LOVE OF GOD 1.
Mary’s love of prayer was reassuringly gradual – one of her earliest stories tells of her ‘playing sports’ while praying with her grandmother, and later in her teens we hear her adjusting her rather too harsh and demanding rituals of prayer and penance, realizing that she wanted always ‘to act not out of fear, but solely from love’. However from the beginning Mary was drawn to God and to a life of contemplation, and even at her most active and demanding periods of life, she would ensure there was time for prayer. Her journeys over the Alps gave the small group of companions time for personal meditation but also for shared vocal prayer, and we know that on arrival one bitterly cold Christmas eve at the little town of Feldkirch, she spent the entire night in prayer – perhaps to the consternation of her companions!

POINTS FOR REFLECTION:
Take a few minutes to reflect on how your prayer has changed and developed over the years...
What has remained consistent?
What is it that you love about God? Try to be specific.

LOVE OF GOD 2.
It would seem that she was given great graces, both visual and audible in prayer, but often these were for the founding of her Institute and to enlighten her on the way forward. Her own prayer came to be more intimate and beyond easy expression in words – an encounter of deep love and trust.

A short description from her retreat notes gives us a wonderful insight into the freedom with which Mary spoke with God and the way in which God led her ever deeper into his love for her… she also teaches us that it is in our humanity and humour that we meet God every bit as much as in our ‘piety’!

‘He was very near me and within me, which I never perceived Him to be before. I was moved to ask Him with great confidence and humility, what I came to know to whit, what He was. I said, 'My God, what art Thou? I saw Him evidently and very clearly go into my heart and little by little hid Himself (and there I perceive Him to be still in the same manner, my meditation being ended an hour since). I endeavoured to go forward according to the points of the meditation, but could not, He held my heart, I could not work. I would then have asked Him something, bid Him welcome, but He would not let. I once asked, 'Will you lie there and do nothing? And another time, 'Make that heart perfect and such as you would have it'; but beginning my speech in both, I could not possibly go forward, I saw plainly that His only will was that I should neither work nor talk, but hold my peace. I was weary with kneeling, having nothing to do sitting down, this idleness of all powers made me wish to sleep. I would have like a walk, but dared not without His leave. I composed I myself handsomely to attend on such a guest, but God
would have none of it; my body was weary, and yet I did nothing; my mind quiet and much contented; all noise, or other things that at other times helps devotion seemed then unpleasing. An hour was gone in the space of one quarter I left unwillingly, remaining still in the same disposition.’

Retreat at Liege October 1619