

Annunciation of the Lord



In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you."

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end." "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

(Luke 1:26-38)

HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS (Milan, March 25th, 2017)

(...) The annunciation of Jesus takes place in a remote area of Galilee, in a peripheral city with a not particularly good reputation (cf. *Jn* 1:46), in the anonymity of the house of a young woman named Mary. A not insignificant contrast, which indicates that the new Temple of God, God's new encounter with his people, will be in places where we do not normally expect, on the fringes, on the outskirts. There they will meet; there God will become flesh in the womb of his mother in order to walk with us. (...) God himself is the One who takes the initiative and chooses to insert himself, as He did with Mary, into our homes, into our daily struggles, full of anxieties and at the same time of desires. It is precisely within our cities, our schools and universities, the squares and hospitals that the most beautiful announcement we can hear is fulfilled: "Rejoice, the Lord is with you!" A joy that generates life, that generates hope, that becomes flesh in the way we look to the future, the attitude with which we look at others. A joy that becomes solidarity, hospitality, mercy for all.

Like Mary, we too can be disoriented. *"How will this happen* in times of so much *speculation*? We speculate about life, about work, about family. We speculate about the poor and the migrants; there is speculation about the youth and their future. (...) Certainly, the *dizzying rhythm* to which we are subjected seems to rob us of hope and joy. The pressures and impotence in the face of many situations seem to make us arid and insensitive to the myriad challenges. Paradoxically when everything speeds up to build - in theory - a better society, in the end we do not have time for anything or for anybody. (...) It will be well for us to ask ourselves: *how can we live the joy of the Gospel today in our cities? Is Christian hope possible in this situation, here and now?* These two questions concern our identity, the lives of our families, our countries and our cities. They move the lives of our children and our young people and demand from us a new way of situating ourselves in history. If joy and hope are still possible, we cannot, we do not want to stand around, in the face of so many painful situations, like mere spectators who look up to the sky hoping it will "stop raining." Everything that happens demands that we look at the present with audacity, with the audacity of those who know that the joy of salvation takes shape in the daily life of the house of a young woman from Nazareth. Faced with this disorientation of Mary, in the face of our disorientations, there are three keys that the Angel offers us to help us accept the mission entrusted to us.

1. Evoking Memory: The first thing the Angel does is to evoke memory, thus opening the gift of Mary to the whole history of Salvation. It evokes the promise made to David as the fruit of the covenant with Jacob. Mary is the daughter of the covenant. We too are invited today to remember, to look at our past so as not to forget where we come from. (...) Memory helps us not to remain prisoners of discourses that sow ruptures and divisions as the only way to resolve conflicts. (...)

2. Belonging to the People of God: Memory allows Mary to appropriate her belonging to the People of God. It is well for us to remember that we are members of the People of God! (...) A people made up of a thousand faces, stories and backgrounds, a multicultural and multiethnic people. This is one of our riches. It is a people called to welcome differences, to integrate them with respect and creativity, and to celebrate the newness that comes from others; it is a people that is not afraid to embrace the fringes, the borders; it is a people that is not afraid to receive those who need them because they know that their Lord is there.

3. The possibility of the impossible: *"Nothing is impossible with God"* (Lk 1:37): thus ends the Angel's response to Mary. When we believe that everything depends on us, we remain prisoners of our abilities, our strengths, our myopic horizons. When, on the contrary, we are willing to let ourselves be helped, be advised, when we open ourselves to grace, it seems that the impossible begins to come true. (...)

Just as in the past, God continues to seek allies, continues to seek men and women who are capable of believing, capable of remembering, of feeling that they are part of His people, to cooperate with the creativity of the Spirit. God continues to walk through our neighbourhoods and our streets; He goes everywhere in search of hearts capable of hearing His invitation and of making Him become flesh here and now. Paraphrasing Saint Ambrose in his commentary to this passage we can say: God continues to seek hearts like that of Mary, willing to believe even in absolutely extraordinary conditions.



MAY THE LORD MAKE THIS FAITH AND HOPE GROW IN US!

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