

Puccio Capanna's *Madonna and Child with Annunciation and Female Saints*, ca. 1330

Reflection

In this painting, Capanna places Mary at the center of the image and as the largest figure among all the others. Mary is celebrated here as the queen of virgins, as the royal leader of all who espouse themselves to Christ. This spiritual joining of one's whole life to Christ is borne witness to in a unique way by women religious, like the women saints pictured with Mary, who consecrated their lives to God. Yet, the vocation to give one's life to Christ is the true vocation of every human person.

In this picture, Christ is looking at and clinging to Mary. Christ wants us to learn from Mary's example of virtue and holiness, her great faith and extraordinary obedience to the will of God. By the intent look on Christ's face, we can see Him pointing us to Mary, as if to say "look at her...she will show you the way to Me." We are called to imitate Mary's own example of openness and receptivity to the love of God.

Mary was literally made fruitful, in her body and soul, by God's grace and Presence. Each of us is called to imitate Mary's "yes" to God. This is why Mary is the example of holiness and virtue that Christ points to in this painting. She is favored and honored above all the saints.

As Mary is the Mother of Jesus and truly a dwelling place of God, it is fitting that Mary is honored and venerated as holy, above all other people. Yes, Mary is exalted because she was the most humble, acknowledging God as the cause of her holiness. God alone is to be worshiped for His greatness. Mary is honored, but not worshiped, because she is only a creature. Mary gives us an example of reverence in how she bowed to God with her very life, and continues to do so, in humility from heaven.

Puccio Cappana

Madonna and Child with Annunciation and Female Saints (Regina Virginum),
ca. 1330

Tempera on wood panel

14 3/8 x 9 1/2 in. (36.5 x 24 cm)

Musei Vaticani, Vatican City

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

[Click here to view painting](#)

Mary is also an example to us of the virtue of magnanimity because she sought, with confidence, to do great things in God. She was truly magnanimous, meaning she had a large and generous soul when it came to offering herself to the Lord. She gave herself totally to God, holding nothing back, in body or spirit. She gave herself with generosity and her “yes” to the Lord changed the course of history by bringing the Savior of the world to earth.

While Mary’s “yes” was and will be unparalleled in the history of the world, we are called to offer our own “yes” to God so that Christ can dwell in us and we can bring Him to others.

Let us ask God for the grace to live, in imitation of Mary, the virtue of magnanimity, so that we may offer ourselves to God and seek to do great things for the Lord.

Living the Encounter

You have encountered genuine beauty today in Puccio Capanna’s masterpiece, *Madonna and Child with Annunciation and Female Saints*. Chose to live your encounter with beauty and share it with others. Living beautifully is living virtuously. Reflect upon the virtue of magnanimity expressed in Mary’s life. Ask yourself:

Where in my life can I grow in the virtue of magnanimity? Where have I been small-souled in my friendships and been reluctant to give generously of my time and gifts? Think of one practical way you can practice magnanimity in your life and offer that deed to someone else today.

Take a moment to reflect on the fullness of Mary’s joy when she realizes the magnitude of God’s greatness in her life as she proclaims, in Luke 1:47, that her spirit rejoices in God her Savior. Looking back on your life, where can you find reason to offer your own prayer of rejoicing in God’s goodness to you? Enter into this magnanimous prayer of Mary and offer your own words to God thanking Him for His goodness to you.

Where can I recognize the magnanimity of others in my life and give thanks for the gift they are to me? Choose to recognize their magnanimity today with a kind word or note of gratitude.

Deepen Your Encounter

After you leave the exhibit, return to your encounter with beauty and remember what you learned about the virtue of magnanimity. Take a moment to read the Scripture passage from Colossians 1:27-29 and reflect upon how you can continue to live your encounter by practicing the virtue of magnanimity 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. [2030](#), [964](#), [273](#), [963](#), [507](#)

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

Scripture passages related to the virtue of magnanimity: [1 Sam 23:13-17](#); [Acts 9:17-22](#); [1 Cor 15:10](#); [Col 3:17](#); [Heb 10:32-34](#)

Read about saints who practiced the virtue of magnanimity: [St Philip Neri](#), [St. Louis de Montfort](#), [St. Paul Miki](#), [St. Turibius of Mongrovejo](#)

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 as an unparalleled recipient of God's grace: Immaculate Conception; Assumption (CCC, nos. 490-494, 966); Mary is ever-virgin (CCC, nos.499-507); Mary is Mother of the Church (CCC, 507, 829); 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); Universal call to holiness (CCC, nos.826, 2012-2014, 2028, 2045, 2013); 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.