



**FRIENDS** *of the*  
**BRIDEGROOM**



# **BETHANY BRUNCH**

HOW-TO GUIDE



**WHO:** YOUNG ADULT WOMEN

**OBJECTIVE:** FORMING THE HEARTS OF WOMEN THROUGH THE WITNESS OF RELIGIOUS WOMEN AND CULTIVATING AN OPENNESS TO RELIGIOUS VOCATIONS.

**HOW:** IDEALLY, MONTHLY MEETINGS FROM OCTOBER-MAY THAT INCLUDE THE PRESENCE OF RELIGIOUS WOMEN, A TALK, TIME FOR PRAYER, AND AN OPTIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR FELLOWSHIP. START WITH WHAT YOU CAN DO- IF IT IS ONLY FEASIBLE TO DO ONE EVENT/YEAR, DO THAT! THIS IS JUST A TOOL.



## What you need:

- Volunteer passionate about fostering the renewal of women's religious life and/or young adult women's ministry (this can also be a diocesan VD, campus minister, pastor, etc).
- Space conducive to creating a "home"-like environment in close proximity to a chapel/church
- Priest for each event, access to Mass/Adoration
- Women willing to host the event (think food, hospitality, etc.)
- Religious women to give a talk, spend time with the women
- Host family, convent, or other suitable housing for the religious sisters if coming from out of town.
- Budget
  - Stipend for sisters (typically sisters do not ask for this, but it is always appreciated)
  - Travel expenses for sisters
  - Money for food (or people willing to donate food)
  - Money for any promo materials you produce



## Step-by-Step

1. Find a volunteer willing to take the helm for planning. The rest of the steps are for them.
2. Choose a location (near a church, if possible).
3. Invite religious communities to come for the events. Plan ahead! This should take place 6-9 months before the event.
  - a. This can be as simple as calling the Vocation Directress for a community within driving distance. It is ideal if there is more than one sister, but this is not always possible for the communities. If they are coming from a distance, consider asking them to be part of other events at your parish/diocese to make it worth the trip.
4. Find a priest willing to pray Mass and expose the Blessed Sacrament for Adoration.
5. Once you have dates and sisters scheduled, begin to promote the event. Direct invitations are the most effective, so spread the word through young adult communities (think Newman centers, Bible Studies, Theology on Tap events, etc.), parishes, and through networks of friends. Create a simple RSVP.
6. Form a hospitality team (2-5) of women that are willing to do the "boots on the ground" hosting- creating a beautiful environment, making breakfast, welcoming guests, etc. It is great for these to be women that are going to be attending the event, as well. Share the vision with them. One woman should be the MC for the morning to facilitate transitions, opening prayer, etc.
7. Send an email to the sisters attending a month before the event with details.
8. Create a way to track who attends for follow-up contact later.



## Some Tips from our Experience:

- It is helpful for women to experience this event as a time to be blessed in their feminine identity, rather than feeling “recruited” to religious life. Many women that would never come to a “discernment” event are opened to that possibility through time with religious women, free of pressure to discern.
- Creating an environment where women feel safe and at home facilitates an openness to the religious that are present.
  - Along this line, providing good, homemade food (when possible) is really helpful- people instantly feel cared for and loved. This is the job of your core team of women.
- Don’t get too married to the schedule- there is a lot of beauty that comes out of the conversations that spring up organically throughout the morning, if freedom is given.
- If you can, pay attention to a community’s particular charism, and play to their strengths. For example, we invited Dominicans to give formation in virtue, Franciscans to speak on Marian joy, and Carmelites to share about meeting Christ in suffering.



# TOOLKIT

## Sample Schedule

8:00 | Mass

8:30-9:15 | Breakfast and mingling

9:15-9:45 | Talk from Sister

9:45-10:00 | Q & A (or extra time for if the talk runs long)

10:00-10:30 | Prayer time (Fr. Priest to expose/repose Blessed Sacrament)

10:30-11:00 | More social time

\*\*Note: This schedule could be modified for an afternoon or evening event. Key elements are social time (with good food), a talk, and time for prayer.



## Sample Email

Dear Sr. Mary,

We are so grateful that you are coming for Bethany Brunch in December. I wanted to confirm plans with you for your visit. Here is the information that I have on our end:

**Reimbursement:** Information about providing a stipend, or how to submit receipts for reimbursement, if applicable.

**Morning Schedule:** We are flexible within this, but here is the tentative schedule for the morning:

8:00 | Mass with Fr. Priest Name

8:30-9:15 | Breakfast and mingling

9:15-9:45 | Talk

9:45-10:00 | Q & A

10:00-10:30 | Prayer time (Fr. Priest Name to expose/repose Blessed Sacrament)

### Talk Outline:

Topic: Marian Hope

#### Key Points

- Defining the virtue of hope.
- Oftentimes as we seek God's will, we encounter seasons of waiting that stretch our capacity to hope. This is something to lean into, not fear. (Personal testimony here, if possible.)
- We nurture hope in our hearts through acts of faith and practicing virtue through difficult seasons.
- Tie-in with Mary's waiting in Advent for the coming of Jesus
- Common temptations against hope

**Location:** Everything will occur at the Mother Teresa House. We have a chapel in our house for prayer times.

A few **questions** for you-

1) If you know which sisters are coming, could you send me **names** so we can prepare well?

2) When would you like to **arrive and depart**? We are able to host sisters overnight at the Mother Teresa House, with individual rooms for as many as 3 sisters and a chapel in the house. We are also happy to organize other activities besides Bethany Brunch while you are here, if you'd like. Let me know what you think.

3) Do the sisters have any **dietary restrictions**?

Please let me know if there is anything else you need, and we look forward to seeing you in December!

In Christ,

Host



## Event Content: Mary's Heart, 8 Month Plan

### October

Attribute of Mary's Heart: Humility and littleness before God

#### Key Points

- Our identity is a gift bestowed upon us by the Father at the time of our creation
- From the moment of our own conception, we are formed for a distinct purpose.
  - "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you..."
- Desire to know and understand the purpose we are created for
- Nurturing the virtue of humility as we approach the God who made us
- Cultivating a personal life of prayer

### November

Attribute of Mary's Heart: Receptivity to the Holy Spirit

#### Key Points

- Mary's life of prayer prior to the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit nurtured a receptive heart
- Mary's eye like the psalmist "upon the hand of the master"
- Our purpose is revealed as we listen attentively to the Holy Spirit in our day-to-day lives, pondering all thing in our hearts
- Discernment of Spirits 101

### December

Attribute of Mary's Heart: Hope

#### Key Points

- Developing the virtue of hope when things take longer than we anticipate.
  - "Blessed is she who believed that what was spoken to her by the Lord would be fulfilled..."
- Active waiting
  - Example shown in the Visitation of our Lady
- Obedience to the will of God, especially over time

### January

Attribute of Mary's Heart: Joy in poverty

#### Key Points

- Mary embraced, with peace and joy, the poverty of how Jesus chose to come into the world.
- The Providence of God brings joy even in the midst of need and messiness.
- As we learn to trust, we encounter the joy of God in the midst of our poverty

### February

Attribute of Mary's Heart: Faithfulness and Perseverance in the ordinary

#### Key Points

- God wastes nothing- most of the life of the Holy Family is shrouded in the mystery of their ordinary, hidden life.
- Meditating on the life of the Holy Family at Nazareth
- Endurance in prayer, even in seasons of great hiddenness
- Fruitfulness of hidden seasons
- Explosion of fruitful mission after the 2nd fiat of Cana





## **March**

Attribute of Mary's Heart: Protected by Joseph

### Key Points

- St. Joseph protects Mary in her vulnerability, especially in the face of fear and danger
- Vulnerability and dependence on God
- St. Joseph is an icon of the Father's care and provision for all
- Nurturing a devotion to St. Joseph

## **April**

Attribute of Mary's Heart: Longsuffering

### Key Points

- Staying with Jesus in the midst of suffering, ours and those around us.
- Allowing our hearts to be opened through the sword of suffering in order to remain with Jesus.
- Mary's consoling presence at the foot of the cross

## **May**

Attribute of Mary's Heart: Joyful witness

### Key Points

- The witness of woman to the joy of the Gospel
- Restoration of the Garden
- Mary as the new Eve, our calling to be her daughters
- Religious woman as image of the redeemed, eternal bride of Christ

## **Event Content: Song of Songs, Flexible Plan**

In our community, where most women are already living lives of prayer, we found it fruitful to simply ask religious sisters to give a 20 minute reflection on a chapter of the Song of Songs, starting with the first chapter and progressing each month. Rather than provide specific points, we ask the sisters to pray about what is most striking to them in each particular chapter.