

The Power of Personal Freedom

Daily Gospel /

Luke 1:26-38

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. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; 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." Then the angel departed from her.

Introductory Prayer: Heavenly Father, you have given Mary to us as our Blessed Mother. Thank you. I know that she constantly intercedes on our behalf and that you listen to her prayer. I am confident in your mercy and love. You are guiding me home to spend eternity with you. I place all my trust in you. I offer you my weak, but grateful love in return.

Petition: Lord, grant me the grace to embrace you in faith, hope, and love.

1. "Sent from God": Too often we attribute too much of our achievements to our own doing. Our education, wealth, or technological ability can lead us to have a false sense of security in our ability to shape our world. Today's Gospel reminds us that God's plan for the salvation of the human race is his own initiative. He sends his Son into the world at a precise time and in a precise place. He prepares Mary beforehand with everything she will need to fulfill her mission as Mother of the Redeemer – a mission that she accepts in freedom and through faith. I do well to realize more and more that God is also the true protagonist of my own life.

2. "Do Not Be Afraid": One of the constant refrains of the Gospel is Jesus' admonition: "Do not be afraid." When the Lord draws near, our natural tendency is to be afraid. We can be afraid of his presence. We can be afraid of what he might ask of us. We can be afraid of our own limitations in the face of the call to true conversion and holiness of life. We can be afraid of the apparent obstacles along the path of Christian discipleship. Like Mary, we need to overcome our fear by embracing God's will with faith and love. As our confidence in God increases, our fear decreases. As our love increases, our fear disappears. Of what am I afraid in my relationship with the Lord? Am I surrendering my fear by giving myself in faith?

3. "May It Be Done to Me": What a truly incredible thing it is to make the salvation of the human race dependent upon the free response of Mary! Mary's "yes" to God shows us the power and transcendence of personal choice. It also sheds light on the importance of our own personal "yes" to God with regard to his plan for our lives. Mary's loving, faith-filled consent to a plan she did not fully understand becomes the model of our own daily consent to the divine will as it manifests itself in our daily lives.

Conversation with Christ: Lord, I have remembered through this meditation that you are the one guiding my life and all of history. I need to be mindful that you always intend good for me, even if it is painful and purifying. So I should never be afraid of your hand in my life. I believe and trust in you my Lord, but increase my faith, hope and love.

Resolution: I will embrace God's will today as Mary did — with faith and love.