



# St Laurence News

25 March 2020

The Feast of the Annunciation of our Lord

Today is the Feast of the Annunciation – the day when we celebrate the coming of the angel Gabriel to Mary, the day Gabriel put to Mary God’s request: that she be the mother of his son, even though she is unmarried and a virgin; and the day Mary says ‘yes’ to God’s unlikely request.

The Annunciation is one of art’s great themes – angelic boy meets beautiful girl. In this version by Filippo Lippi in our National Gallery, the angel is depicted as coy, almost shy, hardly daring to look up at the beautiful girl in front of him as he delivers his message. He seems almost to float on the grass of Mary’s garden, outside her house. Inside, Mary bows reverently, accepting God’s will and putting herself at God’s service. The Holy Spirit hovers just in



front of her. You can see the end of her bed behind her, and, behind, a staircase leading up into the private part of the house. You can see God’s hand, which has sent the dove, at the top of the stairwell.

It’s a beautiful, tranquil and meditative scene, in which an encounter of girl and boy glows with religious depth. Our own lives too, on this day, display the richness they were created for, when seen, in the power of the Spirit, through the eyes of God.

## Luke 1:26-38

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, so highly favoured! 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. Listen! You are to conceive 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 am a virgin?'

'The Holy Spirit will come upon you' the angel answered '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.'

'Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.'

'I am the handmaid of the Lord,' said Mary 'let what you have said be done to me.' And the angel left her.



## The old testament reading for today: Isaiah 7:10-14,8:10

The Lord spoke to Ahaz and said, 'Ask the Lord your God for a sign for yourself coming either from the depths of Sheol or from the heights above.' 'No,' Ahaz answered 'I will not put the Lord to the test.'

Then Isaiah said: 'Listen now, House of David: are you not satisfied with trying the patience of men without trying the patience of my God, too?'

The Lord himself, therefore, will give you a sign. It is this: the maiden is with child and will soon give birth to a son whom she will call Immanuel, a name which means "God-is-with-us."

## The Collect for the Feast of the Annunciation

O God, who willed that your Word should take on the reality of human flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary, grant, we pray, that we, who confess our Redeemer to be God and man, may merit to become partakers even in his divine nature.

Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.



# Meditation by Fr Anthony

## Mary's Response to God's Message

**“Peace be with you! The Lord is with you and greatly blessed you.”**

The appearance and the greeting of God's messenger troubled Mary. She was puzzled and upset, perhaps even angry. Sensing this, the angel sought to reassure her and then went on to outline God's plan for Mary:

**“The Holy Spirit will embrace you, and God's power will be with you.”**

Luke doesn't tell us how long Mary took to take in the angel's message, fight down her doubts and fears about God's commission and respond wholeheartedly:

**“Let God's will be done”**

We live in troubled times

There's certainly a lot of apprehension and fear around at the moment as the toll of the coronavirus escalates. Our freedoms are restricted more and more as the days pass in a desperate attempt to restrict the spread of the pandemic.

There's certainly a lot of worry around as there was for Mary, and maybe Luke's account of the annunciation could be a calming influence for us as we meditate on some of the conversation between Mary and Gabriel.

**The sacraments bless and empower us**

The Holy Spirit greets and embraces each new Christian at baptism. We also get “top-ups” on a regular basis from the other sacraments as we journey through life in this world.

When we are anxious about the future or how we're going to survive self-isolating or tending for victims of the virus we should remember that we are also highly favoured by God to receive this empowering and strengthening blessing. The Holy Spirit is an empowering gift that can bring with it a profound sense of peace in the face of adversity. God is with us, upholding and encouraging us to face down our concerns, helping us cope with the difficult situations that life can throw at us.

**Reflecting on Gabriel's words may help us**

At the close of her conversation with Gabriel, Mary was released from her fear for her future. When the problems we face in life seem insurmountable I think Gabriel's words to Mary can help us, too. As we meditate and pray over them we also may find the peace that comes from being able to say with Mary,

**“Let God's will be done”**

Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.