and strives to respond to them in service. She does what she can, and she calls others to share in this responsibility. We are invited to do the same as we open our eyes to the needs of our world and

particularly those needs of people who are poor. In this way, we discover how we can act. Sometimes, we are called to direct service, and sometimes we invite others to this service. Sometimes, we take up the prophetic role of pointing out the need and promoting change. We are always called to be practical and to treat those served with love and respect, as did Jesus and Mary.

Like Mary, when we have done what we can, we leave the final resolution in God's hands confident that God will bless our efforts. Our baptismal Marian Consecration Presentations commitment calls us to active service and Mary shows us how to bring it all to Jesus. We consecrate ourselves to this effort.

Reflection Areas:

1) Consecrating oneself to Jesus through Mary leads to service. It can go no other way. Service was particularly important in the lives of both of them, and it must be so in our lives as well. In our Vincentian world, this service is particularly directed towards those who are poor. What kinds of service are realistic for you? Can you embrace with special compassion that type of service which is focused on the poor? Why?

2) To provide a service, one must first recognize a need—notice how Mary did it. Where do you see needs in your context? What kinds of response are possible?

## **CONCLUSION**

In baptism, God claims us as his children and we are invited to consecrate our lives to him in love. Three ways in which we can respond to this commitment are: through obedience to God's call in our lives through our faith-filled "yes", through our regular and personal conversation with our God in prayer characterized by praise and commitment, and through our willingness to serve our God in the loving care of our brothers and sisters—particularly those in need. The Holy Spirit guides us in all these efforts. In Mary, we see one who lived this kind of faith-filled and practical life. Each biblical story tells us how special yet simple was her response to God. When we consecrate ourselves to Jesus through Mary we take advantage of God's great gift to us of a loving mother and model who intercedes for us and offers us her encouragement and example. We call upon her with deep respect and reverence: "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you." Marian Consecration Presentations

Reflection Areas:

1) The Bible is a rich source of stories about God's action and direction for our world. Most especially, it tells us about Jesus. Many people consecrate themselves to the Lord in the Biblical witness other than Mary. Who are some of your favorite biblical characters and how have they taught you about the dedication of one's life in service?

2) All Christians are called to deepen their baptismal commitment. The Holy Spirit aids in this effort. How do you experience the Holy Spirit in your life? Where might this Spirit be leading you in your desire to consecrate yourself to Jesus through Mary?

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MUSIC FOR MEDITATION "Go Light Your World" ( Kathy Troccoli)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVqR6kTu8IE&list=PL3355EEF1D4D30BE8> Marian Consecration Presentations

## II. PRESENTATION:

### MY PLAN FOR LIFE

*Happy are those who think before acting and prayer before thinking because they are not disturbed by the unforeseeable.* (Saint Thomas More).

### INTRODUCTION

With this presentation I want the young men and women of the VMY to be able to find themselves, to continue to discover a sense of meaning in life and to continue to open their hearts to the neighbor and to God. In light of every day events I would hope that the members of the VMY are able to open themselves and share their strengths and weaknesses. Daily life that is enlightened by the reading of Scripture should enrich our everyday activities and surroundings.

Drawing up a plan for life is both a means and an end which helps individuals to travel along a path which ultimately enables them to achieve a goal that transforms life.

Therefore as a result of this exercise we want people to develop a critical sense and also want men and women who are aware of themselves and their surroundings and finally we want people who are protagonists of their history. In other words, we want people who allow Jesus to enter their life and transform their surroundings.

Now we are going to narrate an event that can illuminate our life. The life of Vincentian is focused on Christ and we know that Mary played a central role in Jesus' incarnation. Mary is the consecrated woman par excellence, the faithful servant, the model of one who is poor in spirit.

*And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was*



*Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said,*

*Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.*

## **1. A LIFE EVENT**

Let us analyze this event of the annunciation and deepen our understanding of this as we reflect on our own life in light of this event.

Do you have some event that you want to share with the members of the group who have gathered together in this place? Notice, we do not begin with a theme but with an event ... an event involves some action that can affect others. Every event is someone's reality ... someone who wants to discover how to transform him/herself.

Choose an event that has affected you or one that has involved a group of people ... then present some of the details surrounding the event and some of the dialogue that occurred at that time. We will return to this point later so that you can speak about some specific event in your life.

### **Reality of the event**

*And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.*

Events, like life itself, are complex, yet we have a respect for events and should not allow ourselves to become caught up in events. We cannot always see at once all the aspects or dimensions of an event. We have to focus on one aspect that appears to be most significant because this allows us to deepen our personal options, attitudes and motivations. Marian Consecration Presentations

In the Scripture event that we have narrated Mary is at home and appears to be alone. Then the angel arrives and there are two people involved in the event. In what way does this event affect the two people? On the one hand Mary is in Nazareth and the angel arrives in an unexpected manner and tells Mary: *rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you* (Luke 1:28). The invitation to rejoice supposes that now

all the messianic promises that were made to the people ... all those promises have been fulfilled (cf. Isaiah 12:6; Zacharia 2:14, 9:9; Joel 2:21-27; Zephaniah 3:14-15). The coming of the Lord has become a motive for joy for all who hope for salvation. Mary is filled with grace and interiorly transformed and renewed by God. This gift with which Mary has been blessed is a promised for all humankind.

The following questions might be helpful in narrating your specific event and might also help you come to a clearer understanding of the event. **What happened? When and where did this occur? How did this event affect me? Was someone else involved besides me? Why is this event significant? How is it that now I remember this event? Why did this occur? Did I do something to cause this event? Was there some positive consequence (or perhaps negative consequence) for those who were involved in the event?**

At first it will be good for you to respond to each one of these questions in order to acquire the habit of analyzing the events of your life.

## **2. REFLECT ON THE WORD OF GOD IN ORDER TO ENLIGHTEN REALITY**

*And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible (Luke 1:29-37).* Marian Consecration Presentations

Let us reflect on our own reactions and let us do so in light of the ways in which Jesus reacted to events: what did Jesus think? How did he deal with these events? What are the positive values or attitudes that can be found in this event? Does this event build up or destroy? In the process of formation the question "how?" arises. Where are we to begin and what techniques (prayer, youthful protagonist and the transformation of reality [systemic change]) can we utilize that will lead us as members of the VMY to an encounter with ourselves, to an encounter with others and to an encounter with God?

In light of the Word of God we judge the actions that prompted countless men and women to respond to God's plan for the world ... among them Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac and so many others. As we do this we can think and act in a more dynamic manner.

The young virgin in Nazareth was first silent and she remained silent for a while. Then she asked a series of question to the angel ... in fact Mary was direct and asked: *how can this be ...* (Luke 1:34). The angel responded: *do not be afraid* (Luke 1:30). The action of the divine can surprise and startle us, nevertheless we are also told: *do not be afraid* (Luke 1:30). Fear can paralyze us and prevent us from

entering into a relationship with others. Mary does not fully understand God's plan but she is open and willing to do that whatever God desires.

Let us take another step: this is an opportunity to mature as believers, especially now that we see and understand God's plan more clearly. The word of God that is read, listened to and reflected upon is a word that questions us and society; it is a word that denounced all injustice and all that is not in accord with God's plan; it is a word that demands on-going conversion, a change in attitude and a change of heart.

## **RESOLUTION**

The Objective of this section is to determine those attitudes that we ought to change and at the same time to decide on a new course of action that will transform our life and thus enable us to influence the people who surround us. Such personal changes also enable us to become involved in the process of changing social structures.

*Mary said: "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word (Luke 1:38).* Marian Consecration Presentations

Mary's attitude is very clear. Her response, *may it be done to me*, reveals her openness and her willingness to do what God wants. Mary's openness in turn reveals her humility: she is a servant, the handmaid of the Lord. This is not a sign of disrespect or dishonor for Mary but rather an expression of her trust in God ... her life is wholly focused on the Word of God.

This leads us to ask: what are we personally willing to do? With whom will we act? What steps do we have to take? When are we going to take those steps? What do we need in order to accomplish this? What support systems and resources are available? How will we give continuity to this exercise that we have engaged in?

This exercise that has enabled us to reflect on the event of the annunciation and some specific event in our own life can help us to write a plan for our life. To engage in this task of drawing up such a plan there are certain things that we need to be aware of: our strengths and our weaknesses, our likes and dislikes, the present state of our life, our temperament, our virtues, our character defects.

Here is a framework that can help us write a plan for life. Again we need to be aware of our attitudes at the present time and the attitudes that we want to develop.

## MY PLAN FOR LIFE

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>External Supports</b>
What do I want?	How much time do I need to achieve this?	How am I going to do this?	Who can support me to achieve this?

**Personal**

**School**

**Family**

**Work**