

Lorenzo di Credi's *The Annunciation and the Three Stories from Genesis*, 1480-85

Reflection

In this masterpiece, Eve, the original woman, and Mary, the perfect woman, are contrasted. Each woman was presented with a life-defining and life-altering choice. We are invited to reflect upon these two moments – offered to us by the painter, Lorenzo di Credi. We, too, are meant to see in this painting the same life-defining question proposed to us – how will we respond to the proposal from God to choose life?

Looking at the first scene from Eve's life, we are reminded of our dependence on God as our Creator. Every human person shares this dependence on God, having received their life as a gift. The second scene, which places Eve before the tree, reminds us that our life is a continuous choice between what is good and builds relationships or what is sinful and alienates us from others. Eve's choice to sin damaged her relationship with God and Adam. Sin always harms us and our relationships while choices for grace always build our communion with God and others. Patterns of sin deprive us of our true freedom to choose the good, while grace expands our capacity for good and strengthens our interior freedom.

The third scene recalls Adam and Eve being shut out of paradise due to their disobedience and reminds us that earth is not our true home. After the Fall, we all have become pilgrims on journey back to God and to heaven. Taken together, the three scenes remind us of our dependence on God the Father who created us, of our need to choose rightly and that we are meant to return to a heavenly paradise. Only after Jesus becomes Man to redeem each of us by taking on our human nature from within, are we made capable, through the grace He alone merited, to be restored to a right relationship with God as adopted children.

Lorenzo di Credi

The Annunciation and Three stories from Genesis, 1480-85

Tempera on wood panel

34 5/8 x 28 in. (88 x 71 cm)

Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence

View online at the National Museum for Women in the Arts exhibit *Picturing Mary: Woman, Mother, Idea*

[Click here to view the painting](#)

At the center of the painting, we see the angel Gabriel appearing to Mary of Nazareth, calling her ‘full of grace’. The angel’s reverent greeting is in direct contrast to the last scene of Eve’s life when an angel is bidding her farewell. Here – we see the intense contrast between a scene of grace and disgrace, and a scene of welcome and one of rejection. Notice that the atmosphere of grace and of giving welcome to the other, seen in the Annunciation, brings about a freedom to choose obedience, while the atmosphere of departing from others or from God out of self-interest brings disobedience.

Now, take a moment to look upon Mary’s face and her gesture of openness. She is ready to hear God’s plan for her life. Mary is an example to us of how to be receptive to God. Mary accepted God’s word in her heart and also the Living Word, Jesus, in her womb. She is truly the Mother of God, since Jesus was fully human and fully divine. She became the Mother of God because of her obedience, because she said “yes” to God.

Let us ask God for the grace to live, in imitation of Mary, the virtue of obedience, so that we may grow in a life of grace that gives welcome to others and leads to true freedom.

Living the Encounter

You have encountered genuine beauty today in Lorenzo di Credi’s masterpiece, *The Annunciation and the Three Stories from Genesis*. Chose to live your encounter with beauty and share it with others. Living beautifully is living virtuously. Reflect upon the virtue of obedience expressed in Mary’s life. Ask yourself:

How can I live the virtue of obedience in my own life today? Where am I having difficulty letting go of my own will when I know I should choose the good and God’s will instead?

Deepen Your Encounter

After you leave the exhibit, return to your encounter with beauty and remember what you learned about the virtue of obedience. Take a moment to read the Scripture passage from Luke 2:51-52 and reflect upon how you can continue to live your encounter by practicing the virtue of obedience in your life.

You’ve encountered beauty in Mary and her virtues. Continue to live your encounter and live beautifully for others.

Inform Your Encounter

Read more about this Reflection from the [Catechism](#): CCC, nos. [144](#), [494](#), [511](#), [397](#), [399](#)

Scripture related to this masterpiece: [Luke 1:38](#)

Learn more about practicing the virtue of [obedience](#)

Scripture passages related to the virtue of obedience: [Luke 2:51-52](#); [Rom 13:1-2](#); [Philippians 2:5-8](#); [Titus 3:1](#); [Luke 1:38](#)

Read about saints who practiced the virtue of obedience: [St. Matthew](#); [St. Catherine Laboure](#); [Padre Pio](#); [St. Claude de la Colombiere](#)

How is devotion to Mary different from worshipping Mary?

Learn about True Devotion to Mary

Mary's Unique Role as Intercessor

Scripture Directs Prayer to Mary

Standards/USCCB Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for Young People related to this reflection

Unique role of Mary, Mother of God including the Annunciation and Mary's "yes" (CCC, nos.484-487); Mary is ever-virgin (CCC, nos.499-507); Mary is the first disciple; Christ as the Son of Mary, from the moment of the Incarnation (CCC, 486); Mary and her role in the life and prayer of the Church (CCC, nos. 484-511, 721-726, 963-972, 829); Accepting and living the grace of redemption by practicing the virtues (CCC 1803); Types of virtue, (CCC, nos. 1804-1832); Prayer in the life of a believer: lectio divina (CCC, nos. 1177, 2708) Jesus Christ reveals the Father to us, who we are, and our call to holiness; By becoming man, and by his Death and Resurrection, Jesus Christ unites us to God (CCC, nos. 461-464); We become the free adopted children of the Father through Baptism (Gal 4; CCC, nos. 1265-1270); The Word became flesh (the Incarnation) (CCC, nos. 525-528, 456-478) to save us by reconciling us with God, who loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins (CCC, no.457); that we might come to know the depth of God's love for us

(CCC, 458); to be our model of holiness (CCC, no 459); to make us partakers of the divine nature (CCC, nos.457-460);

Share your Encounter

What did your encounter bring? Share your experience and inspirations with others. #MeetMary

PicturingMary.com is funded by private individuals who support the NMWA exhibit and offer the website materials for visitors to deepen their encounter with Mary as a woman, mother and idea. The reflections were written by a woman religious, Sr. John Paul Maher, O.P., who is a member of the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist.