

THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION

For centuries, March 25 has been celebrated by Catholics as the “Feast of the Annunciation.” Mary’s *fiat* – “I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say” – brought our Savior into the world.

As the first disciple of Christ, Mary shows us that we must listen to and do God’s will. Prayer and action therefore go hand in hand. As followers of Christ we must make time to talk to and listen to Him in prayer. Examining all that we do, or simply “living” in the light of our prayer, is essential.

Living with a heart open to God’s will has enormous implications. Different people will realize that God calls them to different things. For an adolescent, it may mean resisting peer pressure to take part in drinking or unchaste activity. For the single adult, it could require offering personal time in service of a needy person. A businessman may find that honesty and fairness requires a certain course of action. A married couple could realize that they should have another child. A frightened pregnant woman may understand that she needs to ask for help to resist the temptation to abortion. The sick person might have to accept his illness and join his suffering to that of Christ.

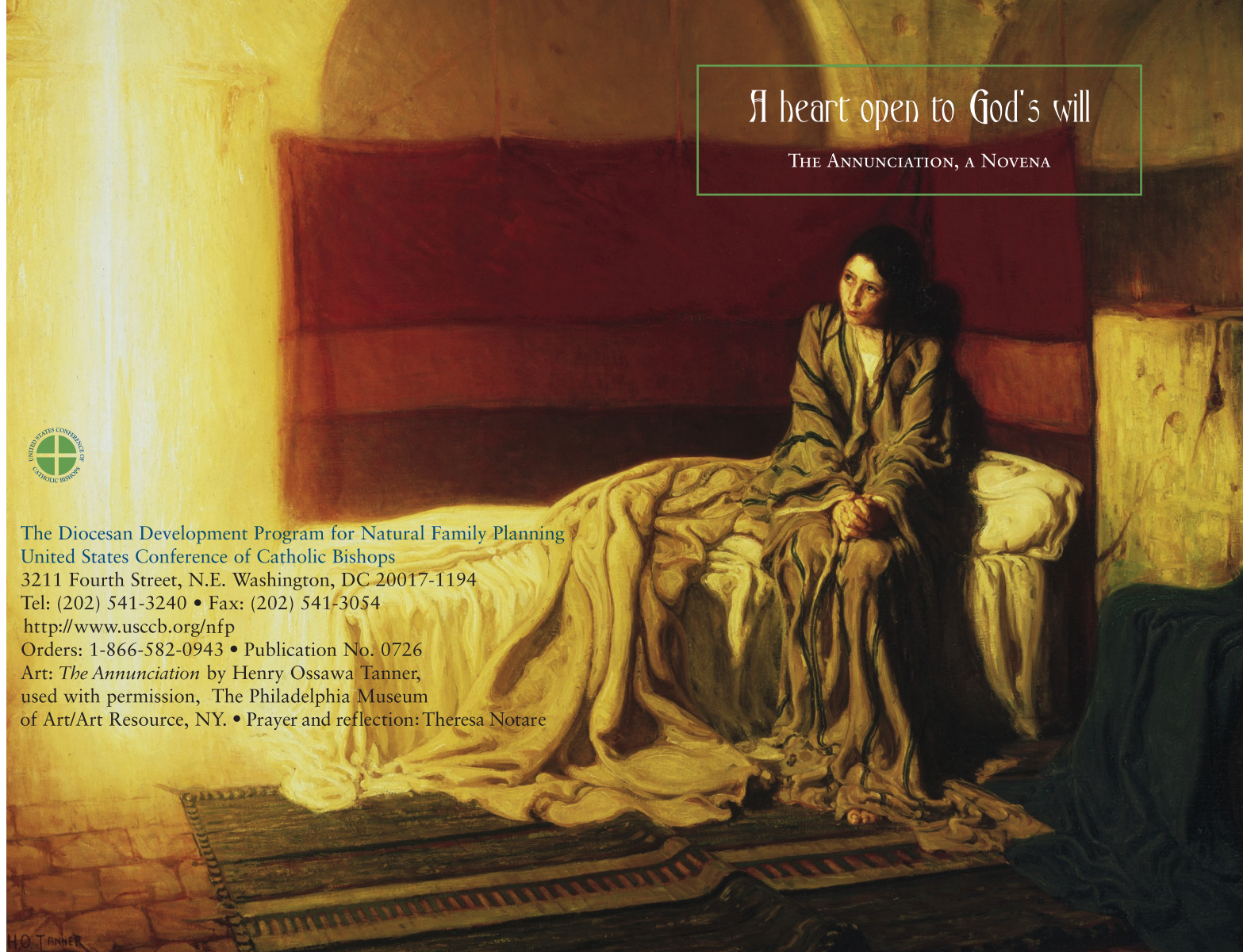
Doing God’s will is not always easy. We usually have our own plans for our lives. It is good to have plans, but never at the expense of our growth in relationship to God. Like Mary, we must trust that God’s will is the best for us and our world. Let us follow the example of Mary and call upon her to help us open our hearts to say “yes” to God!



The Diocesan Development Program for Natural Family Planning
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
3211 Fourth Street, N.E. Washington, DC 20017-1194
Tel: (202) 541-3240 • Fax: (202) 541-3054
<http://www.usccb.org/nfp>
Orders: 1-866-582-0943 • Publication No. 0726
Art: *The Annunciation* by Henry Ossawa Tanner,
used with permission, The Philadelphia Museum
of Art/Art Resource, NY. • Prayer and reflection: Theresa Notare

A heart open to God's will

THE ANNUNCIATION, A NOVENA



THE ANNUNCIATION
ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL OF LUKE
(1:26-38)

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. . . . for nothing will be impossible for God."

Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word."

(The New American Bible)

NOVENA PRAYER

Sign of the Cross

O Mary, Blessed Mother of God,
when the angel greeted you
you were surprised and fearful;
yet, in wonder you listened and
opened your heart to the divine message.

Your life had been ordinary,
like so many of Adam's children,
but your "yes" changed your life
and led to the salvation of us all,
because you invited Christ Our Lord
to grow inside of you.

Mother of Our Savior, help me to open my
heart to the Father's will in my life.
Pray for me to the Lord God as I pray to Him,

O God, prepare my heart
for it is hard for me to trust in your will.
Give me clarity of vision,
that I may see your way.
Open my ears,
that I may hear your words.
Place your hand on my shoulder,
that I may feel your guidance.
Enlighten the darkness of my soul,
that I may be filled with your light.

Grant me wisdom as I ask (mention your requests here).

Generous and loving God,
like your daughter Mary,
help me to know and do your will
in this life and in the next.

Grant me a grateful heart
and help me to always pray
as Mary prayed:

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior
for He has looked with favor on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is His Name.
He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.
He has shown the strength of his arm,
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children for ever.

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever.*

Amen.