

A Leap of Faith
2nd Sunday of Advent - Year C - 12/09/2018
Psalm Reading: 67
1st Reading: Isaiah 43:1-3a, 2nd: Luke 1:26-38

Introduction

This passage is traditionally called the Annunciation.
Lots of stories in the Bible where births are announced:
Hagar and Ishmael (Gen. 16:1-16) by spring - angel
Abraham/Sarah and Isaac – He will laugh (Gen. 18:12)
Rebekah (Gen. 25:23) birth of Jacob and Esau
Samson (Judges 13:3) (Manoah) (Angel)
Elizabeth and John – The Baptist (Luke 1:11-20) (Angel)
Announcements are not to the world rather to individual.
“Here Ye, Here Ye”

God sends Gabriel

What do we know about this angel?
Gabriel means God is great!¹ or God is my Strength
What is an Angel?
 Messenger/Warrior – Evangelion
Helped Daniel interpret dreams (in Babylon)
Also Announced the Birth of John the Baptist to Zechariah.
Qualities of an angel:
 Not: Clean shaven / long flowing robes / elegant wings / or sit on your shoulder... Maybe looks like Michael Landon or Clarence in “It’s a Wonderful Life.”
 But: Tall / Powerful / Ominous / fearsome!

He goes to Mary and says, (as pleasantly as he possibly can considering his ferocious appearance): *“Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you!”* (NIV, Luke 1:28)

So, who is this Mary he has come to see?:

Must have been quite young.

Not from wealthy family.

After all, she is marrying a carpenter named Joseph, and not a priest or merchant or courtier.

Also, she is highly favored. (Good-hearted, mind, tough...)

Mary’s Response to the greeting:

“Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.” (V. 29)

Why might Mary be troubled?

She may have been surprised by the confrontation.

Where does she meet this angel?

Near well? / In her father’s house?/ On the road?/Was it getting dark?/Is this big guy a threat?

And like Mary, we might wonder, **“What kind of greeting is this?”**

Not typical.

Does she recognize Gabriel as an angel?

She must. Maybe we recognize angels by their message?

Maybe she knows that when something is so important that an angel shows up to tell you about it, it means there is some hard work ahead! Not there to announce you have won

a million dollars in the lottery, but more likely has come to tell you to do something with it.

Gabriel Reassures her:

He says, *“Do not be afraid, Mary. You have found favor with God.”* (v.30)

Is Gabriel a bit unsure of the situation? He feels like he has to repeat himself with the “You have found favor with God.” I can see this big, tough, usually confident angel, trying to be clumsily reassuring to this young woman.

It is an awkward moment.

And it is going to be even more awkward when Gabriel tells her what he has really come to tell her.

So Gabriel blurts out the rest of his message:

“You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.” (v. 31-33)

It is a big promise with lots of problems Because:

a.) Mary is a virgin (v. 34) and b.) engaged to Joseph...

Implications: Upset husband, Joseph / shock family and neighbors / possibility of being stoned to death.

(Leviticus 20:10 *“If a man commits **adultery** with another man's wife-with the wife of his neighbor-both the adulterer and the adulteress are to be put to death.”*)

So, Mary naturally asks:

“How can this be?”

Is she taking command of the situation? She trying to get to the bottom of this unlikely scenario?

Is Mary resisting?

Can she resist the will of God?

Can we resist the will of God?

When God calls I think God allows us to respond...

But I also think God calls us in cognizance with our capabilities and our will.

Mary could refuse to do God's will, but she will not refuse God's call because her will and God's will for her are aligned.

When we are called:

A feeling wells up from our conscience and comes into our consciousness.

How do we respond?

If we are truly called, we will say "yes".

Gabriel answers Mary's question, "How can this be?":

He reassures her that it can be, and it will be.

Everything will work out fine.

It is a miracle:

What happens here moves beyond the ordinary - into the extraordinary.

"No Word from God will ever fail." (v.37)

Mary voices her agreement,

"I am the Lord's servant...May your word to me be fulfilled." (v.38)

Spoken with confidence and decision.
Determination to embrace the possibilities of the future.
Knowing that there will be difficulties she moves ahead.
Vow / Contract in speaking the words out loud.
When we are called it is a covenant between us and God.

So, here we have this young woman, faced with this powerful angel, bringing her a message that has two sides. It is one that will lead to glory for her and the Son of God, but also will require hard work and ultimately result in terrible suffering and heartache. We too may perceive a call. The call probably will not come to us in the form of a towering angel or in some kind of dramatic occurrence (though it may). But rest assured that the Lord is calling each and every one of us now. The Lord is asking us to dedicate our lives to God. The Lord would have us open our hearts to Father, Son, and Spirit and to open ourselves to loving and caring for all humanity. It requires risk for us as individuals and risks for us as a church. Just as Mary would have to take risks. It requires work, dedication and confidence in the providence of our Lord.

We may take a lesson from Mary's response to Gabriel, and it should be our response to God's call. "*I am the Lord's servant...May your word to me be fulfilled.*" The Word was fulfilled for Mary and ultimately it is fulfilled for us. We need only align our will with God's will. The word for Mary is that a child would be born in Bethlehem, not just for Mary, but for all of us. This child, Jesus, has been given the throne of David, for all of us. Christ will come again for all of us, and his kingdom will never end.

So this annunciation, this call, although delivered privately for one person, was really for all of us. In the same way when we are called, we are called not to benefit ourselves but our community and all of humanity.

Please bow your heads and pray with me...

Eternal God, Jesus was both fully human and fully divine. It was from the humanity of his mother that Jesus was birthed. She carried him close to her heart. May we carry Jesus in our hearts that our actions as members of the Body of Christ may be all that they ought to be. For, precious savior, we are your servants...May your word in us be fulfilled.

ἀμήν

<https://www.gotquestions.org/angel-Gabriel.html> (accessed December 05, 2018).