



1) Opening prayer

God our Father,
may we love you in all things and above all things
and reach the joy you have prepared for us
beyond all our imagining.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

2) Gospel Reading - Luke 1,26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favour! The Lord is with you.' She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Look! You are to conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.'

Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I have no knowledge of man?' The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. And I tell you this too: your cousin Elizabeth also, in her old age, has conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.'

Mary said, 'You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.' And the angel left her.

3) Reflection

- Today is the Feast of Mary Queen. The text of the Gospel on which we meditate describes the visit of the angel to Mary (Lk 1, 26-38). The word of God comes to Mary not through a Biblical text, but rather through a profound experience of God, manifested

in the visit of the Angel. In the New Testament, many times, the Angel of God is God himself. It was thanks to the meditation on the written Word of God in the Bible that Mary was capable to perceive the living Word of God in the visit of the Angel. The same thing happens today with God's visits in our life. The visits of God are frequent. But because of lack of assimilation and meditation of the written Word of God in the Bible, we are not aware of God's visit in our life. The visit of God is so present and so continuous that, many times, we do not perceive it and, because of this, we lose a great occasion to live in peace and with joy.

- Luke 1, 26-27: The word enters into our life. Luke presents the persons and the places: a Virgin called Mary, betrothed to a man called Joseph, of the House of David.

Nazareth was a small city in Galilee. Galilee was in the periphery. The centre was Judah and Jerusalem. The Angel Gabriel was sent by God to this young virgin who lived in the periphery. The name Gabriel means God is strong. The name Mary means loved by Yahweh or Yahweh is my Lord.

The story of the visit of God to Mary begins with the expression: "In the sixth month". It refers to the "sixth month" of pregnancy of Elizabeth, relative of Mary, a woman of a certain age, who needs help. The concrete need of Elizabeth serves as a background to the whole episode. It is found at the beginning (Lk 1, 26) and at the end (Lk 1, 36.39).

- Luke 1, 28-29: Mary's reaction. The angel had appeared to Zechariah in the Temple. The Angel appears to Mary in her house. The Word of God reaches Mary in the environment of her daily life. The Angel says: "Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favour! The Lord is with you!" These are words similar to those which were said to Moses (Ex 3, 12), to Jeremiah (Jr 1, 8), to Jedaiah (Jz 6, 12), to Ruth (Rt 2, 4) and to many others. These words open the horizon for the mission which these persons of the Old Testament have to carry out in the service of the People of God. Deeply disturbed by this greeting, Mary tries to understand what it means. She is realistic, she uses her head. She wants to understand. She does not simply accept any apparition or inspiration.

- Luke 1, 30-33: The explanation of the angel. "Do not be afraid, Mary!" This is always the first greeting of God to human beings: do not be afraid! Immediately after that, the angel recalls the great promises of the past which will be realized through the son who will be born from Mary. This son must receive the name of Jesus. He will be called the son of the Most High and in him finally, will be realized the Kingdom of God promised to David, which all were anxiously waiting for. This is the explanation which the Angel gave to Mary so that she would not be afraid.

- Luke 1, 34: New question asked by Mary. Mary becomes aware of the important mission which she is about to receive, but she continues to be realistic. She does not allow herself to be transported by the greatness of the offer and looks at her condition." But how can this come about? I have no knowledge of man". She analyses the offer according to criteria that we, human beings, have available. Because, humanly speaking, this was not possible that this offer of the Word of God would be realized at that moment.

- Luke 1, 35-37: New explanation by the angel. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God". The Holy Spirit, present in God's Word since Creation

(Gn 1, 2), can realize things which seem impossible. This is why, the holy One who will be born from Mary will be called Son of God. When today God's Word is received, accepted by the poor who have no studies, something new takes place thanks to the power of the Holy Spirit! Something new and surprising like the son who is born to a virgin or like the son born from Elizabeth, a woman who was already old, of whom everybody said that she could have no children! The angel adds: "And I tell you this too, your cousin Elizabeth is now in her sixth month!"

- Luke 1, 38: Mary gives herself. The response of the angel clarifies everything for Mary. She gives herself to what the angel was asking for: "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord! May it be done to me according to your word". Mary calls herself Servant, handmaid of the Lord. This title comes from Isaiah, who presents the mission of the people not as a privilege, but rather like a service to others (Is 42, 1-9; 49, 3-6). Later, the son who was about to be generated at that moment, will define his mission saying: "I have not come to be served but to serve!" (Mt 20, 28). He learns from his Mother!

- Luke 1, 39: The way that Mary finds to render service. The Word of God reaches Mary and makes her get out of self in order to serve others. She leaves the place where she was and goes toward Judah, at a distance of more than four days journey, in order to help her cousin Elizabeth. Mary begins serving and fulfils her mission in behalf of the People of God.

4) Personal questions

- How do you perceive God's visit in your life? Have you been visited already? Have you been a visit from God in the life of others especially for the poor? How does this text help us to discover the visits of God in our life?
- The word of God became incarnate in Mary. How is the Word of God taking flesh in my personal life and in the life of the community?

5) Concluding Prayer

Let them thank Yahweh for his faithful love,
for his wonders for the children of Adam!
He has fed the hungry to their hearts' content,
filled the starving with good things. (Ps 107,8-9)