

# Introduction

**A** litany is a familiar form of prayer, a way of remembering holy people and asking their prayers. This litany remembers and asks the prayers of the women Mark's gospel records among Jesus' first believers and disciples.

In Mark's gospel, women appear in 57 of the 666 verses. Jesus' women disciples become visible in the narrative only at the crucifixion when two verses name women who have followed and served Jesus and come with him from Galilee to Jerusalem (Mark 15.40-41). The presence of women disciples doesn't surprise the women in the classes I teach today, nor does their standing with Jesus to the end.

In this book the left-hand pages provide gospel verses and background that tell the story of each woman in Mark's gospel. The right-hand pages feature art illustrating the women, suggestions for reflection, and to conclude, the litany prayer for each woman.

Each response in the litany begins, "Holy woman, full of grace as we are, pray for us." The response uses the Angel Gabriel's greeting to Mary (Luke 1.18). It reminds us that God blesses and calls us all. The response unifies the litany.

Use this book to study, reflect, and pray on your own, in groups, in families. Focus on one of the women in Mark's gospel at a time, or two of them, or all of them. Sharing reflections is enriching. Add your role models and prayers on pages 30-31.