

Mary and Youth: Survey Results

Here are the results to questions asked to youth in a survey done by Father Johann Roten at the International Marian Research institute. The survey was answered by youth of many countries.

Mary and Youth: General Information Questions

Austria	Canada	Ecuador	France	Ireland	Italy	Japan	Korea	Peru	Spain	Switzerland	United States
No. of Replies											
96	149	88	562	66	219	129	611	330	920	53	3631
What is the religion in which you have been raised?											
Roman Catholic											
100.0%	99.3%	100.0%	89.3%	95.5%	98.2%	94.6%	24.9%	98.2%	98.4%	96.2%	80.6%
96	148	88	502	63	215	24.9	151	323	905	51	2926
No Religion											
0%	0%	0%	2.3%	3.0%	0.5%	2.3%	30.1%	0%	0.2%	1.9%	3.3%
0	0	0	13	2	1	3	183	0	2	1	120
In general, how would you characterize your association with the religion in which you have been raised?											
Positive (Very Strong, Strong, Average)											
75.1%	72.5%	88.6%	57.1%	60.3%	76.3%	78.3%	59.5%	72.4%	77.9%	52.8%	80.6%
72	108	78	318	38	167	101	363	239	716	28	2917
I reject the religion in which I have been raised											
7.3%	2.0%	0%	2.2%	6.3%	1.8%	0.8%	5.9%	2.1%	2.5%	0%	2.4%
7	3	0	12	4	4	4	36	7	23	0	85
In the last three years at your school have you ever been taught about Mary?											
yes											
79.2%	67.1%	100.0%	75.7%	47.7%	75.5%	40.3%	64.4%	97.3%	90.4%	41.5%	83.9%
76	100	88	424	31	163	52	387	321	829	22	3050
At your church, do you participate in special Marian devotions?											
No											
40.0%	64.4%	23.0%	60.9%	89.2%	61.7%	17.6%	53.3%	59.1%	41.9%	56.9%	44.4%
38	96	20	335	58	132	22	309	194	381	29	1577
If you are aware of any Marian devotions practiced by your school, please indicate which ones are practiced:											
To my knowledge, my school does not practice Marian devotions.											

14.6%	57.7%	0%	7.8%	12.1%	0.5%	34.9%	3.0%	4.5%	3.6%	84.9%	15.7%
14	86	0	44	8	1	45	18	15	33	45	571
If your school does practice Marian devotions (such as, Rosary, Mass on Marian feast days, special local Marian celebrations such as May crownings or Marian processions, recitation of other Marian prayers, Marian pilgrimages) do you participate?											
Yes											
70.8%	11.4%	93.0%	54.3%	45.1%	88.8%	80.7%	82.6%	72.2%	73.3%	13.6%	68.8%
63	17	80	288	23	183	71	493	244	649	3	1496
If your family practices any Marian devotions, which ones are practiced?											
My family does not practice Marian devotions.											
46.9	9.1%	17.0%	44.8%	60.6%	43.8%	32.6%	68.1%	36.7%	39.0%	43.4%	45.3%
45	53	15	252	40	96	42	416	120	359	23	1609

Mary and Youth: Questions on Marian Apparitions

Austria	Canada	Ecuador	France	Ireland	Italy	Japan	Korea	Peru	Spain	Switzerland	United States
No. of Replies											
96	149	88	562	66	219	129	611	330	920	53	3631
The following statements concern how you perceive Marian apparitions, such as Guadalupe, Lourdes, and Fatima.											
I am interested in Marian apparitions											
62.5%	68.7%	88.2%	72.1%	15.8%	79.9%	76.0%	35.1%	78.4%	70.4%	71.2%	60.0%
60	101	75	403	9	175	98	202	258	643	37	2033
Apparitions are a sign of exaggerated importance given to Mary by the Catholic Church.											
45.8%	17.6%	21.2%	19.5%	14.8%	17.4%	42.5%	13.0%	24.3%	31.1%	26.9%	28.2%
44	26	18	109	8	38	54	74	80	285	14	1015
Apparitions are a sign of God's grace operating in the world.											
50.0%	54.7%	77.6%	59.9%	20.4%	70.2%	55.2%	41.4%	74.8%	63.2%	55.8%	66.2%
48	81	66	336	11	153	69	236	246	578	29	2375
So-called Marian apparitions can be explained by psychology.											
36.5%	21.8%	28.9%	32.4%	9.6%	25.2%	17.2%	22.2%	18.0%	18.8%	42.3%	16.4%
35	32	24	181	5	55	22	126	59	172	22	585
We do have to believe in Marian apparitions.											
26.0%	45.9%	68.2%	52.4%	9.4%	56.0%	52.0%	38.8%	48.0%	45.3%	44.2%	28.0%
25	68	58	292	5	122	65	219	158	415	23	1005
Through apparitions, we see that God reveals himself to whomever he wants through Mary.											
42.7%	41.2%	59.5%	52.2%	30.2%	53.0%	66.7%	32.7%	50.0%	50.3%	42.3%	51.0%
41	61	50	291	16	115	84	185	164	459	22	1827

Marian apparitions contribute greatly to the conversion of many to God.											
70.8%	44.6%	82.4%	51.3%	26.9%	58.4%	44.9%	42.3%	74.4%	67.7%	57.7%	51.7%
68	66	70	285	14	128	57	231	244	619	30	1844

Mary and Youth: Marian Prayers

Austria	Canada	Ecuador	France	Ireland	Italy	Japan	Korea	Peru	Spain	Switzer-land	United States
No. of Replies											
96	149	88	562	66	219	129	611	330	920	53	3631
Do Marian prayers have a place in your life?											
Yes											
45.8%	58.8%	94.3%	55.9%	42.9%	74.5%	44.3%	30.9%	79.4%	84.2%	60.4%	69.7%
44	87	82	308	27	161	54	186	258	774	32	2447
I do not pray.											
11.5%	16.2%	0%	19.2%	30.2%	6.9%	4.9%	27.1%	10.2%	8.0%	17.0%	7.3%
11	24	0	106	19	15	6	163	33	74	9	255
If you say any Marian prayers, which one do you say most often?											
"Hail Mary"											
76.0%	69.8%	87.5%	69.8%	57.6%	97.4%	76.0%	26.0%	87.3%	82.9%	66.0%	78.4%
73	104	77	392	38	185	98	159	288	763	35	2847
How do you perceive Marian prayer?											
I do think it is important.											
56.3%	63.3%	97.6%	65.9%	27.6%	83.5%	80.6%	39.8%	89.7%	84.1%	59.6%	64.5%
54	93	83	367	16	182	104	236	296	771	31	2322
Mary is the model of prayer and faith.											
53.7%	68.0%	97.7%	68.1%	37.5%	76.1%	55.0%	25.0%	87.9%	83.3%	51.9%	74.8%
51	100	86	380	21	166	71	147	290	763	27	2648
Mary is the powerful intercessor.											
50.0%	48.3%	92.9%	48.3%	21.4%	71.7%	51.9%	24.7%	73.0%	61.7%	36.5%	57.4%
48	71	78	269	12	157	67	145	241	565	19	2061
It distracts me from directly praying to God.											
13.5%	10.2%	18.8%	15.4%	5.6%	10.1%	10.2%	10.1%	8.8%	6.8%	9.8%	11.0%
13	15	16	86	3	22	13	59	29	62	5	395
One can only pray to God.											
14.6%	13.6%	2.4%	23.5%	3.6%	10.2%	7.0%	25.5%	3.0%	2.3%	8.0%	11.7%
14	20	2	131	2	22	9	150	10	21	4	417

Mary and Youth: Questions about special forms of prayer and dogma.

Austria	Canada	Ecuador	France	Ireland	Italy	Japan	Korea	Peru	Spain	Switzer-land	United States
No. of Replies											
96	149	88	562	66	219	129	611	330	920	53	3631
If you were ever taught to pray the rosary, do you ever pray it?											
I was taught the rosary, but never pray it.											
28.7%	43.0%	22.7%	30.1%	59.7%	44.2%	36.9%	10.4%	39.0%	27.3%	43.4%	34.4%
27	64	20	167	37	96	45	59	128	251	23	1223
Are you a member of any Marian prayer or social organizations?											
No											
88.2%	98.7%	80.7%	95.5%	100.0%	94.9%	95.2%	94.5%	88.8%	83.3%	100.0%	96.9%
82	147	71	528	61	206	120	568	293	766	53	3467
Other than reading in church or required reading for school, do you ever read the Bible?											
Yes											
26.0%	23.5%	68.2%	35.4%	13.8%	26.4%	33.3%	58.9%	53.0%	46.0%	26.4%	41.5%
25	35	60	197	9	57	43	353	175	421	14	1493
The Roman Catholic dogma of the Immaculate Conception says essentially...											
I do not know what the dogma says.											
77.9%	32.0%	44.3%	41.2%	53.2%	24.7%	50.8%	35.5%	33.7%	32.8%	30.2%	47.9%
74	47	39	226	33	54	64	212	110	302	16	1610
Besides the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception, can you think of other Roman Catholic Marian dogmas?											
No											
94.7%	98.0%	86.9%	95.0%	100.0%	94.9%	98.4%	94.1%	84.7%	88.2%	98.1%	92.7%
90	146	73	516	58	204	124	546	271	811	52	2357

Mary and Youth: Beliefs about Mary

Austria	Canada	Ecuador	France	Ireland	Italy	Japan	Korea	Peru	Spain	Switzer-land	United States
No. of Replies											
96	149	88	562	66	219	129	611	330	920	53	3631
What is your perception of Mary being divine like God or human like us?											
I see Mary as a woman who is like God or more like God than like us.											

20.8%	35.1%	33.7%	30.5%	17.7%	27.9%	44.9%	13.2%	28.4%	24.3%	35.8%	37.0%
20	52	29	169	11	61	57	79	93	223	19	1308
What is your perception about how Mary became the mother of God's son, Jesus?											
I believe that Mary chose freely to accept God's invitation to bear his son.											
54.3%	58.1%	92.0%	70.1%	58.3%	68.9%	77.2%	45.1%	87.5%	82.2%	82.7%	76.3%
50	86	80	392	35	151	98	269	287	756	43	2726
The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Mary was a virgin before, during and after she gave birth to Jesus. I strongly agree or agree that...											
A. The doctrine of the virgin birth is important because it safeguards the divinity of Jesus Christ.											
29.5%	48.3%	70.1%	52.3%	20.0%	57.1%	48.4%	38.8%	59.0%	56.1%	46.2%	61.3%
28	71	61	291	11	125	62	225	194	514	24	2142
B. I don't understand the doctrine of the virgin birth, but I believe it because the Church teaches it.											
7.9%	23.1%	44.7%	23.6%	19.6%	25.1%	55.5%	18.1%	75.9%	23.3%	28.8%	26.7%
17	34	38	131	11	55	71	105	249	212	15	937
C. It is important for Roman Catholics to believe in the virgin birth as biological (physical) reality.											
23.2%	23.1%	26.7%	24.3%	19.6%	17.8%	25.8%	23.1%	19.8%	20.9%	13.5%	35.4%
22	34	23	135	11	39	33	133	65	190	7	1243

Mary and Youth: Mary's role within the Church

Austria	Canada	Ecuador	France	Ireland	Italy	Japan	Korea	Peru	Spain	Switzerland	United States
No. of Replies											
96	149	88	562	66	219	129	611	330	920	53	3631
What is your perception of Mary being divine like God or human like us?											
Do you believe that Mary is the mother of God, meaning the mother of Jesus Christ, true God and true man?											
Yes											
53.7%	83.1%	93.2%	70.5%	46.8%	80.3%	83.6%	41.8%	86.3%	83.6%	67.9%	81.3%
51	123	82	395	29	175	107	244	284	765	36	2912
The following statements concern different views or opinions about Mary. I strongly agree or agree that...											
Mary is the mediator between God the Father and humanity.											
Agree											
62.5%	67.1%	89.4%	61.4%	23.2%	74.8%	51.2%	44.8%	78.4%	64.7%	50.0%	48.0%

60	100	76	344	13	163	65	265	257	591	26	1722
Mary is the co-redeemer of humanity with Jesus Christ.											
Agree											
35.4%	39.6%	72.9%	36.9%	7.3%	51.6%	66.7%	43.6%	57.1%	51.5%	28.8%	37.3%
34	59	62	206	4	112	84	258	186	461	15	1319
Mary is the Catholic goddess to be worshipped by the faithful.											
Agree											
35.4%	41.6%	39.5%	36.6%	35.1%	26.7%	51.6%	37.5%	24.2%	28.4%	38.5%	33.8%
34	62	34	201	20	58	64	219	79	258	20	1189

Mary and Youth: Perceptions of Mary

Austria	Canada	Ecuador	France	Ireland	Italy	Japan	Korea	Peru	Spain	Switzerland	United States
No. of Replies											
96	149	88	562	66	219	129	611	330	920	53	3631
The following are descriptions that are used to describe Mary. I strongly agree or agree that...											
she is a caring mother of the Church and of humanity.											
65.6%	76.2%	96.6%	73.7%	57.9%	80.8%	68.8%	42.1%	86.2%	84.6%	64.2%	83.3%
61	112	85	411	33	177	88	249	282	778	34	2953
she is the mother of God.											
71.3%	77.6%	94.3%	70.7%	50.9%	81.3%	60.9%	31.4%	88.7%	84.0%	66.7%	79.8%
67	114	82	396	29	178	78	185	290	772	34	2851
she sympathizes with the poor.											
75.5%	85.7%	60.9%	78.0%	43.9%	77.9%	74.2%	47.5%	54.0%	53.2%	76.9%	76.7%
71	126	53	437	25	169	92	281	176	485	40	2746
she is our sister in faith.											
57.0%	78.2%	85.1%	59.3%	40.4%	70.3%	31.3%	47.3%	74.9%	70.1%	65.4%	70.2%
53	115	74	332	23	154	40	280	245	641	34	2496
she is the handmaid of God.											
60.6%	49.7%	90.6%	63.0%	23.2%	58.9%	23.8%	30.0%	63.9%	51.6%	71.2%	50.0%
57	73	77	353	13	129	30	177	209	473	37	1767
she is the feminine dimension of God.											
22.3%	53.1%	43.0%	33.9%	26.8%	23.4%	41.3%	20.3%	31.6%	24.2%	26.9%	41.6%
21	78	37	190	15	51	52	119	103	220	14	1482
she is the highest expression of human beauty.											

21.5%	44.9%	72.1%	35.8%	23.6%	33.3%	50.4%	28.6%	46.8%	40.3%	15.4%	47.2%
20	66	62	200	13	73	65	169	153	368	8	1657
she is the Queen of Heaven.											
37.2%	46.3%	80.5%	30.9%	43.9%	67.4%	23.4%	13.5%	64.2%	41.7%	21.2%	60.4%
35	68	70	173	25	147	30	80	210	382	11	2132
she is a powerful intercessor who presents our prayers to God.											
51.1%	53.1%	81.4%	42.4%	14.3%	56.6%	60.6%	37.9%	76.1%	49.7%	30.8%	50.1%
48	78	70	237	8	124	77	223	249	454	16	1753
she is the co-redeemer of humanity with Jesus Christ.											
35.1%	52.4%	78.8%	45.9%	17.9%	61.5%	65.6%	43.6%	60.1%	51.4%	34.6%	39.4%
33	77	67	257	10	134	84	258	196	466	18	1406
she is the ideal woman.											
20.2%	39.5%	79.1%	35.5%	22.8%	30.3%	60.2%	39.9%	68.7%	67.3%	13.5%	52.0%
19	58	68	199	13	66	77	236	224	617	7	1823
she is a chaste virgin.											
42.6%	37.0%	69.8%	40.1%	24.6%	55.5%	65.6%	59.0%	63.5%	50.4%	32.7%	58.6%
40	54	60	225	14	121	84	349	207	459	17	2094

Mary and Youth: Views on Mary in our lives

Austria	Canada	Ecuador	France	Ireland	Italy	Japan	Korea	Peru	Spain	Switzer-land	United States
No. of Replies											
96	149	88	562	66	219	129	611	330	920	53	3631
Do you view Mary in other ways? [This continues last's week's questions.]											
No											
3.9%	86.3%	28.6%	78.2%	88.3%	85.2%	92.0%	88.4%	56.7%	59.3%	80.8%	28.8%
68	126	24	431	53	184	115	497	181	546	42	1009
Does Mary have a place in your life?											
Yes											
33.3%	40.8%	86.2%	40.3%	23.4%	51.6%	10.2%	19.9%	74.8%	68.6%	43.4%	59.4%
32	60	75	226	15	113	13	118	246	628	23	2111
Is Mary important to the Roman Catholic Church?											
Yes											
66.0%	71.6%	94.3%	68.8%	61.9%	79.5%	71.8%	29.2%	94.8%	85.1%	62.3%	76.9%
62	106	83	381	39	174	89	170	310	777	33	2749
In your opinion, how important is knowledge about and devotion to Mary to faith in Jesus Christ?											

Very Important or Important											
36.3%	42.2%	78.4%	46.1%	12.5%	53.9%	47.2%	29.5%	60.7%	59.4%	34.0%	49.1%
33	62	69	256	7	118	59	174	198	542	18	1731
In your opinion, is Roman Catholic teaching about Mary an obstacle to Christian unity?											
Yes											
23.9%	4.1%	11.5%	19.1%	5.3%	4.6%	6.5%	9.5%	8.3%	12.2%	20.8%	10.8%
22	6	10	107	3	10	8	56	27	111	11	382
I would describe my relationship with the following as very close or somewhat close:											
God											
69.8%	64.6%	88.4%	63.2%	41.0%	80.4%	49.2%	75.5%	89.6%	85.0%	71.7%	87.0%
67	95	76	335	25	176	61	450	294	775	38	3010
Jesus											
2.3%	64.6%	4.2%	61.3%	36.1%	81.7%	51.2%	75.0%	87.5%	86.6%	73.6%	83.7%
68	95	81	342	22	179	64	445	287	788	39	2885
Mary											
2.6%	52.7%	8.9%	58.8%	29.5%	73.1%	48.4%	46.4%	85.4%	81.3%	64.2%	64.6%
40	77	72	329	18	160	61	273	280	734	34	2211
Saint											
9.8%	38.8%	1.7%	42.2%	21.7%	34.2%	5.0%	32.5%	50.2%	41.2%	20.8%	39.6%
28	57	50	235	13	75	42	192	164	368	11	1345
Home parish											
5.2%	54.8%	4.7%	50.5%	14.8%	9.7%	6.6%	36.1%	52.5%	60.9%	43.4%	57.9%
53	80	55	280	9	65	69	214	171	542	23	1985
Church groups											
35.4%	35.9%	52.3%	41.1%	1.6%	16.0%	47.1%	50.6%	19.4%	49.5%	26.4%	35.4%
34	52	45	228	1	35	57	298	63	442	14	1209

Mary and Youth: A Selection of Replies

The replies to questions 35 to 38 (see Appendix I) which indicated that Mary was seen as a mother figure could be divided into two groups: those using implicit and those using explicit maternal references. Respondents using such imagery

appeared to have a personal and affective relationship with Mary. When referring to Mary as *mother*, the respondents (as can be seen from the samples) spoke of an *idealized* mother. Implicit maternal language was present in a plurality of the total number of responses to the open-ended questions.

Obviously, such insights are open to subjective interpretation. It is well established, however, that those answering such optional questions tend to hold stronger and less typical views than those who do not answer them. Nevertheless, certain trends appeared.

Ideal Mother Image

Those using explicit maternal references often seemed to express a view of Mary similar to a maternal religious archetype. This was apparent in the replies to question 38. "Is Mary important to the Roman Catholic Church?" Here the replies were short answers, frequently consisting of phrases that seemed to have been memorized." Mother of Jesus Christ, our only Lord" - "She conceived the only son of God through the power of the Holy Spirit" - "She's the mother of God" - "Intercessive [sic] power, as of a mother" - "She's the mother of Jesus and our Spiritual mother" - "She is the mother of the world." Although this group of replies seemed to indicate a more cognitive perspective on Mary, the brevity and the predictable form of the answers might well indicate a shallow level of understanding.

The image most frequently cited in the responses to the open-ended questions described Mary in language which was personal and suggestive of an affective relationship. Examples will follow next week.

Mary and Youth: A Selection of Replies to Questions Inquiring About Personal Images of Mary

Explicit Maternal Image

"I view her as a mother who cares for her children" - "A friend, a mother, my own mother, and a caring person who is concerned about us and our future" - "I see Mary as the mother to all humanity" - "Mother of God" - "My second mother" - "As my mother (real)" - "To me, Mary represents my mother, the one who has done everything she can possibly do for me, that is why when I think of Mary I

see my mother" - "Mary is my mother, who I come to [to] seek advice and be consoled" - "She is the mother of Jesus" - "She is the mother of mothers."

Implicit Maternal Image

"As a respected loving and caring woman" - "I see Mary as a gentle, loving person who cares for all" - "Mary is one we can talk to (pray to)" - "Whenever I need some help always ask Mary, and whenever I get scared I ask Mary to help me and protect me, and that never fails" - "Mary helps me in my life in many ways. She helps me to be thankful for everything I have especially my mother" - "Mary is a source of guidance to me and my family" - "But if I am in need I pray to her" - "Mary is someone I see with a heart immeasurably large. She gives special blessings to all and she is like God in that she will listen when you need her to."

Another commonly repeated theme, though less frequent than the ideal mother, was the exemplary or model human person. For our purposes, the term *model* refers to a person with traits which should and can be imitated. The emphasis is on similitude and affection. Responses in this category were divided between those using the language of human values and those emphasizing religious values. Some examples of Mary recognized as *model* will follow next week.

Model (Human Values)

Some examples of Mary recognized as *model* follow:

"She was very young and brave" - "Handmaid, strong-willed, humble, average beauty, not ugly" - "A nice lady" - "Our great, bold, loving mother" - "I view her as a brave, dedicated and loving woman" - "I see her as a friend" - "She is just someone that I can talk to" - "She is what I try to model my life after her caring and compassionate ways" - "Being a female, I see Mary as a role model" - "Mary is someone for me to follow and shape my life after. A model, someone I can confide in" - "Human expectations, goals, possibilities, limitations."

Model (Religious Values)

"I see Mary as the woman without sin" - "Holy woman that would do anything for God" - "I believe Mary was a good woman and served God and he rewarded her, but she is not sinless" - "A model to follow the right way Jesus taught us" - "I

feel Mary is a model of faith and discipleship" - " She is a symbol of faith and goodness, also she brings people closer to God."

A large number of responses from young women showed that they saw Mary as a *feminine role model* (a division of the category of human or secular model):

"I view her as a friend I can ask help from. I can pray to her about 'girl problems' like a big sister" - " I view Mary as a role model for Christian girls" - " She is a feminine model for women" - " Gentle, understanding of our wants and feeling because she was a teenage girl too" - " Example to all women" - " First, Mary is also female and human. She offers me a role model as to what God asks of each one of us" - " I pray to Mary, when sometimes I want to talk to a girl. I believe she hears my prayers and asks the Lord Jesus to help me and who I pray for."

Along similar lines, many responses showed a view of Mary as an *ideal*, admirable but inimitable. These occurred often, though less frequently than responses portraying Mary as a *model* for attainable goals. As with the image of *model*, the replies stressing dissimilitude were divided into those based on human (more frequent) and religious values (less frequent). Examples follow next week.

Ideal (Human Values)

"I view her as the most sinless woman who that [sic] will ever live" - "I see Mary as the protector of the weak, and the downfall of the strong that persecute the weak" - " She is a model of truth, justice and fairness. She treats all people equally" - "They [Catholics] use Mary as a model for women and virginity. We are to be pure like Mary, devoted like Mary, virgins like Mary!!"

Ideal (Religious Values)

"She is the 'Highest' to me, no one could ever be like her, I RESPECT her" - "I see Mary as a link between God and humans" - "Mary is sort of my idol. The way she has no sin. I wish I had no sin" - "Mary is the mother of God, and should be respected and honored for giving birth to the Lord, and her total devotion" - "I CAN PRAY TO HER LIKE GOD" - "Mary is like God to me. She is very powerful and I pray to her and God equally the same" - "Mary has a place in my life as the ideal woman. I would like to be pure, trustworthy, beautiful, without sin, faithful, etc....I also pray to her because I know she hears my prayers, and helps them

become true" - "Mary is one I pray to other than God for help in my daily life" - "I try to be sinless like Mary but I know I can't be" - "An idol or hero that says we might be human but we can use our gifts to be great and make us worthy to be in heaven with God" - "Mary is very powerful and all Catholics should be close to her" - "Mary symbolizes as the true Mother of God and Queen of Heaven."

Over the past several months, we have brought you the surveys of a Marian survey among youth. Today, we are bringing you the very last in the series.

Related to the notion of Mary as unapproachable religious ideal was the notion that Mary manifests God's presence in her womanhood. Though this received little support when offered as a choice (e.g., no. 34.f. "I see Mary as the feminine dimension of God"), a number of 'write-in' replies indicated this perspective.

"As truly God and also knows human emotions" - "I pray to Mary often when I feel comfortable speaking to a female" - "I pray to Mary because I feel that she is close to God and will take my prayers to Jesus Christ. She is a woman and I feel more comfortable talking to her" - "Mary is a special symbol of a person who personifies God" - "It helps me related the beauty of a woman with God. And her compassion helps me to love and pray" - "Mary is a symbol of God" - "She is the embodiment of a human being given divine powers" - "Mary is like Jesus Christ; she conceived him through the power of God & the Holy Spirit" - "Mary is someone that I pray to while in Church. To me, she's a picture of a female god-like creature. She was pure and innocent" - "To me, Mary, along with Jesus is my friend. I feel it would be easier to talk to Mary about something. She's also a female, I'll pray to her. She is also Queen of Peace, so during this [Gulf] war, I pray to her" - "She shows that all women are divine and that not all of our leaders are keen and that she is someone who I can look up to" - "Mary is my mother, the link to my father, God" - "I like to pray to Mary because I think she understands my problems because I am a girl and it is easier to pray to someone who can understand you" - "She represents womanhood in the divine scheme of things" - "She is a divine being who answered her call to God and should be an example to all."

These replies called to mind Leonardo Boff's suggestion that rank-and-file Catholics see Mary essentially as an object of worship (*latria*). However, there were equally numerous replies which revealed Mary as seen at a lower level than God-either as merely human (e.g., "She is the one who was chosen to bear Jesus and she is a perfect human" - "Personal praying friend" - "Mary was a person as we are. She bore the savior and is a good model of faith") or as one uniquely

mediating between lowly humanity and a distant God (e.g., "Mary helps my prayers go to God when I need them most" - "Mary has a place in my life because I think it's easier for me to pray to her. God always seems as a great and wonderful person, but Mary seems a normal human being who makes mistakes" - "She helps me get through to God" - "A mediator of prayers to God. An example of a human being like Jesus"). Such variety of expression eludes reduction to a single mariological principle, but each response contains a grain of revealed truth.