



SAMPLE INVITATION TALK TO BE GIVEN ON SIGN-UP SUNDAY

(This talk will be most effective if it is publicized in advance. Bulletin announcements and announcements at the end of Mass are especially helpful.)

Usually the celebrant introduces you by saying something like this: “As you are probably aware, something very exciting and new is happening here at St _____ . We are taking part in a program called *At Prayer with Mary* from RENEW International. I thank _____, who will tell us about *At Prayer with Mary* and why you will want to join with other members of the parish in becoming closer to the mother of our Lord.”

SPEAKERS:

- Look enthusiastic as you step up to the lectern.
- Speak with a tone of sincerity.
- Start with a story – perhaps about someone in your family who has a special devotion to Mary, or about someone named Mary who has meant something special to you. Your first line has to grab the congregation’s attention.

SOME THINGS TO REMEMBER:

1. The more personal the talk, the better: make it your own. Don’t be afraid to use humor. Share why you are part of *At Prayer with Mary* and/or your experience in a small Christian community in the past.
2. If you are not familiar with the microphone, practice with it ahead of time. Speak slowly and clearly. Ask someone to listen from the back of the church to make sure you are audible. Look up at the people frequently.
3. Include directions about your sign-up process. For example, where are the sign-up cards – in the pews, in back of the church? How are the cards to be returned?
4. When you introduce yourself, tell the assembly more than your name. Make a personal connection. There are two examples in the sample talk below.

Good Afternoon/morning/evening, my name is _____.

I have been a parishioner at _____ for most of my life, but many of you may recognize me as a member of the Parish Finance Council who speaks at Mass during the annual capital campaign.

Or...

I usually attend the 10:30 a.m. Mass and sit right over there with my husband and my three boys.

Today, I am here to say a few words about a wonderful opportunity that is coming to our parish. *At Prayer with Mary* is a faith-sharing process for small groups to help us deepen our devotion to Mary and, through her, to her son, Jesus Christ.

Most of us have known the Blessed Mother's name for almost as long as we have known our own names.

We have also known since we were very young that she gave birth to her son in a stable in Bethlehem, with her husband, Joseph, by her side.

Year after year, we have seen the images of Mary cradling the infant Jesus in her arms as shepherds and magi look on in awe.

These things are deeply imprinted in our minds: we can close our eyes and visualize them in an instant.

But how well do we know Mary? How conscious are we of Mary as a poor woman of flesh and blood who lived a real life and coped with real fears and challenges?

How often have we thought of Mary as not only the mother of Jesus but as his first disciple?

As much as we may respect and honor her, how aware have we been that she never calls our attention to herself but always to her son, our savior?

This is a chance to encounter the real Mary as she lived and breathed in first century Palestine.

Our parish, along with many parishes around the country, is going to use *At Prayer with Mary* to revive our devotion to our Blessed Mother and, through her, deepen our friendship with her son.

Groups of eight to ten people will meet for about 90 minutes once a week for seven weeks.

Each time the group meets, there will be prayer and Scripture, faith-sharing, and an invitation to put our faith into action in our lives.

Each person in the group will have a book with the contents of the sessions so we can prepare for each meeting.

The book also includes an appendix of the most enduring prayers to Mary—including the rosary—all placed in the context of when they first appeared and how they evolved into the forms we know today.

Now why would you want to be a part of this process?

- Maybe you want to meet new people; that's a good reason
- Maybe you want to learn more about your faith and your God; that's good too
- Maybe you want to try to revise how you look at the world.
- Maybe you want to make Mary a real presence in your daily life rather than an indistinct figure whom we encounter only momentarily in the prayers of the Church.

Whatever your reason, we want you to be part of this. God will not be outdone in generosity, and you will be glad you said yes.

Don't miss this chance to meet Mary in a new and meaningful way.

In your pews there are Sign-Up cards. Most people find it easiest to sign up for the date and time that is most convenient for them.

Remember this is for only seven weeks.

We will organize the groups according to when you can meet. Just fill out the cards, and put them in the basket when the hospitality ministers come around to collect them. We'll get back to you. How easy is that?

Just to summarize:

I am inviting you to accept this invitation to be either:

- A participant of a small community gathering or
- A leader or co-leader of a small community gathering

We promise to offer training and to teach you how to lead the group or maybe you would like to offer your home to host a small community gathering

On behalf of the parish staff and the other members of our parish team, I invite you to join us on this exciting journey to renew our faith, our parish community and our church.

Thank you for your attention and I can guarantee that you will not be disappointed if you sign up for *At Prayer with Mary*.