



# Formative Parenting

*Cultivating Character in Children*

*A Ministry of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Immaculata, Pennsylvania*

## MARY WAYS FOR ALL OUR DAYS

My father was quick to say, “Show me who your friends are and I’ll tell you the kind of person you are.” Children dismiss that remark but parents know only too well how true it is. Our friends do influence our thinking and behavior. So do the personalities that we find in book characters, cartoons, TV, movie, and music celebrities. Over time, who and what feeds our mind begins to show in our attitudes and actions.

Heroes and heroines give perspective and example, direction and advice when we are alone or in the midst of peer pressure situations. Who are the heroes/heroines that contemporary children imitate? Do these spiritual companions lead young people to be respectful, responsive, self-controlled, responsible, kind, loving, generous, self-sacrificing and forgiving? Or, as a pattern, do you and others observe attitudes that are rude, selfish, mean-spirited, or vengeful?

Saints, including private saints like grandpop or a particular aunt, modeled virtues like: total dependence on God (Mary), integrity (Thomas More), unshakable devotion to Christ in the poor (Teresa of Calcutta), zeal for souls (Patrick), and unconditional forgiveness (Maria Goretti). The saints are human guideposts whose lives inspire us and give us strength.

Mary is Queen of All Saints. Introduce children to Mary as mentor and model: a wise and trusted teacher, guide, counselor, and friend who is a standard for imitation. Seek her advice in decision-making and identify behavior based on hers. For example, taking soup to a sick neighbor is like Mary caring for Elizabeth (the Visitation); being hospitable and including all people in your friendship is the way that Mary received shepherds and kings in the stable (the Nativity).

Family rituals that become annual events shape family memories. Some suggestions follow that can penetrate the family environment with Mary-ways.

### LEARN AND LIVE MARY’S WORDS.

- “I am the servant of the Lord.” (Lk. 1:38)
- “Let it (God’s will) be done to me.” (Lk. 1:38)
- “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.” (Lk. 1:46)
- “God who is mighty has done great things for me, holy is his name.” (Lk. 1:49)
- “Do whatever he tells you.” (Jn. 2:5)

### OBSERVE MARY SEASONS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

- **October – Month of the Holy Rosary**  
Review the mysteries of the rosary during the month. Discuss the meaning of each mystery and lessons each contains. (5 Joyful, 5 Sorrowful, 5 Glorious, and 5 Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary).

- **May – Mary’s Month**

Create a centerpiece on the family meal table of a statue, symbol or icon of Mary. Crown a statue of Mary. Sing a favorite Mary hymn. Choose-by-lot a card or stick that has the name of a Mary-virtue on it. Practice that virtue for the day.

- **The First Saturday of each month**

Participate in Mass and receive Holy Communion. Afterwards, share a special breakfast.

### **PUNCTUATE THE YEAR BY HONORING THE MAJOR FEAST DAYS OF MARY.**

- Solemnity of Mary (1/1), \* **Holy Day**
- Presentation of Jesus (2/2)
- Our Lady of Lourdes (2/11)
- Annunciation (3/25)
- Visitation (3/31)
- Immaculate Heart (Saturday following the Second Sunday after Pentecost)
- Our Lady of Mount Carmel (7/16)
- Assumption (8/15), \* **Holy Day**
- Queenship of Mary (8/22)
- Birth of Mary (9/8)
- Our Lady of Sorrows (9/15)
- Our Lady of the Rosary (10/7)
- Presentation of Mary (11/21)
- Immaculate Conception (12/8), \* **Holy Day**
- Our Lady of Guadalupe (12/12)

### **DEVELOP WORSHIP PRACTICES AND ACTIVITIES TO CELEBRATE MARY FEAST DAYS.**

- *For example*, celebrate the birthday of Mary (9/8) with Mass in the morning and cake with ice cream in the evening. Contribute infant items to a baby layette program.

- Pray a decade of the rosary on Rosary Mystery feast days: Presentation (2/2), Annunciation (3/25), Visitation (3/31), Assumption (8/15), and Queenship (8/22).
- Pray the *Angelus* on the feast of the Annunciation (3/25).
- On scriptural feast days read the Scripture Story and involve the family in naming Mary qualities and characteristics.

### **TELL OR VIEW STORIES OF MARY APPARITIONS like:**

- Lourdes, France
- Fatima, Portugal
- Guadalupe, Mexico
- Miraculous Medal, France
- La Salette, France

### **TEACH MARY PRAYERS.**

- Hail Mary
- Angelus
- Memorare
- Magnificat
- Mother of Good Counsel
- Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- “My queen, my mother, remember I am yours. Keep me, guard me as your property and possession.”

### **USE MARY FEASTS TO TEACH FAITH CONCEPTS.**

For example, on the feast of Sorrows (9/15) discuss the seven sorrows of Mary:

- Prophecy of Simeon
- Escape into Egypt
- Losing Jesus in Jerusalem
- Meeting Jesus on the Road to Calvary
- Standing at the Crucifixion
- Holding the Dead Body of Jesus
- Burying Jesus

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