

Week 1: *The Annunciation*

Pray

Pray one decade of the Rosary each day, focusing on the mystery of the Annunciation. Try to enter into the scene of Mary's fiat and Jesus' incarnation. Ask Jesus to reveal Himself to you in a new way. Be still with Mary and trust Jesus to work within you.

Read

Luke 1: 26-38

Enter into the Scene

Prayerfully reflect on *The Annunciation of Jesus to Mary* (attached), or enter into your own reflection. Consider Mary's disposition before Gabriel comes, while he speaks with her, and after he departs. Contemplate Mary's response to Gabriel and to God. Imagine what it must have felt like for the Holy Spirit to come to Mary. How does this encounter change her? Draw near to your newly incarnate Lord. What is He like in this very earliest stage of His humanity?

Reflect

1. The provided reflection suggests that Mary's fiat was not a singular occurrence, but one of many "yeses" that she spoke to God throughout Her life and the life of Her Son. In what other ways do you think Mary has or will say "yes" to God? Do you think that Her "Yes" changes or grows over time and maturity?
2. Take a moment to imagine Jesus' earliest moments of incarnation. Draw upon your own knowledge of or experience with pregnancy and fetal development. Consider Jesus' physical smallness and delicacy in these early weeks and months. Why do you think He chose to enter into our humanity in such a humble and quiet way? Why do you think He decided to enter the world through the womb of a woman, or more specifically, through the womb of Mary? What does this say about femininity and motherhood?

Question

1. Mary receives her call from Gabriel in a spirit of prayerful waiting and internal stillness. In what ways or situations am I able to remain still and prayerful in my own life? In what circumstances do I find myself scrambling, over-busy, or given to excessive worry?
2. Mary fully gives Her "yes" to God, even without knowing every detail that She is consenting to. In what circumstances is it easy for me to say, "yes" to God? In what situations is it difficult for me? God often asks us to follow Him and trust Him without giving us all of the answers up front. Does not knowing sometimes limit my "yes," or reduce my generosity?
3. Mary questions how God can accomplish His plan through Her, given Her own limitations. However, She remains deeply rooted in trust, ultimately proclaims that He is capable of all things, and submits Herself to His service. Have I ever let my own limitations impede me from following God's call? Is there a chance that God may want to use me with my limitations, not just in spite of them?
4. The Holy Spirit comes to Mary and infuses Her soul in a very profound and tangible way. Have I ever felt the presence of the Holy Spirit in my own life? When? What did the Holy Spirit's nearness feel like? How is my experience similar/different from what Mary experienced?



Reflection: *The Annunciation of Jesus to Mary*

I open my interior eyes and imagine Your Mother waiting in prayer. She does not know for what or whom She is waiting. She does not know when the event or person is coming, but She waits. She is perfectly still, internally and externally. This is the first thing that I notice about Her – not Her beauty, nor Her faith, nor Her exuding sense of peace, but Her stillness. I am reminded immediately of all the unknowns and questions I face in my own life, how I scramble after answers and steep myself in worry. She is so different from me.

Mary's waiting is like hymns of quiet trust. She has so entirely devoted Herself to Her Heavenly Father, that His will alone is Her joy and song. It is from this disposition of humility that She is able to see and ready to hear Your angelic messenger. "Hail, Full of Grace!" Gabriel greets Her. "The Lord is with You."

For a few moments Mary is confused. She knows that She is the recipient of this hailing, but She does not know why She has been chosen or to what propose She is being called. She presumes no awareness of Her own grandeur, but remains limited within Her personhood, which is unassuming and small. Mary's hope for You, Her Lord, is infinite, but She does not suppose Her own role in Your coming. She has spent Her whole life waiting for You, although She does not fully understand Her own longing until now.

"You will conceive" ... "birth to a Son" ... "Son of the Most High" ... "Forever." The words of Gabriel flood into Mary's heart like little breaths of both wonder and fulfillment, question and answer. She is dizzied by the beauty and magnitude of the request. "How can this be?" She wonders with trusting confusion. "Since I know not man," She continues, graciously beholding Her own limitation. Gabriel smiles broadly and continues his explanation, trying to put the ultimate divine mystery into terms of human understanding.

Your Mother's knowledge of this bidding, of Her own role in bringing You – Emanuel, God with us – into the world is great, but not complete. She knows that Her "yes" will bring great sorrow and joy, but She cannot yet grasp the extent. She gives Her fiat in this manner, not in naivety or ignorance, but also not with full comprehension or illusion of control. Her "yes" is a willing surrender; it is an openhanded reception; it is a melody of quiet trust. She repeats the same unwavering consent that She has spoken to Her Father continually throughout Her early life, and will continue to speak until Her own death. Mary gives Her fiat with head bowed in humility, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done to me according to your word."

Gabriel departs as the Holy Spirit falls over Mary. The entire room fills with warmth as She exudes deep spiritual consolation. The Holy Spirit infuses Her heart; He espouses Her. You, the Word made Flesh, enter into humanity by Your Mother's consent and the power of the Holy Spirit. You are no longer separate from Your people, but fully incarnate among us. You are not as a god, cloaked in human flesh; rather, You are fully God and fully man.

In these earliest moments of Your human life, Your body is comprised of just a few hidden cells, carried and sustained in the Eden of Your Mother's womb. This is how you come to us; this is how You come to me – by making Yourself least among Your people, by making Yourself so tiny that You cannot be seen. You, infinite God of infinite universe, have made Yourself so finite, so limited in nature, that for months You will be essentially unnoticed.

Jesus, as I enter into the advent of Your life, I want to behold my own smallness with You. How many times have I, distended with pride, fashioned myself beyond my calling? Let me make myself as small as You. Let me hide within Your Mother's womb with You. Let me learn Her fiat, that I might say "yes" to You in all things.

JOYFULLY PROCLAIMING, CELEBRATING, WITNESSING, AND SERVING *Together*