



Name:

Gathering

formation course

Opening Prayer

“Gracious God, as we gather today, we are reminded of the Annunciation and the profound discernment of Mary, Your humble servant. Guide us to listen as attentively as she did, to remain open to the unexpected wonders You place before us, and to muster the courage to act in faith, even amidst uncertainties. Just as Mary found strength in her trust in You, may we too be inspired by her example, drawing closer to Your will and discerning Your divine plan for each of us. Amen.”



Images - Fra angelico “ The Annunciation”

Silently reflection for 1 minute - What do you see in the image?
Discuss.

Scripture - Annunciation

Luke 1:26-38



Scripture Reflection -

The story of the Annunciation, as recounted in Luke 1:26-38, provides a rich source for reflection on the art of discernment. At its heart, this story is about Mary's process of discernment as she receives the news that she will become the mother of Jesus.

One of the key elements of discernment is listening attentively. In the Annunciation story, we see Mary carefully listening to the angel's message and pondering its meaning. She does not immediately reject the news or rush to accept it without thought. Instead, she takes time to consider what it means for her life and her relationship with God. This attentiveness and reflection is a crucial aspect of the art of discernment.

Another element of discernment is openness to new possibilities. Mary's initial response to the angel's message is one of surprise and confusion, but she does not dismiss the possibility that what she is hearing could be true. She remains open to the angel's words, and as she reflects on them, she begins to see the truth of what is being revealed to her. This openness to new possibilities is essential to the art of discernment, as it allows us to consider new paths and opportunities that may not have been apparent to us before.

A third element of discernment is the courage to act on what we discern. In the Annunciation story, Mary ultimately decides to say yes to God's plan for her life, even though it is uncertain and potentially dangerous. Her decision requires courage and trust in God's guidance, even in the face of uncertainty and difficulty. This willingness to act on what we discern is an essential aspect of the art of discernment, as it allows us to take the next steps in our journey and move forward in faith.

In reflecting on the Annunciation story in connection to the art of discernment, we see how Mary's example can provide guidance and inspiration for our own discernment processes. Through attentiveness, openness, and courage, we too can discern God's plan for our lives and move forward in faith and trust.



Questions Reflection and Journaling

1. *Attentiveness in Listening:* Mary listened attentively to the angel's message and pondered its implications. Can you recall a time in your life when you took a moment to attentively listen to a message or sign, rather than reacting impulsively? What was the outcome?
2. *Deep Reflection:* The text emphasizes Mary's deep reflection on the angel's words. How can one cultivate a habit of deep reflection in today's fast-paced world? What practices or routines might help?
3. *Openness to the Unexpected:* Mary remained open to the unexpected message from the angel, even amidst her initial surprise and confusion. How do you handle unexpected events or messages in your life? Do you remain open or shut down when faced with the unfamiliar?
4. *Seeing New Possibilities:* Mary's discernment process led her to see new truths. How can we train ourselves to be more open to new possibilities and insights, especially when they challenge our current understanding or beliefs?
5. *Courage in Decision Making:* Mary displayed immense courage in accepting God's plan, despite uncertainties. Can you share an instance when you needed courage to act on a decision you discerned, especially when it seemed risky or uncertain?
6. *Trusting in the Journey:* Trust in God's guidance was vital for Mary's discernment. How do you cultivate trust in your discernment process, especially when the outcome is uncertain or when it seems to defy logic?
7. *Mary as a Model:* Given the Annunciation story and Mary's example, what key takeaway or lesson resonates with you the most in your own journey of discernment? How can you apply this lesson to your daily life?

Journaling

Take one of the questions above which most speaks to you. Take 20 minutes journaling and reflecting on your question.



Leader to play quiet instrumental music.

Discussion

Share - What most stays with you?

Leader - As each person shares, we ask that you do not jump in but listen tentatively. Wait until they finish speaking.

Also, if one person dominates the speaking, we ask the leader to remind the the group
““To ensure everyone gets a chance to speak, let's try to limit our responses to a few minutes. Thank them for sharing. Who else has thoughts?”

Song

Lauren Daigle - Trust In You

Prayer of An Annunciation Psalm

In the town of Nazareth, a message came forth,
An angel to Mary, revealing her worth.
“Rejoice, O favored one,” the heavenly voice did say,
“You will bear the Son of God; His light will lead the way.”

How blessed is she who listened with grace,
Not turning away, but seeking God’s face.
In silence and wonder, she pondered each word,
Finding in her heart, a song yet unheard.

“Can this be?” Mary asked, her spirit unsure,
Yet open she remained, to possibilities yet unseen.
Even in surprise and the unknown so vast,
She stayed open-hearted, her doubts she surpassed.

Courage took root, as Mary replied,
“Behold, I will serve the Lord,” with trust she did confide.
In discernment and faith, she bravely did tread,
Saying “yes” to God’s plan, where the Spirit
into the wilderness led.

Common Prayer

Different members are invited to read one of the following common prayers.

1. Attentiveness in Listening

Lord, just as Mary attentively listened to Your message, grant us the grace of presence. Help us to pause, listen, and deeply understand the messages You send our way, so that we might respond with wisdom rather than impulse. Lord hear us.

Response - “Lord hear our prayer”

2. Deep Reflection

Divine Guide, in a world of constant motion, inspire in us the commitment to stillness and deep reflection. May we, like Mary, find moments to ponder Your words in our hearts, drawing closer to Your wisdom and love. Lord hear us.

Response - “Lord hear our prayer”

3. Openness to the Unexpected

God of Surprises, as Mary remained open to Your unexpected call, help us to embrace the unforeseen with trust and curiosity. When confronted with the unfamiliar, let our hearts be receptive to the grace it may bring. Lord hear us.

Response - “Lord hear our prayer”

4. Seeing New Possibilities

Lord of Possibilities, open our eyes to see beyond our understanding. Just as Mary discerned new truths in Your call, empower us to embrace insights and opportunities that challenge our beliefs, leading us to greater growth and transformation. Lord hear us.

Response - “Lord hear our prayer”

Teach us, O Lord, to listen and see,
To be open and brave, like Mary,
fierce yet gentle spiritual warrior.
May we discern, with heart and with mind,
Like Mary who inspires us today
O God, you have plans for our lives,
show us your purpose this day.

In the story of old, a lesson we claim,
To be attentive, open, and bold in Your name.
For in Mary’s example, our spirits are stirred
To move forward in faith,
Despite the darkness we face.
Mary, be our annunciation today.
Amen.



5. *Courage in Decision Making*

God of Courage, as Mary bravely said 'yes' to Your divine plan, strengthen our resolve. In times of doubt and uncertainty, embolden our hearts to choose paths aligned with Your purpose, even when they demand courage and sacrifice. Lord hear us.

Response - "Lord hear our prayer"

6. *Trusting in the Journey*

Ever-present Guide, instill in us an unwavering trust in Your guidance. Even when the road ahead is clouded in mystery, may our faith in Your plan remain steadfast, inspired by Mary's unshakable trust in Your purpose for her. Lord hear us.

Response - "Lord hear our prayer"

7. *Mary as a Model*

Gracious God, with Mary as our model of faith and discernment, enlighten our paths. Let her example inspire and guide us, as we discern and embrace Your divine calling in our lives, transforming every step into a journey towards Your eternal love. Lord hear us.

Response - "Lord hear our prayer"

Are there any other prayers?

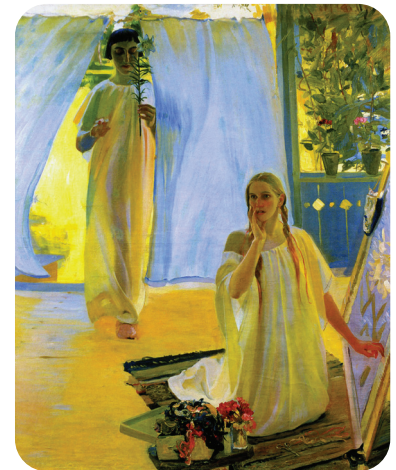
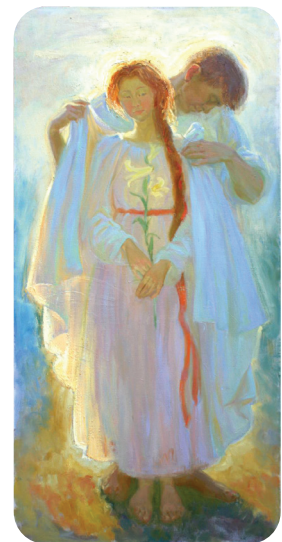
Lord hear us.

Response - "Lord hear our prayer"

Leader - "We bring all these prayers both said and unsaid to you through the Song of Mary"

Closing Prayer - Song of Mary

'My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is God's name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.'
Amen.



During the week participants are encouraged to reflect on and journal one of the other seven questions each day....