



Te Ara a Maria

Mary's way

Activity sheet

Ko Hāta Maria, te Matua Wahine o te Atua

Holy Mary, Mother of God

Te Hīkoi Wairua mo Te Ara a Maria

Spiritual pilgrimage of Mary's way

15 August 2021 – 15 August 2022

Introduction

As the beautiful image of Mary moves throughout Aotearoa New Zealand her presence will guide us as we reflect together on how Mary is not just Mother of the Church but also of each parish and community in our land.

We are all invited to ponder three dimensions of her life's journey and to join in school or parish activities that will help bring these reflections to life.

Let us ponder her life as a

- (1) woman on the move,
- (2) living bond between family and the wider community, and a
- (3) bridge uniting diverse cultures and ethnic roots.

(1) Woman on the Move

We are not sure where Mary grew up but Nazareth or the Galilean area around there is likely, as that is where she would have come to know Joseph's family.

As a devout Jew she would have made the annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem with her family on many occasions.

The moment she agreed to God's invitation to mother the Messiah her life began to expand.

The joy and mystery growing inside her drove her to visit her cousin Elizabeth in the hills of Judea.

A Roman decree then forced her to give birth among strangers, amid rural poverty and simplicity.

Very soon the new family had to flee as refugees to Egypt; on their return to Israel they needed to find safety in the backblocks of Nazareth.

When Jesus launched himself on his mission to proclaim a new Kingdom of God, her life expanded to follow his.

There was a family wedding at Cana, and a trip with the wider clan in an effort to curb his preaching.

A little later (perhaps after Joseph's death?) we find her following Jesus on the road, and then on his final journey to Jerusalem.

She is there at the foot of the cross, and in the upper room when the Spirit is poured out on the disciples. After some time at the heart of this newborn Church in Jerusalem it is likely that she travelled with John to Ephesus to be the hidden dynamo within the Christian communities coming to birth all over Asia Minor (which includes modern day Turkey).

What we see in Mary is a pattern for the lives of so many Catholic women today: growing their own call and gifts, following their children, moving many times, sinking roots in many different communities, and to be a loving and unifying presence wherever they travel.

(2) Bonding Family and Community

In the great Faiths of the Book (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) tension and even strife between the prophet's family and his followers have been a fixture. Not so for the nascent Christian Church. For Mary acted as a bridge between his Jewish past and his international future.

Through his extended and now converted wider family his clan clearly became significant leaders in the Church in Jerusalem, particularly in James, 'the brother of the Lord.'

Yet Jesus had given Mary as a mother to the new Christian family in the person of John. So Mary straddled and held together both worlds, sharing memories of his past while also witnessing to the dynamic evangelising Spirit moving powerfully within her. She was the hinge of unity, holder of the past and promise of the future.

Globalisation and migration has seen New Zealand families become separated and spread out across different cities and countries, each facing different social and economic pressures, it is so easy for religious faith to fall and die between the cracks that separate. Parents, and especially mothers, play a special role in managing these tensions.

(3) A Bridge Across Cultures

Growing persecution and the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 pushed many Jewish Christians out of Israel, so contributing to the steady growth of the Christian communities in areas which are today Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq. At the same time some of the disciples moved west into Greece and Italy.

The claim that Mary moved with John to Ephesus (a city in Ancient Greece) is of great significance here. The Church was becoming cosmopolitan: hosting diverse languages and cultures, different family structures and expectations.

Over the past 40-50 years our New Zealand Catholic Church has become more and more multicultural and multilingual. The tangata whenua saw tauiwi (foreigners), mainly of European origin, enter this land. Today's migrants include peoples of Asian and African heritage who are enriching our Church.

Here Mary can act as our model. Without title or Church office she embodied the welcome, the bridging and healing that was the legacy of her son, Jesus. In a very diverse Church in our land today she is a model of unity and mutual acceptance.

Activities for Te Hikoi Wairua

Primary Schools

Draw a map of Mary's journeys

- How did families travel?
- Where did they stay?
- How did they earn their living?

Intermediate schools

What are the bible references and old traditions that are the basis of Mary's story above?

Secondary schools

Explore the linkages between Jerusalem – Ephesus – Lyon – Hokianga – and the area you live?

Research the people and their backgrounds who have made these linkages?

Parishes

Joining together around the image of Mary to share:

- Prayers, songs, and images celebrating Mary in our different cultures and traditions
- Sharing the rosary or the chaplet of divine mercy praying for local people, families and needs

For everyone

Explore [@tearaamaria](#) (on Instagram) or [CatholicDiscoveryNZ](#) (on Facebook) to find the Novena and accompanying images we shared in August 2021.