

Session 1: Daughter Zion

Learning to read Mary with Jewish eyes

LEADER PREPARATION GUIDE

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim. The group discovers that the New Testament introduces Mary in the language and patterns of Israel's Scriptures, and learns the Church's method of typological reading so they can make these discoveries themselves for the rest of the study.

Catholic Touchstone. Typology and the unity of God's plan (CCC 128–130); the holy women of Israel who prepare for Mary's mission (CCC 489).

What You Need to Know

Every study in this series begins with a wager: that the New Testament authors thought in the Old Testament, steeped as they were in Israel's Scriptures and in Jewish patterns of reading, and that when they describe Mary they are deliberately echoing Israel's story. Brant Pitre's *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of Mary*, one of the guiding sources for this study, builds its whole case on this move: before asking what the Church teaches about Mary, ask what a first-century Jew would have heard in the Gospel accounts of her. This session teaches the group how to listen that way.

Two texts do the heavy lifting tonight. First, the Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55), which is saturated with the song of Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1–10), the once-barren mother of the prophet Samuel. Mary sings her own joy in the borrowed cadences of Israel's mothers, placing herself in their line. Second, the angel's greeting (Luke 1:28–33) read against Zephaniah 3:14–17, where the prophet tells the Daughter of Zion to rejoice because 'the King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst.' Many scholars, Pitre among them, hear Gabriel addressing Mary as the Daughter of Zion in person: the woman in whose midst, quite literally in her womb, the Lord now dwells. Present this as a reading the Church's liturgy and many exegetes embrace, not as a defined datum.

The method itself needs naming. Typology is not a Catholic invention laid over the Bible; it is the New Testament's own way of reading. St. Paul calls Adam 'a type of the one who was to come' (Romans 5:14) and says Israel's desert wanderings 'happened to them as a warning' for us (1 Corinthians 10:11). St. Peter calls the flood a type of baptism (1 Peter 3:21). St. Matthew structures his infancy narrative around fulfillment. When this study reads Mary typologically, it is imitating the apostles, not improvising past them.

Set expectations for the room. This study is apologetic in nature: most sessions will raise the strongest Protestant objection to a Marian doctrine and answer it from the text. Tell the group plainly that the objections will be presented at full strength, because a faith that has only ever met weak objections is fragile. Some in the room may be seekers or Protestants; the tone toward them is the tone of a good host, never a debater scoring points.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Hannah and the Magnificat. Hannah, barren and grieving, receives a son by God's power and sings: 'My heart exults in the LORD; my strength is exalted in the LORD' (1 Samuel 2:1). Her song announces the reversal of the proud and the exaltation of the lowly, the hungry filled and the full sent away (1 Samuel 2:4–8). Mary's Magnificat follows the same arc of reversal, with striking verbal and thematic echoes. The Catechism names the pattern of holy women who prepare for Mary: Eve, Sarah conceiving in spite

of her old age, Hannah, and others whom God chose though they were 'considered powerless and weak' in order to show his faithfulness to his promises (CCC 489). Extending that line to the barren mothers Rebekah and Rachel is this study's own application, and we mark it as ours.

Daughter Zion. In the prophets, Israel personified as a woman is told to rejoice at the coming of her King: 'Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion... The LORD, your God, is in your midst' (Zephaniah 3:14, 17; compare Zechariah 9:9). Luke's annunciation opens with the same summons to joy, 'hail', 'rejoice' or 'hail,' and the same assurance: 'the Lord is with you' (Luke 1:28). What the prophets promised to the nation, the angel announces to a particular young woman of the nation.

This is the study's foundation stone: Mary is not an ornament added to the Gospel. She is where Israel's whole story gathers to a point so that the Messiah can enter it.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. AUGUSTINE

"The New Testament lies hidden in the Old, and the Old is unveiled in the New." This single sentence is the charter for everything this study will do: the two Testaments are one plan, and each opens the other.

Questions on the Heptateuch, Book 2, q. 73

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

St. Thomas teaches, in substance, that because God is the author of history itself, He can make not only words but events and persons carry meaning: the things of the Old Covenant really happened, and in happening they also signified what was to come. Typology therefore rests on the literal sense, never replaces it.

Summa Theologiae I, q. 1, a. 10 (summary)

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. IRENAEUS OF LYONS

St. Irenaeus teaches, in substance, that Christ "recapitulates" the whole human story: he passes back through what Adam and Israel lived, and where they failed, he is faithful, so that the story is not discarded but healed from inside. This study will watch Mary drawn into that same pattern of retelling.

Against Heresies, Book 3, chapters 18 and 21-22 (summary)

Catechism Connection

CCC 128–130 grounds tonight's method: the Church has always read the two Testaments as one plan through typology, discerning in God's works of the Old Covenant prefigurations of what He accomplished in Christ. CCC 116 anchors it: the spiritual senses are built on the literal sense, so typology is disciplined reading, not free association.

CCC 489 names the pattern the group will discover in Hannah: 'throughout the Old Covenant the mission of many holy women prepared for that of Mary,' from Eve through Sarah and Hannah to the poor and humble of the Lord. Cite these paragraphs as they stand; where tonight's discussion applies them to new examples, mark the application as ours.

Thread Watch

THREAD WATCH (LEADER ONLY)

Thread A ('the Woman') is planted tonight, lightly. In the last five minutes the group reads John 2:1–5 and simply notices that Jesus addresses his mother as 'Woman.' Do not explain it. Take-Home 1 carries the sealed My Guess box asking why he does this; guesses will be opened at Session 8 (Cana) and the thread fully resolves at Session 11.

Thread C ('mother of all living') gets a seed only: Genesis will surface in Session 2; make no mention tonight.

Keep a light touch. Tonight's job is method and appetite, not answers.

Session Goals

1. Group can state in their own words what typology is and defend it as the New Testament's own method.
2. Group has personally discovered the Hannah and Magnificat, and Zephaniah and Annunciation, parallels from the open texts.
3. Group understands the study's ground rules: objections at full strength, answers from the text, charity throughout.
4. Sealed My Guess box explained and assigned via Take-Home 1.

Timed Plan (75–90 minutes)

Segment	Minutes
Welcome and opening prayer	5
Win questions	10
Build: what is typology (Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 10; 1 Peter 3:21)	15
Build: live discovery, Magnificat and Hannah	20
Build: live discovery, Zephaniah and the Annunciation	15
Build: steelman and answer	10
The Woman teaser (John 2:1–5)	5
Send, Live It, memory verse, closing prayer	10

If short on time: Cut the Dig Deeper box on the barren mothers, and compress the typology openers (Romans, Corinthians, Peter) to Romans 5:14 alone. Do not cut the John 2 teaser; the sealed guess depends on it.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Opening Prayer

Leader prays: Father, you spoke through Moses and the prophets, and in the fullness of time you sent your Son, born of a woman. Open the Scriptures to us tonight as you opened them on the road to Emmaus. Give us eyes to see your one plan running through both Testaments, and hearts humble enough to be surprised by it. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Win: Opening Questions

1. When you hear the name 'Mary,' what is the first image or feeling that comes to mind, and where do you think it came from: Scripture, art, family, or somewhere else?
2. Have you ever reread a book or rewatched a film and caught something planted early that only made sense at the end? What was that experience like?

Build: Into the Text

1. Read Romans 5:14. Paul calls Adam 'a type of the one who was to come.' What do you think he means, and what does it tell us about how Paul reads Genesis?

Read aloud: Romans 5:14

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Paul reads Adam as a real man whose story is also a designed foreshadowing: Adam is the pattern (Greek *typos*, the stamp a seal leaves) and Christ is the fulfillment who both matches and exceeds him.

This means typology is not a later Catholic habit; it is Paul's own stated method. The Old Testament is history that also points forward, because its Author governs history.

2. Skim 1 Corinthians 10:1–11 and 1 Peter 3:20–21. What Old Testament events do Paul and Peter treat as pointing to Christian realities?

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Paul: the cloud and sea point to baptism; the manna and water he calls 'spiritual food' and 'spiritual drink,' and the rock 'was Christ' (1 Corinthians 10:3–4). The Church, following the trajectory of Paul's own chapter (see 10:16–21, the cup and bread of the Lord's table), has long read that spiritual food and drink as pointing to the Eucharist. And 'these things happened to them as a warning' and 'were written down for our instruction.'

Peter: the flood, in which eight were saved through water, corresponds to baptism 'which now saves you.' Peter even uses the technical term: baptism is the *antitypos*, the fulfillment of the type.

Rule of the study, worth saying aloud: when we read typologically, we are copying the apostles.

LIVE DISCOVERY: MARY SINGS SOMEONE ELSE'S SONG

Read Luke 1:46–55 aloud slowly. Then say: 'Somewhere in the early chapters of 1 Samuel, a once-barren mother sings a song after God gives her a child. Find it, and read it side by side with Mary's.'

Let the group hunt and find 1 Samuel 2:1–10 themselves. Have two readers alternate verses between the songs.

Ask them to call out every echo they hear before you name any.

3. What did you find? List the parallels between Hannah's song and Mary's, and then ask: why would Mary, or Luke, want us to hear Hannah behind the Magnificat?

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Shared arc: exultation in God my Savior; the proud scattered and the mighty brought low; the lowly and hungry raised and filled. Distinctive to Mary: the explicit remembrance of God's mercy to Israel and to Abraham (Luke 1:54-55), which reaches beyond Hannah to the covenant promises themselves.

By singing in Hannah's cadences, Mary places herself in the line of Israel's mothers whose children came by God's power. Luke is telling us: to understand this mother, remember those mothers.

CCC 489 makes the same point: the holy women of the Old Covenant, Sarah, Hannah, and the rest, prepare for Mary. She is the summit of a pattern God spent centuries drawing.

DIG DEEPER: THE BARREN MOTHERS

If the group is moving fast, trace the pattern: Sarah (Genesis 18:9-14), Rebekah (Genesis 25:21), Rachel (Genesis 30:22-24), Hannah (1 Samuel 1). Each time, the child of promise comes when nature has failed and only God's word can deliver.

Then ask: if God kept giving Israel sons through mothers who could not conceive naturally, what is He teaching Israel to expect about how *the* Son will come?

LIVE DISCOVERY: THE DAUGHTER OF ZION

Read Luke 1:26-33 aloud. Then give only this clue: 'A short prophet near the end of the Old Testament, Zephaniah, chapter 3, tells a woman to rejoice for a reason you just heard. Find it.'

Group reads Zephaniah 3:14-17 and compares: the summons to rejoice, the removal of fear, and the King of Israel, the LORD himself, 'in your midst.'

4. In Zephaniah the woman is Israel personified, the Daughter of Zion. In Luke, the same greeting lands on one particular woman. What is Luke suggesting about Mary?

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

On this reading, Mary is the Daughter of Zion in person: the faithful Israel in whose midst, in whose very womb, the Lord and King now dwells. The nation's vocation gathers to a point in her.

Hedge honestly: Luke never writes the sentence 'Mary is the Daughter of Zion.' This is a reading, one the Church's liturgy and a broad stream of exegesis embrace (see CCC 2676 later in this study), and the group should weigh the echoes for themselves. That discipline, weighing echoes honestly, is the skill of the whole study.

STEELMAN: PRESENT AT FULL STRENGTH

Present this with full force before answering: 'Protestants affirm typology, and gladly, wherever the New Testament itself draws the connection. Paul names Adam a type; Peter names the flood. But no apostle ever calls Mary the Daughter of Zion or a new Hannah. Where Scripture draws the type, we follow; where the Church draws it herself, that is speculation. Echoes and shared vocabulary do not prove the author intended an identification, and even a real literary allusion cannot carry the weight of binding

doctrine about Mary. That is the difference between reading Scripture and reading into it.'
Let it sit. Ask the group: what is right about this worry?

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Concede the true part first: undisciplined typology is a real danger, and the objection is right to demand controls. The Church agrees, which is why the spiritual senses must rest on the literal sense (CCC 116).

Then answer the real question, which is not whether typology is legitimate but how far it may go. Adam the type (Romans 5:14), the flood as baptism's antitype (1 Peter 3:21), the rock that 'was Christ' (1 Corinthians 10:4): the apostles are not handing us a closed list of three, they are modeling a way of reading they expect us to keep using. And an intended echo can be tested rather than merely felt: shared vocabulary, shared structure, and where the passage sits in the story. Hannah's song and Zephaniah's summons meet all three, as the group just saw with both texts open. Then say plainly what typology does and does not do: it illuminates a doctrine, it is not by itself the ground of one. Every Marian teaching in this study has its own basis, and we will name that basis each time we come to it.

The controls are: (1) the echo must be in the text, verifiable with both passages open, as tonight's were; (2) the reading must serve, never override, the literal sense; (3) the conclusion must be tested against the Church's rule of faith. Every claim this study makes will be held to those three.

5. Last text of the night. Read John 2:1–5, the wedding at Cana. Notice one small thing: how does Jesus address his mother? Do not try to solve it tonight.

Leader note: Resist all urges, yours and theirs, to explain 'Woman.' Say only: 'Hold that question. Your Take-Home sheet has a sealed box for your best guess. We will open the guesses together later in the study.' Curiosity left open does more work than curiosity satisfied.

Send: Taking It Out

1. Where in your own life has God been 'planting early' the way He planted Hannah and Zephaniah before Mary: something that only made sense much later?
2. Who is one person you could invite to next week's session, and what would you tell them this study is actually about?

Live It This Week

- Pray the Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55) aloud once a day this week, and each day let one different line be the one you sit with.
- Read one barren-mother story (Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, or Hannah) and note what it teaches Israel to expect from God.
- Write your sealed guess on the Take-Home sheet before you go to bed tonight, while the question is fresh.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name."

Luke 1:49 (RSV2CE)

Closing Prayer

Pray together the oldest known prayer to Mary, found on an Egyptian papyrus commonly dated to the third or fourth century, the Sub Tuum Praesidium:

We fly to your protection, O holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.

Leader adds: Father, thank you for the Scriptures opened tonight. Teach us this week to read our own lives the way you taught Israel to read hers: as a story you are telling. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

LEADER REFERENCE CARD

Every passage used in this session, in order:

- Romans 5:12–14 (Adam a type of the one to come)
- 1 Corinthians 10:1–11 (Israel's story written for our instruction)
- 1 Peter 3:20–21 (flood and baptism, the antitype)
- Luke 1:46–55 (the Magnificat)
- 1 Samuel 2:1–10 (Hannah's song; live discovery)
- Luke 1:26–33 (the Annunciation)
- Zephaniah 3:14–17 (Daughter of Zion; live discovery)
- Genesis 18:9–14; 25:21; 30:22–24; 1 Samuel 1 (Dig Deeper: the barren mothers)
- Luke 1:49 (memory verse)
- John 2:1–5 (thread teaser: 'Woman')