



## Thursday of the Third Week of Advent

In the sixth month, 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, full of grace! 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:** Lord, as I contemplate the example of Mary's simplicity and generosity, my heart burns within me. If only I could be as docile as she was. In my desire to improve, I trust in your help and mercy. As I begin this prayer, I humbly place myself in your presence. I come, Lord, to do your will.

**Petition:** Grant me, Lord, a love for the example of Our Lady.

**1. A Personal Call:** We notice the very human details of the Annunciation. It happened in a specific place, to a specific person. So it is with God's plan. He doesn't call us en masse. He calls each one of us personally, because he loves each of us as a son or daughter. The Catholic faith is a personal relationship with Our Lord. Do I ever feel the opposite? Do I ever feel like just a number? That's not how God intends my faith to be.

My vocation is personal. Do I respond likewise in a personal way to God?

**2. Beyond All Hopes:** God's people had long awaited a Messiah. Mary also would have looked forward to a Savior. Yet it likely would not have occurred to her that she would ever be the *mother* of the Redeemer. We too might wonder: When will God send someone to save the world in our time? In fact, he tries to do just that ? through each one of us. Each of us can be a saint; each of us can help save the world, with God's grace. Likewise, each of us is called to a great and unique vocation, whether ordained, consecrated or lay. To what great mission is God calling me? Do I realize that my life can be great, if lived with sufficient love?

**3. Let It Be:** Mary's fiat ? "Let it be done to me" ? was the response that brought joy to the angels in heaven. A 14- or 15-year-old, by her openness to God's plan, would help to change the course of history. We, too, are called to say "yes" to God and to build little civilizations of love. Each generation can contribute to building the Kingdom. Do I see the young people in my life as potential apostles? Do I respect them as persons called to great things? Do I see my friends in the same way?

**Conversation with Christ:** Lord, your great plan for sending your Son into the world hinged on Mary's "yes." Let me learn from her openness; let me say "yes" to what you ask.

**Resolution:** I will pray for a young person to have the strength to follow a vocation to the priesthood or consecrated life.