

Reflection:

January 2026

*“The disciples
with one accord
devoted themselves to
prayer together with the
women and Mary,
the mother of Jesus.”*

Acts 1:14

As we stand on the threshold of a new year, our hearts naturally turn toward beginnings. We look for models of hope, renewal, and direction. There is perhaps no better image to guide us into this new season than the scene in the Upper Room immediately following the Lord's Ascension.

Here, we find a community of about 120—the disciples, men and women, the apostles, including Peter, and Mary—gathered in obedience to the Lord's instruction, waiting for the great Gift from heaven.

This passage offers a picture of harmony and joy — a blueprint for the kind of community every Jesus Youth fellowship is called to cultivate. It is a portrait of a people united in relationship, rooted in prayer, and ready for mission. Here Mary and the other women disciples are not on the margins; they are fully present and active alongside the men.

The Upper Room challenges us to leave behind a spirituality marked by fear, anxiety, or self-absorption. Instead, it invites us into God's ultimate plan: love. We are called to turn to Him in love, live in love with one another, and be sent out in love to the world.

Mary's presence and leadership are particularly striking. She stands at the centre — indeed, at the heart — of the early Church, with the other women actively participating as the disciples wait for the promise of Pentecost. This is beautifully captured in the beloved Jesus Youth icon, Mary, Queen of the Apostles. More than honouring an image, Jesus Youth seeks to cultivate the attitudes and culture that both the icon and this passage express.

From this prayerful communion arises the bold, discerning leadership of Peter. A united community, under the Spirit and in harmony with Mary's contemplative presence, moves toward creative missionary action. It is the Church, gathered in prayer, moving forward in a truly synodal spirit and bearing abundant fruit. The living, nurturing heart of Mary inspires and strengthens the visionary action of Peter.

Recent Popes have cautioned against worldly or one-sided approaches to mission, reminding us of the need to balance the Marian and Petrine dimensions of the Church. These are not simply roles but cultures and attitudes that shape us deeply. The Gospel challenges and transforms our habits



and values, drawing us into the “new creation” God desires — where, as St. Paul says, there is no Greek or Jew, no male or female, but all are alive in Christ. This is not about erasing differences but about shared participation, complementarity, and collaboration. As the Catechism profoundly points out, the “Marian” dimension of the Church precedes the “Petrine”(CCC 773).

Jesus lived in a society that often marginalised women, yet He took deliberate, sometimes shocking steps to restore their dignity and rightful place. The early disciples in the Upper Room continued this trajectory. Today, we are called to do the same. Pope Francis challenges us to recognise the “indispensable contribution” of women and the need for the “feminine genius” in every expression of society (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 103).

The gentle strength, sensitivity, and transforming influence of the feminine presence must find a deeply nurturing place in our communities today. In cultures shaped largely by male ways of thinking and acting, even recognising this need — let alone responding to it — can be challenging.

The Church sanctifies the beginning of the year by dedicating January 1 to the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. This is not a coincidence; it is a compass. Today, more than ever, in a world and culture often shaped by aggressive or purely functional ways of thinking, we are in desperate need of not just a greater, authentic feminine presence, but of a more “Marian heart” within each of us — a nurturing love like that of the Father in the parable of the Prodigal Son. This is the collaboration of charisms that St. Paul calls for in his letters to the Corinthians.

As we step into this new year, may the example and intercession of our heavenly Mother lead us forward in this beautiful direction, transforming us into a community that prays with one accord and moves with one heart.

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