

ORIGIN STORY

Mary, Mother of God

GOAL

The goal of this session is for middle school youth to honor Mary and call on her as their helpful guide and mother in times of need.

Scripture

Micah 5:2, Isaiah 7:14, Jeremiah 29:11-13, Luke 1:26-38, Luke 2:1-20, John 19:26-27

Catechism

CCC 441-445, 456-463, 484-507, 522-534, 583-586, 964-971

Resources

Handout

“Origin Story” Parent Letter

Media

Ascension Presents, “Why Catholics Call Mary Their Mother” ([youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com))

“Annunciation” by Leonardo da Vinci (commons.wikimedia.org)

“The Annunciation” by Luca Giordano (commons.wikimedia.org)

GATHER

Youth collaborate to create a unique hero origin story, supporting the theme of the session in a funny and cooperative way.

PROCLAIM

The following are the main teaching points of the Proclaim:

- Jesus became man and was born of a virgin named Mary, who God chose to be the Mother of God.
- We honor Mary because God honored her first.
- Jesus gave Mary to us as our mother so we can depend on her to comfort and guide us closer to her son.

BREAK

Youth contemplate and pray with an image of Mary at the Annunciation. Then they participate in a discussion about Mary.

SEND

Youth reflect on their own origin story and entrust themselves to God's plan for their life, focusing on **Micah 5:2** and **Jeremiah 29:11-13**.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

In the morning when you wake up, take a moment to say "yes" to whatever God has planned for you during the day.

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PREP

Collect all materials needed for the Edge Night.

SETUP

Follow the Environment suggestions for the series.

Test all audio-visual elements of the Edge Night.

Project the environment image, and play the “ES - Unsuspecting Hero” Spotify playlist as the youth enter.

SUPPLIES

Prepare the following supplies:

Break

Image of the Annunciation

NOTES

CORE ASSIGNMENTS AND NOTES

This youth minister worksheet provides writing space to detail core member assignments and notes specific to running this Edge Night. Write the names of core members assigned to the roles listed.

Highlights:

- Be aware that not all youth have a positive relationship with their earthly mothers. Think carefully before making sweeping generalizations.

Setup:

Opening Prayer:

Gather - Choose Your Hero

- Leader: _____

Proclaim - Origin Story:

Break - The Word Comes to Life, Small Group Discussion

Send - Humble Beginnings

- Leader: _____

Weekly Challenge:

Parking Lot:

NOTES

ORIGIN STORY

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GATHER

Introduction (5 min)

Welcome the youth and introduce those who are there for the first time. Invite the preselected core member to begin in prayer. Give a brief overview of the Edge Night topic, using the following as an example:

Every great hero has an origin story. Some were refugees of their home planet, others fell victim to some crazy radioactive science experiment, and still others vowed to see justice come to those who harmed their family. Their humble beginnings lay the foundation for becoming great heroes. For our hero, Jesus, his origin story takes place in a family – a humble home in Nazareth, with a mother named Mary. She plays a significant role in the life of Jesus and in our lives of faith, too.

Choose Your Hero (15 min)

Ask the large group for suggestions to fill in the blanks of the story starting on the next page. Take the best suggestion for each prompt and add it to the story. When the story is complete, read it dramatically aloud or invite your priest to read it!

Suggestion

Invite three youth or core member volunteers to act out the final story as the leader reads it aloud.

Step It Up

Provide each small group with a copy of the story to complete on their own, with guidance from their small group leader. Allow each small group to present their story to the large group using music, props, and costumes to enhance their story.

The Rise of Captain _____

[school subject]

In the not-so-quiet town of _____, a(n) _____,
[city name] [adjective]

ordinary teenager named _____ was trying to survive high school.
[uncommon name]

Between _____ class, after-school _____,
[verb ending with -ing] [club or sport]

and avoiding his arch-nemesis, _____ -Breath Carl, life was
[unpleasant smell]

complicated. But one fateful _____, everything changed.
[day of the week]

While _____ through the old, abandoned _____
[verb ending in -ing] [store name]

near the _____, he stumbled upon a(n) _____
[natural feature: river, forest, mountain, etc.] [adjective]

_____ glowing with a strange energy. Against all logic (and common
[object]

sense), he reached out and touched it. KAPOW! A blinding flash of light, a thunderous

boom, and suddenly _____ was no longer ordinary.
[same uncommon name]

He awoke hours later, face-down in a pile of _____,
[plural noun]

feeling ... different.

It wasn't long before he discovered he now had the power to _____
[verb]

_____ just by _____. His pet
[plural noun] [action verb ending in -ing]

_____ was the first to witness his powers and promptly
[animal]

_____ in surprise. Terrified, but curious, _____
[verb, past tense] [same uncommon name]

turned to the only person who might understand: Professor _____, a
[cute thing]

former _____ -turned-conspiracy-theorist who lived in a van behind the
[occupation]

_____. Under the professor's mentorship and a training montage scored
[common location]

to _____, he began to master his abilities.
[epic song title]

But no hero's journey is complete without a villain. Enter: The _____ -
[gross food]

a once-respected _____ who turned evil after an unfortunate accident
[occupation]

involving _____, a(n) _____ microwave, and a
[plural noun] [adjective]

cursed _____.
[kitchen utensil]

Now, with the fate of _____ hanging by a thread,
[same city name]

_____ must juggle algebra homework, teenage drama, and full-on
[same uncommon name]

superhero responsibility. As Captain _____, he dons a
[same school subject]

_____ cape, wields his _____ powers, and zooms
[color] [adjective]

through the skies on a _____ shaped like _____
[mode of transportation] [food]

His sidekick, named _____ - a talking _____
[piece of clothing] [animal]

with a love for _____ - is always by his side, even if he complains too
[snack food]

much about _____.
[minor inconvenience]

So whenever evil rises, and the people cry out for help, one voice will answer with a mighty:

“Right away, _____!”
[nonsense word]

PROCLAIM

“Origin Story” Teaching (10 min)

A Very Good Place to Start

- The origins of superheroes tell us a lot about the heroes themselves.
- For example, because Batman lost his parents to a dangerous villain, he vowed to do justice so that no one else would have to experience what he did.
- Just as authors are intentional about the backstories they create for heroes, God intentionally chose Mary and Joseph as the parents of Jesus.

Project and read **Luke 1:26-38**.

- By the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was conceived in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary was a devout Jewish girl who was chosen by God to be the Mother of God, and she responded to this call with incredible faith. (**CCC 494**)
- God could have chosen any woman to bear his son — someone rich or powerful, well-connected, or who lived comfortably. And yet, he chose Mary.
- The angel tells Mary that God is with her and has a plan for her. Because of her great faith and trust in God, Mary says “yes” to this plan, even if she does not have all of the details.

Honorable

Ask the youth to share with you all the qualities they think would make a perfect mother. Look over the list that they made and discuss how Mary has all of the best qualities of a perfect mother. Write their ideas here or on a whiteboard:

- We do not worship Mary or revere her on the same level as Jesus, but we do recognize and honor the incredible and holy woman that she is. (**CCC 971**)
- She is an example of faith in her powerful “yes” to God’s invitation to what seemed impossible, to be the Mother of God. (**Luke 1:39-40**)
- She was a part of all the big events of Jesus’ life. She was there when the shepherds came to see her Son, when he was found in the temple teaching as a young teenager, and when his public ministry began. (**Luke 2:8-19, Luke 2:41-51**)

Project and read **John 2:1-11**.

- This miracle, called the wedding at Cana, marks the beginning of Jesus's public ministry. Mary is a key character in this story: She saw a problem, brought it to Jesus, and then instructed the servants to do whatever Jesus asked.

Going Deeper

The way Jesus addresses his mother may sound harsh to our ears. After all, if we called our mom "woman," we would be in trouble! Jesus was not insulting his mother by calling her "woman." Biblical scholars suggest Jesus is making the connection between his mother and the woman prophesied in **Genesis 3:15**, the "new Eve," whose son would defeat the serpent.

- Mary was with Jesus until the very end. She was there when he was tortured and killed, and she was there when he sent the Holy Spirit after he was raised from the dead. (**CCC 964-965**)
- We honor and respect Mary because God honored her first. God chose Mary to be the Mother of God, and he made her a big part of his incredible plan for salvation.
- Saint Maximilian Kolbe once said, "Never be afraid of loving [Mary] too much. You can never love her more than Jesus did."

The Mother

- Mary has always been honored by God and by the Church. Mary also holds a special place in our faith because Jesus gave his mother to be our mother too.

Project and read **John 19:26-27**.

- John, the apostle at the Cross, receives Mary as his mother. In a way, he stands in place of the Church, who receives her as our mother.
- Just as we sometimes think of Jesus, the Son of God, as a character rather than a real person, sometimes we can do the same thing with Mary.
- However, Mary sits alongside Jesus in heaven and holds a special place as an intercessor for us, her children. (**CCC 971**)
- Just like we would ask a friend or our own mother to pray for us, we can go to Mary with all our prayers and ask her for her help. Mary's prayers are very powerful because of her close relationship with Jesus.

Share about a time when you took a special intention to Mary, and recall how she helped you in a time of need. Consider a particular story from Church history where Mary has intervened in a particular circumstance, such as a Marian apparition. Write your thoughts here:

Going Deeper

Throughout history, Mary has appeared in visions to many people. Several of these apparitions, such as Our Lady of Guadalupe or Our Lady of Lourdes, have been investigated and proven credible by the Catholic Church. Devotions to different apparitions of Mary do not distract us from the biblical portrait of Mary, but ultimately point us to a deeper devotion to Jesus.

- Mary can help you with particular difficulties in your life, and she can help you grow in your relationship with Jesus.
- Mary knew Jesus better than anyone else, and she wants to bring you to Jesus so your life can be filled with his grace and love.

BREAK

The Word Comes to Life (15 min)

Introduce the activity using the following example:

Many superhero stories are told through comics, TV shows, and movies. There is something special in how images communicate in a different way from words. Together, we are going to observe and pray with an image from Mary's life that we heard in the Proclaim. This depiction of the Annunciation shows when the angel spoke to Mary announcing that she would bear the Son of God. While we look at the image, allow God to bring you to a deeper understanding of this important event in Mary's life.

Display an image of the Annunciation. Suggested artistic renderings can be found in the Resources section.

Allow the youth a minute to take in the image. One at a time, pose these prompts:

1. Read **Luke 1:26-38**.
2. Prompt the youth to focus on a part of the image that draws their attention. Encourage them to study it and allow it to fill their minds and hearts.
3. Tell the youth it is estimated that Mary was about 14 years old when the angel came to her. Ask them what kind of plans Mary may have had for her life before this shocking news.
4. Ask them what emotions Mary may have felt during this encounter. Remind them to keep in mind that she said “yes” anyway.

Conclude the meditation, and divide the youth into their small groups for discussion.

Suggestion

Provide paper and pens for the youth to write down their thoughts or observations.

Step It Up

Provide a prayer card with the image of the Annunciation or another Marian image for the youth to take home.

Small Group Discussion (15 min)

Use the following questions to foster a discussion within the small group:

- Whip Around: What is something you will always say “yes” to?
- What was something you thought about or focused on during the meditation?
- What do you know about Mary?
- Does your family practice any devotions to Mary?
- In what kinds of situations would you pray for Mary’s intercession?

Eighth-Grade Adaptation

Use the following questions for a more challenging discussion for eighth-grade youth:

- Who in your life has resembled Mary’s faithfulness to God’s plan?
- Share about a time when you said “yes” to something without knowing all of the details.

SEND

Humble Beginnings (10 min)

Gather the youth back together in the main meeting space. Invite them to sit apart from others in a comfortable upright position. Lead them through a reflection, using the following as an example:

Jesus was an unexpected kind of Messiah. He grew up poor in an insignificant town and did unremarkable things for most of his life. Even still, those humble beginnings were the start of a story with a heroic ending.

Project and read **Micah 5:2**. Leave the Scripture verse projected as you continue.

Think about your origin story. Where do you come from? What people and events have shaped your life up to this point? Where has God been in these events?

Allow a few moments of silence for reflection. Then, project and read **Jeremiah 29:11-13**.

Just like Mary at the Annunciation, we do not know the plan of where we are going or what heroic ending God has in store for us. What we do know is that they are good. Think about your dreams for your life — what you hope to accomplish and who you hope to be. Share them with God. Trust that his plan for you will bring about the greatest good for your life.

Allow a few moments of silence for reflection. Conclude the prayer with a Hail Mary.

Suggestion

Conclude this prayer with a guided CAPE prayer from the first session.

Weekly Challenge (5 min)

Invite the preselected core members to present the Weekly Challenge.

In the morning when you wake up, take a moment to say “yes” to whatever God has planned for you during the day.

Dismiss the core members preassigned to parking lot safety.

NOTES