



Prophecy and
Promise

Branch 2

Y6 Teachers' Guide

Version 1: September 2026

This booklet is offered as a theological guide for teachers. Although the information provides some context for the whole branch, it will be most useful for teachers as they deliver the first few sessions and lessons within the branch.

Teachers' Guide: Y6 Prophecy and Promise

Session 1	
Learning Focus	HEAR / BELIEVE Recognise that Miriam is a significant woman in the Old Testament for salvation History.
Recall and Retrieval	
Sequence of knowledge throughout the lesson	Key knowledge: Pupils will know That women of the Old Testament are true protagonists of salvation history (<i>Pope John Paul II's address, 1996</i>). That Miriam is a significant woman in the Old Testament for salvation History.
Key skills/disciplinary knowledge	U6.2.1. Show an understanding of any one of the following Old Testament scripture passages that show the importance of women in salvation history, recognising authorial intent and historical context: – Exodus 1:8-22, 2:1-10: Miriam U6.2.2. Use theological language to explain what is meant by describing the women of the Old Testament as 'true protagonists of salvation history' (<i>Pope John Paul II's address, General Audience, 27 March 1996</i>), making relevant links with the stories of some key women from the Old Testament.

U6.2.1. Explain how Exodus 1:8–22 and 2:1–10, focusing on Miriam, shows the importance of women in salvation history, while also recognising authorial intent and historical context:

Historical Context

Exodus begins with the oppression of the Israelites in Egypt, where Pharaoh orders the killing of all Hebrew baby boys. This context of violence and oppression makes the survival of Moses extraordinary. In the ancient Near East, women often had limited public authority, yet in this passage, women act decisively to protect life. Their courage sets the foundation for God's saving plan through Moses.

Miriam's Role

Miriam, though a child, shows quick thinking and bravery. When her baby brother is placed in the Nile, she watches over him, intervenes with Pharaoh's daughter, and ensures that Moses' own mother becomes his nurse. Her initiative ensures Moses' survival, directly enabling God's plan of liberation for Israel.

- **Importance in salvation history:** Miriam participates in safeguarding the future deliverer of Israel. Without her role, the story of Exodus—and Israel's covenant identity—might have been lost. She stands as an example of how God works through the actions of women, not only kings and prophets.

Authorial Intent

The author of Exodus highlights women as instruments of God's providence:

- The Hebrew midwives (Shiphrah and Puah) defy Pharaoh's orders.
- Pharaoh's daughter shows compassion.
- Miriam ensures continuity of family and covenant identity.

The inclusion of these female figures is intentional: it subverts the expectation of Pharaoh's absolute power. Ironically, it is women—powerless in that society—who outwit the king and further God's saving plan.

The author shows that God's purposes are unstoppable and that He often chooses the unexpected to bring about salvation.

Theological Significance

The passage foreshadows later themes in salvation history:

- Women as protectors of covenant identity (e.g., Hannah, Mary).
- God's salvation working through the humble and overlooked.
- The pattern of God raising up deliverers through the faithful actions of the marginalised.

Miriam's role prefigures the part women will play in the New Testament, especially Mary in the story of Jesus' birth and salvation.

Summary:

This passage shows the importance of women in salvation history by highlighting Miriam's courage and resourcefulness in ensuring Moses' survival. Historically, it reflects the precariousness of Israel under Egyptian oppression, yet the author intentionally elevates the role of women—midwives, Miriam, Pharaoh's daughter—as central to God's plan. Theologically, it establishes a pattern of women as key participants in God's saving work, pointing forward to Mary and the fulfilment of salvation in Christ.

U6.2.2. – Use theological language to explain what is meant by describing the women of the Old Testament as 'true protagonists of salvation history' (Pope John Paul II's address, General Audience, 27 March 1996), making relevant links with the stories of some key women from the Old Testament.

Explanation

To call the women of the Old Testament "**true protagonists of salvation history**" (Pope John Paul II, 1996) means that they are not passive figures in God's plan, but active participants through whom God's saving will is accomplished. In Catholic theology, **salvation history** refers to the unfolding story of God's redemptive work, preparing for the definitive salvation brought in Christ. The term "protagonists" highlights their agency, showing that women are integral in God's providential plan, not merely background characters.

From the very beginning, Scripture shows this pattern. **Eve**, although associated with the Fall, is also the recipient of the first promise of salvation (Genesis 3:15 – the "protoevangelium"), pointing forward to Mary as the "New Eve." This frames women as essential in God's saving design.

Other examples demonstrate how women embody faith, courage, and fidelity in the midst of crisis:

- **Sarah** is the matriarch of Israel; through her, God's covenant people begin.
- **Miriam** protects the infant Moses (Exodus 2:1–10), enabling the Exodus, a foundational act of God's deliverance.
- **Deborah**, a prophetess and judge (Judges 4–5), leads Israel to victory, showing that God empowers women to guide His people.
- **Ruth**, a Moabite convert, becomes the great-grandmother of King David, showing God's inclusion of outsiders in the messianic line.
- **Esther**, through courage and prayer, saves her people from destruction, foreshadowing Christ's saving work for all humanity.

In each case, the women are more than supporters of male figures; they embody **covenant faithfulness**, **trust in divine providence**, and **courageous cooperation with God's plan**.

Theologically, this reveals that God's saving will is worked out not only through patriarchs, kings, and prophets, but also through women whose faith and actions anticipate the role of **Mary**, the ultimate

woman of salvation history. Mary's fiat ("let it be done to me") at the Annunciation (Luke 1:38) fulfils the Old Testament pattern of female protagonism by directly enabling the Incarnation.

Thus, Pope John Paul II's description shows that the Old Testament women are not marginal, but rather are **active co-operators with God's salvific plan**, pointing toward the fullness of salvation in Christ.

Summary:

Women of the Old Testament are called "true protagonists of salvation history" because they reveal, in their faith and courage, how God's plan is advanced through their actions. From Miriam and Deborah to Ruth and Esther, these women show that salvation history is not just a story of men, but a shared covenant story, preparing for Mary and the definitive salvation in Christ.

Implications for Teaching

This theme helps students see that:

- Women are not marginal but essential to God's salvific plan.
- Old Testament narratives prefigure New Testament fulfilment, particularly in Mary.
- Salvation history is a shared story of men and women co-operating with divine providence.

Session 2	
Learning Focus	HEAR Recognise that Deborah is a significant woman in the Old Testament for salvation history.
Recall and Retrieval	
Sequence of knowledge throughout the lesson	Key knowledge: Pupils will know That women of the Old Testament are true protagonists of salvation history (<i>Pope John Paul II's address, 1996</i>). That Deborah and Esther are significant woman in the Old Testament for salvation History.
Key skills/disciplinary knowledge	U6.2.1. Show an understanding of any one of the following Old Testament scripture passages that show the importance of women in salvation history, recognising authorial intent and historical context: Judges 4:4-11, 5:7-15: Deborah Esther 8:3-12: Esther U6.2.2. Use theological language to explain what is meant by describing the women of the Old Testament as 'true protagonists of salvation history' (<i>Pope John Paul II's address, General Audience, 27 March 1996</i>), making relevant links with the stories of some key women from the Old Testament.

U6.2.1. – Show an understanding of any one of the following Old Testament scripture passages that show the importance of women in salvation history, recognising authorial intent and historical context:

- **Judges 4:4-11, 5:7-15: Deborah**

Historical Context

The Book of Judges presents a cycle in Israel's early history in the land: the people fall into sin, are oppressed, cry out, and are delivered through a judge raised up by God. In a society that was patriarchal

and militarised, leadership normally rested with men. Deborah stands out as both a **prophetess** and a **judge**, exercising civil, military, and spiritual authority. Her role demonstrates that God can raise up women as leaders and instruments of salvation in times of crisis.

Deborah's Role

- In **Judges 4**, Deborah summons Barak to lead Israel into battle against the Canaanite commander Sisera. When Barak hesitates, Deborah agrees to go with him but declares that "the honour will not be yours, for the LORD will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman" (Judges 4:9). This is fulfilled through Jael, who kills Sisera.
- In **Judges 5**, often called the "Song of Deborah," she leads Israel in a hymn of victory, celebrating God's deliverance. Verse 7 highlights her role: *"Village life in Israel ceased... until I, Deborah, arose, a mother in Israel."*

Deborah is portrayed as courageous, wise, and faithful, guiding both men and women in obedience to God.

Authorial Intent

The author of Judges emphasises a few key points:

- **Divine sovereignty:** God chooses unlikely instruments for deliverance. The inclusion of women as leaders and warriors undermines human assumptions about power and gender.
- **Female protagonism:** Deborah and Jael together subvert expectations—one leads as judge and prophetess; the other delivers the final blow to the enemy commander. Both are celebrated as agents of salvation.
- **Israel's identity:** The Song of Deborah functions as both liturgy and historical memory, showing how Israel understood its victories as God's work, achieved through unexpected human agents.

Theological Significance

- **Women as instruments of salvation:** Deborah demonstrates that salvation history includes female leadership at the highest levels—judicial, prophetic, military.
- **Foreshadowing:** Her maternal language ("mother in Israel") anticipates Mary's role as Mother of the Church, showing continuity in how women safeguard covenant identity.
- **Communal worship:** By composing and leading the victory hymn, Deborah not only secures deliverance but also ensures its theological interpretation: Israel's victories belong to God, not to human might.

Summary for Teaching Use

Judges 4–5 shows the importance of women in salvation history through Deborah's leadership and Jael's decisive act. Historically, this was radical in a patriarchal society, demonstrating that God empowers women as leaders. The author intentionally highlights women's protagonism to show divine sovereignty and to ensure Israel remembers that deliverance comes through God's choice of unexpected agents. Theologically, Deborah anticipates later female figures—especially Mary—as active participants in God's saving plan.

- **Esther 8:3-12: Esther**

Historical Context

The Book of Esther is set in the Persian court during the reign of King Xerxes (Ahasuerus), at a time when the Jewish people lived in exile and were vulnerable to persecution. Haman, a high-ranking official, plotted their destruction, but Queen Esther—herself a Jew, though initially concealing her identity—intervenes. Esther's role reflects the precarious position of Jewish communities under foreign rule and highlights God's providence, even in a book where God is never explicitly mentioned.

Esther's Role in 8:3–12

In this passage, Esther boldly approaches the king once more, falling at his feet and pleading with tears for her people to be spared. The king responds favourably, allowing Esther and Mordecai to issue a new decree permitting the Jews to defend themselves against their enemies.

Esther's courage and advocacy directly secure the survival of her people. Her intercession transforms a decree of destruction into one of deliverance. She acts as a mediator between her people and the king, embodying both political wisdom and deep solidarity with her community.

Authorial Intent

The author of Esther presents Esther as:

- **A model of faith and courage:** She risks her life by approaching the king unsummoned (earlier in Esther 4–5), and here she continues her advocacy with persistence.
- **An instrument of God's hidden providence:** Though God's name is never mentioned in the book, the narrative shows how human courage and fidelity align with God's saving plan.
- **A female saviour figure:** The author highlights Esther's protagonism, deliberately casting her as the decisive agent of deliverance rather than a male counterpart.

These intent challenges cultural expectations of the time: in the Persian court, women had little power, yet Esther is portrayed as the central figure through whom God preserves His people.

Theological Significance

- **Women as co-operators in salvation history:** Esther's intervention ensures the continuity of God's covenant people, without whom the messianic promise could not have been fulfilled.
- **Prefiguration of Mary:** Like Esther, Mary intercedes on behalf of her people—seen most clearly at Cana (John 2:1–11) and in her role as Mother of the Church.
- **Providence and mediation:** Esther's advocacy reveals how God works through human agents, even in hidden ways, to preserve His people and advance salvation history.

Summary for Teaching Use

Esther 8:3–12 shows the importance of women in salvation history by presenting Esther as the key figure who secures the survival of the Jewish people in exile. Historically, it reflects the vulnerability of the Jewish diaspora and the courage needed to preserve covenant identity. The author intentionally highlights Esther's protagonism, showing that God's saving plan is worked out through her bravery and intercession. Theologically, Esther anticipates Mary's role as the supreme woman of salvation history, who also safeguards God's people through her fiat and intercession.

Women in Salvation History: Comparative Teacher Sheet

Figure	Historical Context	Role in Narrative	Authorial Intent	Theological Significance
Miriam (Exodus 1–2; 15)	Israel enslaved in Egypt; Pharaoh orders the killing of Hebrew boys.	Protects Moses by watching over him in the Nile and arranging for his mother to nurse him (Exod 2:1–10). Later leads Israel in song after the Red Sea crossing (Exod 15:20–21).	Emphasises how God's plan depends on the courage of women (Miriam, midwives, Pharaoh's daughter). Highlights the overturning of Pharaoh's power.	Safeguards the life of the deliverer of Israel → essential for covenant survival. Prefigures Mary safeguarding Jesus. Shows women as worship leaders.
Deborah (Judges 4–5)	Period of the Judges; Israel oppressed by Canaanites.	Prophetess, judge, and military leader. Directs Barak in battle; proclaims victory song.	Highlights God choosing a woman as judge, prophet, and leader in a patriarchal society. Pairs with Jael, another woman, to secure victory.	Demonstrates female leadership in covenant history. "Mother in Israel" (Judg 5:7) foreshadows Mary as Mother of the Church. Shows God works through the unexpected.
Ruth (Book of Ruth)	Time of the Judges; famine and migration. Ruth, a Moabite widow, integrates into Israel.	Shows loyalty to Naomi, adopts Israel's God, marries Boaz, becomes great-grandmother of David.	Demonstrates that covenant faith is not restricted to bloodline but is open to outsiders who trust in God.	Links Gentiles to messianic line (Ruth → David → Jesus). Anticipates Mary's openness and faith. Highlights God's inclusion of the marginalised.
Esther (Book of Esther, esp. 8)	Jews in exile under Persian rule; threatened with extermination by Haman.	As queen, risks her life to intercede with King Xerxes for her people; secures a decree allowing Jewish survival.	Author deliberately shows a woman as the saviour of her people. God's providence is hidden but implied.	Esther ensures covenant continuity by saving her people. Foreshadows Mary's intercessory role as Queen and Mother of the Church. Shows God's deliverance through hidden providence.

Key Takeaway for Teaching

All four women act decisively in moments of crisis for God's people. Each safeguards covenant identity, often from positions of social weakness, thereby showing that **God's salvation history is worked out not only through patriarchs and prophets but also through courageous women**. They anticipate Mary, the ultimate fulfilment of this pattern, whose fiat enables the Incarnation and definitive salvation in Christ.

Session 3	
Learning Focus	HEAR / BELIEVE Understand why Mary is the fulfilment of the Old Testament promises and became the 'Mother of God' by her 'yes' to God's plan.
Recall and Retrieval	
Sequence of knowledge throughout the lesson	Key knowledge: Pupils will know That Mary is the fulfilment of the Old Testament promises and became the 'Mother of God' by her 'yes' to God's plan.
Key skills/disciplinary knowledge	U6.2.3. Show understanding of the Christian belief that Mary is the fulfilment of the Old Testament promises, making relevant links to Luke 1:26-56 and the accounts of the women of the Old Testament. Contrast Luke 1:26-56 with the authorial focus in Matthew's account (Matt 1:18-25). U6.2.4. Use theological language to describe and explain the belief that Mary became the 'Mother of God'.

U6.2.3. – Show understanding of the Christian belief that Mary is the fulfilment of the Old Testament promises, making relevant links to Luke 1:26-56 and the accounts of the women of the Old Testament.

Contrast Luke 1:26-56 with the authorial focus in Matthew's account (Matt 1:18-25).

Mary as the Fulfilment of the Old Testament Promises

Christian belief sees Mary as the culmination of the pattern of women in salvation history. The women of the Old Testament (Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Ruth, Esther) all played vital roles in safeguarding or advancing God's covenant plan, often in times of crisis. Mary is the **fulfilment** of this line of "true protagonists of salvation history" (St John Paul II, 1996), because in her, God's saving plan comes to completion in the Incarnation of Christ.

Luke 1:26–56 (Annunciation and Magnificat) presents Mary as:

- **The New Eve:** where Eve's "yes" to temptation led to sin, Mary's fiat ("Let it be to me according to your word") enables salvation (Luke 1:38).
- **Daughter of Zion:** the angel's greeting ("Rejoice, full of grace", 1:28) echoes Old Testament prophetic addresses to Zion (Zeph 3:14–17), showing Mary as the embodiment of Israel awaiting the Messiah.
- **Model of covenant faith:** like Sarah and Hannah, Mary receives a miraculous child through divine intervention, continuing the line of covenant promises.
- **Voice of Israel's poor and faithful:** the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46–55) echoes Hannah's song (1 Samuel 2:1–10) and gives Mary a prophetic voice proclaiming God's justice and mercy.

Thus, Mary fulfils the pattern of faithful women in the Old Testament by embodying obedience, courage, and covenant fidelity in the climactic moment of salvation history.

Contrast with Matthew's Authorial Focus (Matt 1:18–25)

- **Luke:** The focus is on **Mary**. The narrative highlights her faith, her acceptance of God's plan, and her role as the active human co-operator in the Incarnation. Mary is given a theological voice

(Magnificat) that situates her within the tradition of Israel's faithful women. The author's intent is to show Mary as the climax of Israel's salvation history.

- **Matthew:** The focus is on **Joseph**. Mary is present but largely silent; the narrative centres on Joseph's dilemma, his righteousness, and his acceptance of God's will through the angel's message. Matthew frames the story in terms of Old Testament prophecy fulfilment (e.g., Isaiah 7:14: "the virgin shall conceive and bear a son"). Mary's role is more passive in Matthew's portrayal, with the emphasis on Joseph as the legal father who brings Jesus into the line of David.

Theological Significance of the Contrast

- **Mary as fulfilment (Luke):** Luke explicitly situates Mary in continuity with the women of the Old Testament—Sarah, Hannah, Deborah, and Esther—who each played a part in preserving the covenant and enabling God's saving work. Her Magnificat confirms her awareness of this salvation history.
- **Joseph as fulfilment (Matthew):** Matthew focuses on **Jesus' Davidic lineage and legal identity** through Joseph. Mary's role is acknowledged but not expanded; the intent is to prove Jesus' messianic legitimacy to a Jewish audience.

Together, the two accounts complement each other: Luke emphasises Mary's active faith and her place in the tradition of Old Testament women, while Matthew stresses Jesus' fulfilment of prophecy and rightful place in Israel's royal line.

Summary for Teaching Use

Mary is the fulfilment of Old Testament promises because she brings to completion the pattern of faithful women—Sarah, Hannah, Miriam, Deborah, Ruth, Esther—through her fiat, which allows the Word to become flesh. Luke 1:26–56 highlights Mary's protagonism in salvation history, presenting her as New Eve, Daughter of Zion, and prophetess of the Magnificat. Matthew 1:18–25, by contrast, shifts the focus to Joseph, emphasising fulfilment of prophecy and legal lineage. Both together show that Mary fulfils the covenant promises by embodying the faith and obedience of the Old Testament women, while ensuring the Messiah is born into the Davidic line.

U6.2.4. – Use theological language to describe and explain the belief that Mary became the 'Mother of God'.

Theological Language and Meaning

The title "**Mother of God**" (Greek: *Theotokos*, literally "God-bearer") expresses the Christian belief that Mary, in giving birth to Jesus Christ, gave birth to the one who is both **true God and true man**. This title was solemnly affirmed at the **Council of Ephesus (431 AD)** to safeguard the unity of Christ's person.

- **Incarnation:** The eternal Word (Logos), the second person of the Trinity, took flesh in the womb of Mary (John 1:14).
- **Hypostatic union:** In Christ there are two natures, human and divine, united in one divine person. Because Mary is the mother of this one person, she is rightly called "Mother of God," not just "Mother of Jesus' humanity."
- **Christological safeguard:** The title prevents any separation between Jesus' humanity and divinity. Denying Mary as Theotokos would imply denying that Jesus is fully God from the moment of conception.

Scriptural Foundations

- **Luke 1:43** – Elizabeth greets Mary as "*the mother of my Lord*", recognising that the child she bears is divine.
- **Luke 1:35** – The angel tells Mary: "*The child to be born will be holy; he will be called the Son of God.*"

- **Galatians 4:4** – Paul teaches: “When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman.”

Doctrinal Significance

1. **Christological:** Affirms that Jesus is one person, both fully divine and fully human.
2. **Mariological:** Mary’s role is not incidental but essential in salvation history—her free acceptance (fiat) allowed God’s plan to be realised.
3. **Ecclesiological:** As Mother of God, Mary is also seen as **Mother of the Church**, because the Church is Christ’s body (Lumen Gentium, Vatican II).
4. **Soteriological:** Mary’s motherhood is directly linked to the mystery of salvation, since the Redeemer takes flesh through her.

Theological Summary

To call Mary the “Mother of God” is to affirm the central Christian mystery of the **Incarnation**—that the Son of God truly became man without ceasing to be God. It honours Mary not for her own sake but because of the greatness of the One she bore. Her title safeguards orthodox belief in Christ’s divinity and humanity and highlights her unique place in salvation history as the Theotokos, the one through whom the Word became flesh.

Session 4	
Learning Focus	CELEBRATE Understand that the Magnificat is the song of the Mother of God and the song of the Church. CELEBRATE Recognise some sung settings of the Magnificat.
Recall and Retrieval	Respond: how can we live out Deborah or Esther’s example today?
Sequence of knowledge throughout the lesson	Key knowledge: Pupils will know That the Magnificat is the song of the Mother of God and the song of the Church. Some sung settings of the Magnificat.
Key skills/disciplinary knowledge	U6.2.3. – Show understanding of the Christian belief that Mary is the fulfilment of the Old Testament promises, making relevant links to Luke 1:26-56 and the accounts of the women of the Old Testament. Contrast Luke 1:26-56 with the authorial focus in Matthew’s account (Matt 1:18-25). U6.2.4. – Use theological language to describe and explain the belief that Mary became the ‘Mother of God’. U6.2.5. – Show understanding of how and why the Magnificat prayer forms radical expectations of the Messiah. D6.2.2. – Exploring how they and others interpret their own and the composer’s meaning, in response to a variety of sung settings of the Magnificat.

U6.2.5 – Show understanding of how and why the Magnificat prayer forms radical expectations of the Messiah.

Context

The *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46–55) is Mary's prayer of praise spoken during her visit to Elizabeth. It is steeped in Old Testament imagery, especially Hannah's song (1 Samuel 2:1–10), and it reflects Luke's concern with God's preferential love for the poor, the lowly, and the oppressed.

Radical Elements in the Magnificat

- **Reversal of Human Expectations**
 - *"He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly"* (Lk 1:52).
 - The Messiah is not expected to uphold existing power structures but to overturn them, raising up the humble and casting down the proud.
 - This challenges worldly models of kingship and points to a reign of justice rather than domination.
- **Option for the Poor**
 - *"He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty"* (Lk 1:53).
 - The Messiah's mission is associated with feeding the hungry, not enriching the wealthy.
 - This anticipates Jesus' ministry of healing, table fellowship, and his teaching on the poor in the Beatitudes (Luke 6:20–23).
- **Continuity with God's Covenant Promises**
 - *"He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors"* (Lk 1:54–55).
 - The prayer frames the Messiah not as a new break but as the fulfilment of God's covenantal promises to Abraham and his descendants.
 - This grounds the radical vision in the faithfulness of God.
- **Subversion of Political Power**
 - In its original setting under Roman occupation, such words would sound politically dangerous: a Messiah who dethrones rulers and empowers the poor.
 - The Magnificat points to a kingdom rooted in divine justice rather than imperial might.

Theological Understanding

- **Christological:** The Magnificat sets the expectation that the Messiah will embody God's justice, mercy, and preferential love for the poor, rather than worldly triumphalism.
- **Eschatological:** The prayer has a future orientation, anticipating the final establishment of God's kingdom where social and spiritual reversals will be complete.
- **Mariological:** Mary herself embodies the lowly being raised up—she, a humble young woman from Nazareth, is chosen to bear the Messiah.

Why the Expectations Are Radical

- They **challenge existing hierarchies** of wealth, gender, and power.
- They **centre salvation on the poor and oppressed**, not the elite or powerful.
- They **redefine messianic kingship**: not a political conqueror like David, but a saviour who serves, liberates, and brings divine justice.

Summary for Teaching Use

The Magnificat is radical because it redefines expectations of the Messiah away from power, wealth, and conquest, toward humility, justice, and God's care for the poor. It anticipates Jesus' ministry and teaching, while rooting this vision in God's covenant promises. Mary's prayer shows that the Messiah's kingdom will transform social structures and establish a divine order where the last are first.

D6.2.2. – Exploring interpretations of the Magnificat through sung settings

Core Idea

Students are invited to reflect on:

- **The composer's meaning** – what message or emphasis the composer intended in their musical setting.
- **Their own meaning** – how they personally interpret or feel the text when sung, and how their response might differ from others'.

This combines theological reflection on the *Magnificat* with aesthetic and emotional engagement through music.

Key Teacher Knowledge

- The *Magnificat* has inspired composers across centuries, each bringing a different interpretation:
 - **Gregorian Chant / simple plainsong**: meditative, emphasises humility and prayer.
 - **J.S. Bach (Magnificat in D major, 1723)**: joyful, triumphant, highlighting God's glory.
 - **Arvo Pärt (1989)**: minimalistic, mystical, stressing stillness and transcendence.
 - **Taizé Magnificat**: repetitive, prayerful, designed for communal participation.
 - **Gospel or contemporary settings**: stress liberation, justice, and joy of the poor being raised up.
- Each setting makes a theological choice in how to express Mary's prayer:
 - Is it **humble** (Mary as servant)?
 - Is it **triumphant** (God overthrowing the mighty)?
 - Is it **mystical** (the divine mystery of Incarnation)?
 - Is it **communal** (the Church singing Mary's song as its own)?

Why This Matters

This outcome develops:

- **Religious literacy**: understanding that scripture can be interpreted theologically and artistically.
- **Personal engagement**: students reflect on their own responses to a biblical text.
- **Broader horizons**: seeing how different cultures and centuries have expressed Mary's radical song.

Summary for Teaching Use

D6.2.2. invites students to interpret both the *Magnificat* and its musical settings. By contrasting styles (e.g., Bach's triumphalism, Pärt's mysticism, Taizé's communal prayer), students can explore how composers highlight different theological dimensions of Mary's song. They then reflect on their own responses, recognising that sacred music both communicates faith and invites personal interpretation.

Session 5	
Learning Focus	HEAR Describe the differences between the Lucan and Matthean infancy narratives
Recall and Retrieval	Wonder: considering what we have learnt about Mary, what questions do you wonder about her/would you like to ask her?
Sequence of knowledge throughout the lesson	Key knowledge: Pupils will know The difference the Lucan and Matthean infancy narratives, emphasising their respective intensions, narrative approach, and Luke's emphasis on the role of women in the story of salvation. That artists depictions of key people from the bible is based on the words written in the bible
Key skills/disciplinary knowledge	

Anton Raphael Meng's *The Dream of Saint Joseph* and Robert Moore's *Annunciation Triptych*.

1. Use of Colour

- **Mengs – The Dream of Saint Joseph (c. 1773)**
 - o Uses soft, warm, harmonious tones typical of Neoclassicism.
 - o The palette is subdued, emphasising serenity and divine illumination. The angel often glows with a gentle light, contrasting with Joseph's earthly tones.
 - o Colour conveys calmness, trust, and divine reassurance.
- **Moore – Annunciation Triptych (contemporary)**
 - o Uses brighter, sometimes stark colours with sharper contrasts, drawing the viewer into the intensity of the moment.
 - o Mary is often bathed in vivid light, symbolising her unique role as *Theotokos*.
 - o The use of colour is more dramatic, emphasising mystery and transcendence.

2. Depiction of Joseph and Mary

- **Mengs**
 - o Joseph is shown as humble, weary, often sleeping or in quiet repose when the angel appears.
 - o He is passive, the recipient of God's message, reflecting his obedience and trust.
 - o Mary is not the focus in this scene; Joseph's role as protector and receiver of divine guidance is emphasised.
- **Moore**
 - o Mary is central, depicted with dignity, often upright, serene, receptive to the angel Gabriel's message.
 - o Joseph (if included) is marginal or absent, reflecting the Annunciation's focus on Mary's fiat rather than Joseph's dream.
 - o Mary is not passive but thoughtful, embodying consent and active participation.

3. Facial Expressions and Body Language

- **Mengs**
 - o Joseph's body language: relaxed, head bowed, eyes closed or half-lifted in trust, hands folded or open to the message.
 - o Expression communicates humility and obedience — Joseph as faithful servant, quietly accepting God's will.
- **Moore**
 - o Mary's body language: poised, upright, reflective. Hands may be folded in prayer or raised slightly in acceptance.
 - o Facial expression is calm, contemplative, sometimes tinged with awe.
 - o The emphasis is on her intellectual and spiritual engagement with Gabriel's message, not blind submission.

4. What the Depictions Tell Us about the Artists' Perceptions

- **Mengs**
 - o Presents Joseph as a man of humble obedience, deeply human, reliant on divine guidance.
 - o Suggests Joseph's dignity lies in his listening and trust, not in worldly strength.
 - o Reflects Neoclassical ideals: order, serenity, moral virtue.
- **Moore**
 - o Presents Mary as a figure of quiet strength and contemplation.
 - o Highlights her active role in salvation history as the one who consents freely to God's plan.
 - o Reflects modern theological emphases on Mary's agency, inner life, and her central role in the Incarnation.

Summary for Teaching Use

- **Colour:** Mengs uses warm harmony for serenity; Moore uses brighter contrasts to emphasise mystery.
- **Figures:** Mengs elevates Joseph as humble and obedient; Moore elevates Mary as thoughtful and strong.
- **Expressions/Body language:** Mengs shows Joseph passive and receptive; Moore shows Mary contemplative and active.
- **Perceptions:** Mengs sees Joseph as a model of trust in divine guidance; Moore sees Mary as the central protagonist of salvation history.

Session 6	
Learning Focus	HEAR Describe the differences between the Lucan and Matthean infancy narratives
Recall and Retrieval	Wonder: Who did have the most difficult job- Joseph or Mary?
Sequence of knowledge throughout the lesson	Key knowledge: Pupils will know The difference the Lucan and Matthean infancy narratives, emphasising their respective intensions, narrative approach, and Luke's emphasis on the role of women in the story of salvation.
Key skills/disciplinary knowledge	

Key differences between the **Lucan** and **Matthean** infancy narratives, with attention to intention, narrative approach, and Luke's emphasis on women.

1. Narrative Approach

- **Matthew (Matt 1:18–2:23)**
 - o Narrative is structured around **Joseph's perspective**.
 - o Contains five dream sequences where Joseph is guided by an angel.
 - o Strong emphasis on **Old Testament prophecy fulfilment** (e.g. Isaiah 7:14, Hosea 11:1, Micah 5:2).
 - o Includes the **visit of the Magi**, the flight into Egypt, and Herod's massacre of the innocents.
 - o Tone is darker, more political, stressing Jesus' role as the new Moses and fulfilment of Israel's hopes.
- **Luke (Luke 1:5–2:52)**
 - o Structured around **Mary's perspective**.
 - o Two annunciations (to Zechariah and Mary) and two canticles (Magnificat, Benedictus) mirror one another.
 - o Includes the **visitation**, shepherds at the manger, and presentation in the Temple.
 - o Tone is more joyful, liturgical, and theological, highlighting the action of the Holy Spirit and God's mercy.

2. Authorial Intentions

- **Matthew**
 - o Writing for a **Jewish-Christian audience**.
 - o Intention: to show Jesus as the **Messiah**, the fulfilment of Scripture, and the true heir of David.
 - o Focus on prophecy: repeated formula, *"This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet..."*.
 - o Emphasis on continuity with Israel's history: Jesus is the new Moses, delivering his people from sin and oppression.
- **Luke**
 - o Writing for a **Gentile-Christian audience**.
 - o Intention: to highlight the **universality** of salvation, extending beyond Israel to all nations.
 - o Stresses joy, peace, and the activity of the Holy Spirit.

- Uses hymns/canticles modelled on Old Testament psalms to root the gospel in Israel's worship life while opening it out to the world.

3. Luke's Emphasis on Women

- Luke consistently gives women **active protagonism** in salvation history.
- **Mary**: central figure of the infancy narrative. She receives Gabriel's message, gives the fiat, and speaks the Magnificat.
- **Elizabeth**: filled with the Spirit, she recognises Mary as "mother of my Lord" and her unborn child (John the Baptist) leaps in her womb.
- **Anna the prophetess**: in the Temple, she recognises Jesus as the Redeemer.
- Contrast: Matthew centres the narrative on Joseph's obedience and faith, whereas Luke elevates the voices and actions of women, showing that salvation history advances through their faith and courage.

4. Theological Implications

- **Matthew**:
 - Jesus as fulfilment of prophecy → messianic credentials.
 - Strong Davidic line emphasised through Joseph's genealogy.
 - Focus on kingship (Magi) and confrontation with worldly power (Herod).
- **Luke**:
 - Jesus as universal saviour → salvation for the poor, lowly, and outsiders.
 - The Magnificat sets radical expectations of a Messiah who reverses human power.
 - Emphasis on women anticipates the role of Mary as the model disciple and the Church's Mother.

Summary for Teaching Use

- **Matthew** tells the infancy narrative from Joseph's perspective, stressing prophecy fulfilment and Jesus as the new Moses and heir of David. His focus is on kingship, fulfilment, and protection of the child from Herod.
- **Luke** tells the story from Mary's perspective, stressing joy, the action of the Holy Spirit, and the universal scope of salvation. His inclusion of Mary, Elizabeth, and Anna shows women as central protagonists of salvation history.

Infancy Narratives: Matthew vs Luke

Feature	Matthew (1:18–2:23)	Luke (1:5–2:52)
Perspective	Told through Joseph's experience : dreams, decisions, obedience.	Told through Mary's experience : annunciation, Magnificat, pondering in her heart.
Structure & Content	- Annunciation to Joseph in a dream - Visit of the Magi - Flight into Egypt - Massacre of the Innocents - Return from Egypt to Nazareth	- Annunciation to Zechariah (John the Baptist) - Annunciation to Mary - Visitation and Magnificat - Birth of John the Baptist and Benedictus - Birth of Jesus and visit of shepherds - Presentation in the Temple (Simeon & Anna) - Boy Jesus in the Temple
Tone	More political and somber: Herod, persecution, exile.	Joyful and liturgical: filled with canticles, hymns, Holy Spirit activity.
Theological Intent	- Writing for a Jewish-Christian audience - Jesus is the Messiah, fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy (frequent "This was to fulfil...") - Jesus as new Moses leading his people to freedom - Emphasis on Davidic lineage through Joseph	- Writing for a Gentile-Christian audience - Jesus is the universal saviour (for poor, marginalised, Gentiles) - Salvation history fulfilled in Christ but extends to all nations - Strong focus on Holy Spirit and joy
Use of Old Testament	Heavy use of direct prophecy fulfilment (Isaiah 7:14; Hosea 11:1; Micah 5:2; Jeremiah 31:15).	Allusions and echoes through canticles (e.g. Magnificat echoing Hannah's song; Benedictus echoing Psalms).
Role of Women	Women are silent/passive (Mary is present but has no speaking role; narrative is centred on Joseph).	Women are central protagonists : - Mary gives the fiat and sings the Magnificat. - Elizabeth recognises the Messiah and blesses Mary. - Anna the prophetess proclaims Jesus in the Temple. Luke shows women as agents of salvation history.
Christological Emphasis	Messiah as kingly, Davidic, fulfilment of prophecy .	Messiah as universal saviour, bringer of justice and joy .
Overall Portrait of Jesus	Jesus as fulfilment of Israel's hopes, new Moses, rightful King of the Jews.	Jesus as saviour for all, heralded with joy by the poor, women, and outsiders.

Key Takeaway for Teaching

- **Matthew** → stresses Jesus' **messianic legitimacy** through Joseph's line, prophecy fulfilment, and survival from political threat.
- **Luke** → stresses Jesus' **universal mission** and the protagonism of **women**, the poor, and the marginalised, showing salvation as a joyful, Spirit-filled reality.

Session 7	
Learning Focus	LIVE Describe ways that women today are still responding to God's call in their lives
Recall and Retrieval	Discern: summarise what you understand to be the differences to the two narratives- why were they written differently?
Sequence of knowledge throughout the lesson	Key knowledge: Pupils will know That there are women today who are responding to God's call in their life.
Key skills/disciplinary knowledge	U6.2.6. Show understanding of the life of individual women today who are responding to God's call in their life, making relevant links to Mary's 'yes' to God (Luke 1:26-56), for example, describe and explain the role of women's religious orders in the Church today, with reference to at least one example of a Catholic women's religious order. Benedictines, Bridgettines, Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary

U6.2.6. – Women Today Responding to God's Call

Theological Foundation: Mary's Fiat

- In Luke 1:26–56, Mary responds to the angel Gabriel with her *fiat*: "Let it be done to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38).
- This act of obedience, faith, and trust in God is the model for Christian discipleship.
- Women in the Church today continue this pattern of responding to God's call, especially through consecrated religious life, where they dedicate themselves wholly to Christ.

Women's Religious Orders Today

1. Benedictine Nuns

- **Charism:** rooted in the Rule of St Benedict (*ora et labora* – prayer and work).
- **Life:** contemplative, centred on the Divine Office, hospitality, and manual/academic work.
- **Example:** Benedictine nuns at Stanbrook Abbey (UK) dedicate themselves to prayer, community life, and service.
- **Link to Mary:** Like Mary's hidden, faithful service, Benedictines live a quiet but powerful witness of fidelity to God's will.

2. Bridgettines (Order of the Most Holy Saviour of St Bridget)

- **Founded:** 14th century by St Bridget of Sweden.
- **Charism:** contemplative prayer combined with hospitality, particularly for pilgrims.
- **Life:** Bridgettines live in communities marked by simplicity, prayer, and welcoming others.
- **Example:** Bridgettine convents worldwide continue their charism of hospitality, especially near shrines and pilgrimage routes.
- **Link to Mary:** Like Mary's openness to God and service to others, Bridgettines embody a Marian spirituality of prayer and hospitality.

3. Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary (SBVM)

- **Founded:** A more recent congregation, with roots in the Anglican tradition, now fully Catholic.
- **Charism:** following Mary's example of discipleship and prayer, with emphasis on liturgical life and teaching.

- **Life:** community life, prayer, and apostolic work such as education and catechesis.
- **Link to Mary:** The order's very name reflects their Marian model: saying "yes" to God in prayer, mission, and fidelity to the Church.

Theological Significance Today

- These orders show that women continue to be **protagonists in salvation history**, not in the same way as in the biblical narratives, but through lived discipleship.
- Their witness expresses:
 - **Obedience to God's call** → like Mary's fiat.
 - **Service of the Church** → through prayer, teaching, hospitality, and evangelisation.
 - **Countercultural witness** → showing that a life dedicated to God is valuable in a secular world.

Summary for Teaching Use

Women's religious orders today, such as the **Benedictines, Bridgettines, and Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary**, embody Mary's yes to God by dedicating their lives to prayer, community, and service. Just as Mary's fiat made the Incarnation possible, these women's fidelity allows God's love to be made present in the world. Their lives highlight the continuing role of women as active agents in salvation history, carrying Mary's model of discipleship into the modern Church.

Session 8	
Learning Focus	BELIEVE Recognise the importance of the role of women in the story of salvation history and reflect on whether women play a large enough role in the life of the Church today.
Recall and Retrieval	Respond: How could you live like the women studied last lesson? Could you help their cause? How?
Sequence of knowledge throughout the lesson	Key knowledge: Pupils will know The importance of the role of women in the story of salvation history and reflect on whether women play a large enough role in the life of the Church today.
Key skills/disciplinary knowledge	U6.2.6. Show understanding of the life of individual women today who are responding to God's call in their life, making relevant links to Mary's 'yes' to God (Luke 1:26-56), for example, describe and explain the role of women's religious orders in the Church today, with reference to at least one example of a Catholic women's religious order. D6.2.1. Thinking about the role of women in the story of salvation, giving a response to this statement: 'Looking at the role of women in the story of salvation, women today do not play a large enough role in the life of the Church', supporting their answer with reasons , and discussing why people might give different answers.

D6.2.1. – Evaluative Statement

Statement:

"Looking at the role of women in the story of salvation, women today do not play a large enough role in the life of the Church."

1. Role of Women in the Story of Salvation (Biblical Foundation)

- **Old Testament:** Miriam, Deborah, Ruth, Esther → each safeguarded or advanced covenant identity.
- **New Testament:** Mary as Theotokos (Mother of God), Elizabeth, Anna, Mary Magdalene (first witness of the Resurrection).
- Women are shown as **protagonists in salvation history**, with essential roles in God's plan.

2. Supporting the Statement (Women do not play a large enough role today)

- **Ordination:** Women cannot be ordained as priests or bishops in the Catholic Church → many argue this limits leadership roles.
- **Decision-making:** Senior decision-making in the Church is largely male-dominated.
- **Historical contrast:** Compared with the central protagonism of biblical women, some argue women's contribution today is undervalued.
- **Contemporary voices:** Some theologians and lay groups call for greater recognition of women's gifts in leadership, preaching, and governance.

3. Challenging the Statement (Women already play a large role)

- **Religious Orders:** Benedictines, Bridgettines, SBVM, Missionaries of Charity (Mother Teresa) – women dedicate their whole lives to prayer, teaching, health care, and mission.
- **Lay roles:** Women serve as catechists, theologians, chaplains, extraordinary ministers, parish leaders.
- **Influence of Mary:** The Church honours Mary as the greatest of all saints, model of discipleship, and Mother of the Church.
- **Recent developments:** Pope Francis has appointed women to senior Vatican roles, opened the instituted ministries of lector and acolyte to women, and stressed their importance in synodal governance.

4. Why Different Answers?

- **Theological differences:**
 - Catholic teaching stresses complementarity (men and women have different but equal roles).
 - Some Christian traditions allow women's ordination, so they would answer differently.
- **Cultural expectations:** Modern society values equality in leadership, so some feel the Church lags behind.
- **Personal experience:** Someone who sees strong women leading in their parish may disagree with the statement; others may not.

5. Model Teacher Summary

The role of women in salvation history is undeniably central — from Miriam and Deborah to Mary and Mary Magdalene. In the Church today, women remain vital through religious life, lay ministry, and mission. However, the debate continues because some see limits on ordained ministry as restricting women's full participation, while others argue women's influence is already profound though exercised differently.

Sessions 9 & 10	
Learning Focus	RESPOND Collective worship Assessment – Knowledge capture Reflecting on their own experience, consider the women in their lives who have been important or significant.
Recall and Retrieval	
Sequence of knowledge throughout the lesson	Key knowledge: Pupils will know Reflect Comparing their own and others' experiences about the importance of Mary the mother of Jesus in their spiritual life. Considering what life or task God might be calling them to live or do and reflect on how their 'Yes' could transform their own lives and the lives of the community.
Key skills/disciplinary knowledge	R6.2.1. Reflecting on their own experience, consider the women in their lives who have been important or significant. R6.2.2. Comparing their own and others' experiences about the importance of Mary the mother of Jesus in their spiritual life. R6.2.3. Considering what life or task God might be calling them to live or do and reflect on how their 'Yes' could transform their own lives and the lives of the community.

R6.2.2. – Comparing Experiences of Mary's Importance in Spiritual Life

Theological Foundation

- **Mary in Catholic Tradition:**
 - Honoured as *Theotokos* (Mother of God).
 - Seen as the perfect disciple who said "yes" to God.
 - Role as intercessor: Catholics pray to Mary to bring their prayers to Christ.
 - Titles: Mother of the Church, Queen of Heaven, New Eve.
- **Mary in Spiritual Life:**
 - For many Catholics, Mary is a source of comfort, guidance, and closeness to Christ.
 - Practices include the Rosary, Marian feasts, pilgrimages (e.g. Lourdes, Fatima, Guadalupe).
 - For some Christians (especially in Protestant traditions), Mary is respected as Jesus' mother but not given the same devotional role.

Student Reflection Angle

Students are invited to think about:

- **Their own experience:**
 - Do they pray the Rosary, attend Marian feasts, or feel inspired by Mary's "yes" to God?
 - Do they see Mary as a role model of faith, obedience, or courage?
 - Is she part of their own family or school spirituality?
- **Other people's experiences:**
 - Catholics may experience deep devotion to Mary (pilgrimages, daily Rosary, feasts like the Assumption).
 - Protestants may honour her as Jesus' mother but without devotional practices.
 - Some people may not focus on Mary at all but still respect her example of faith.

Teacher Summary

- Mary is important because she models obedience and discipleship, becoming the Mother of God.
- For many, devotion to Mary is central in prayer and spirituality.
- For others, Mary is inspirational but not the focus of devotion.
- Comparing experiences helps students understand diversity in Christian spirituality, while also reflecting on their own faith journey

R6.2.3. – Considering God’s Call and Saying “Yes”

Theological Foundation

- **Mary’s Fiat (Luke 1:38):** *“Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word.”*
- Mary’s “yes” to God made possible the Incarnation and transformed history.
- The Church teaches that each person has a **vocation** — a calling from God, whether to marriage, priesthood, religious life, or lay discipleship in the world.
- Saying “yes” to God’s call, like Mary, is transformative both personally and communally.

Application for Students

- **Personal life:** God may be calling them to use their gifts in kindness, service, or leadership now (e.g., helping a classmate, serving in the parish, caring for family).
- **Future vocation:** They may feel drawn to particular paths in life — teaching, medicine, priesthood, religious life, charity work — all ways of living out God’s call.
- **Community impact:** Just as Mary’s yes blessed the whole world, their yes could transform their community — bringing justice, peace, and love where it is lacking.

Pedagogical Approaches

- **Reflection prompts:**
 - o What gifts has God given you?
 - o Where might God be calling you to use them?
 - o What difference could your yes make in your family, school, parish, or wider community?
- **Link with Mary:**
 - o Compare their small daily “yeses” with Mary’s great “yes.”
 - o Use the Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55) to show how her yes transforms society (lifting the lowly, feeding the hungry).
- **Activity idea:**
 - o Students write their own “fiat” prayer — a short statement of how they say yes to God today.
 - o Create a class “yes wall” where each student adds a note about how they can transform their community.

Teacher Summary

This outcome helps students see vocation not just as a distant life choice, but as daily openness to God. By reflecting on Mary’s yes, they learn that their response to God — in small acts of faith, service, and love can transform their lives and those around them.