

Reflections

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Annunciation

Shortly we will be in the season of Advent, on the way to Christmas, the Nativity: we are going to celebrate the birth of our God in our midst. At the end of this time of waiting, once again, the Church wants to present to us that great Advent figure, the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In the Annunciation, that hour announced by the prophets and which the people had awaited for centuries, had finally arrived. The encounter of the angel with Mary turns out to be one of the greatest moments in the history of Israel and of all humanity. This history now passes through Her, depends on Her, culminates in Her – but for everyone's advantage.

In a unique way, heaven and earth touch, the greatness of God and the smallness of his creature. God has chosen Her to reveal his mystery maintained in secret for centuries. God's promise will become reality in the womb of Mary: *"The Lord will give Him the throne of David his father and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever,"* the Angel announces to Mary.

The call to Mary by means of the Angel is significant for the acting of God before man. We can see it, especially, in three characteristics:

(1) God prefers the humble, the small ones, the simple ones. Thus He chooses Mary, "the handmaid of the Lord." She is humble because She knows the infinite distance there is between God and Her. Mary feels She is the little and insignificant daughter of her people. Therefore She is disturbed when the Angel greets her: *"Peace be with you! The Lord is with you and has greatly blessed you!"*

(2) A second characteristic: for the truly great events of history and of our life, **God does not choose the agitation and turbulence of the world,** but rather chooses solitude and tranquility. The greatest moments are usually the more silent and hidden moments. This is how it also happens in this singular encounter between Heaven and earth: it takes place in the solitude and the peace of the house of Mary, ignored by the world.

(3) Furthermore, the Annunciation reveals to us that God takes man and his liberty seriously. Therefore He does not want to fulfill his plans of salvation without the free collaboration and free consent of man. In the Gospel scene, this respect of God before the dignity and freedom of the human being is expressed in an impressive way. God gives Mary the possibility of accepting or rejecting her mission. God places the destiny of humanity in the hands of this simple virgin.

The response of Mary in this decisive hour turns out to be exemplary for all of us: *"Let it be done unto me according to thy word."* She accepts even if She does not see or understand.

Therefore, what is most extraordinary about Mary in the hour of the Annunciation is her faith.

Mary is the Church's first believer. "The Mother of all believers," as She is called by the Fathers of the Church. She is the model of our faith, not only in the hour of the Annunciation but also in her entire life.

The Angel leaves Her and She is left alone, alone with her great mystery without the possibility of explaining it to anyone. And her sorrowful way of faith begins. From that same moment, She begins to be the Sorrowful Mother. Let us only recall her difficult situation with St. Joseph, the birth in poverty, the killing of the innocents, the flight into Egypt, even the death of her Son on the Cross.

This and no other is also our luck if we want to be authentic Christians. Faith is not a sure comfort of life. Rather it is a leap into emptiness, a way of continuous struggle which also includes the Cross.

But we have in Mary a Mother who preceded us on this way and who accompanies us anew with her help, her encouragement and her consolation. And at the end of our life, She awaits us to take us to the House of the Father forever.

Dear brothers and sisters, in this same faith we are also going to prepare ourselves like the Blessed Virgin for the great feast of Christmas, the Nativity.....the miracle of the Holy Night, the arrival of God made man to our land.

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