

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on The Solemnity of the Annunciation to
the Blessed Virgin Mary
March 25, 2021

+

Physical science proposes evolution of the species, with mankind as the culminating product. Catholicism is more specific. The process culminates *in a particular woman*. Mary of Nazareth is that person. After the Fall in the Garden of Eden, the whole history of Israel is Divine preparation that led to her. Salvation history finds its fruition in one person capable of again receiving the supernatural gifts lost by Adam and Eve. Nature and grace combined in that effort. Blessed Mary is the crowning achievement.

Our Lady was certainly no puppet in God's hand, without a will of her own. Blessed Mary had the same ability to sin as did her first parents, Adam and Eve. But there is a difference. In Mary there was *no inclination to sin*. We acknowledge that fact, and yet do not sentimentalize, romanticize, or trivialize her effort.

Blessed Mary needed to choose right in order to act right. She wasn't receiving signals through a quarterback's helmet from the coach on the sidelines! Mary's question at the Annunciation: "How shall this be?" reveals her independence of mind. Her vow of perpetual virginity was at stake. That had been her own choice. Such vows were neither forced upon nor expected of Jewish girls.

And then Mary's response to the archangel Gabriel was equally free and independent. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." Our Lady accepted her vocation as Mother of God through the direct and free act of her will. Mary of Nazareth is a willing agent, not a passive instrument. She chose the will of God because there was no inclination in her towards evil such as would have drawn her to refuse. Mary's obedience was a free as was Eve's disobedience. You and I also are given free will, not so we will disobey God, but to make the free choice to be His living sons and daughters.

Mary's acceptance was as much the moment of the Incarnation as the words of consecration bring Christ's Presence to the Altar at Mass. The Lord waits for cooperation and consent. Just as in the Mass the priest's part is necessary but secondary, so too at the Annunciation, Mary's human part is necessary. The great work is God's.

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on The Solemnity of the Annunciation to
the Blessed Virgin Mary
March 25, 2021

+

All the history of Israel led to the moment of the Annunciation to Mary. That was the moment God became Incarnate. Nine months later, Christmas is the natural-law outcome. As the crisis for the world's salvation came to a head, the Old Testament preparation ensured there would be, in the fullness of time, this woman, who would freely choose, in a marvelous, wonderful, and unique way, *to be with the Lord*.