

The Magnificat

My soul magnifies the Lord
And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior;
Because He has regarded the lowliness of His hand-
maid;
For behold, henceforth all generations shall call me
blessed;
Because He who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is His name;
And His mercy is from generation to generation
on those who fear Him.
He has shown might with His arm,
He has scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart.
He has put down the mighty from their thrones,
and has exalted the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich He has sent away empty.
He has given help to Israel, his servant, mindful of His
mercy
Even as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his
posterity forever.

Unfolding the Word Advent



The Annunciation (Luke 1:26-38)

The most important message in this text is centred on the coming of Jesus as Messiah/Saviour and God's Son and the fulfilment of God's plan of salvation (vs.31-33, 35).

While we call this story the Annunciation to Mary, it is God who is the Prime Mover here. The initiative comes from God. ("the angel Gabriel *was sent from God* to a virgin . . . whose name was Mary" Luke 1: 26-27). It is God's Plan for humanity that is coming to fulfilment. The Annunciation is but an aspect or an initiative within the overall plan of God.

God's message is for Mary, a normal, ordinary, everyday, young woman of her time to be his partner in salvation, a willing participant in the working out of God's Plan.

The angel salutes Mary as 'full of grace'/'highly favoured one.' Mary is not 'full of grace' on the basis of something special she has done because she hasn't done anything special that we know of at that point. It is not an honour she has earned – in fact it has nothing to do with merit.

God's trust in her is pure gift. We tend to think that you have to earn someone's trust because that is the way of the world. But, it is not God's way. In fact the Annunciation says the exact opposite. It reveals a God whose first instinct is to trust for no other reason than that that is how God is.

Mary's reaction is something that is seen at many of the crucial stages throughout the Infancy Narrative. She 'pondered' or 'reflected upon' the words of the angel and on the events as they unfolded, struggling to find the message's relevance for her and her life, actions, and behaviour. She 'pondered' God's messages/actions/events after the visit of the shepherds at the birth of Jesus (2: 19) and after finding the 12-yr old Jesus teaching "in the midst of the Temple teachers, listening to them and asking them questions" (2: 51).

Mary does not fully understand God's message and asks for clarification. She asks 'How can this be as I am a virgin'? This is in contrast to Zechariah at the annunciation of John the Baptist's birth. He does not believe and asks for a sign. Mary's belief in the angel's message is not in doubt. Her reaction is to accept God's message - "May it be done according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

The angel's explanation involves both the creative power of the Holy Spirit and the 'over-shadowing' of the power of God. This is a reminder of the power and glory of God, which was described so often during the Exodus when the power and glory of God lead the people as they journeyed from Egypt to the Promised Land. So Mary is chosen to be the recipient of the creative power of God as she conceives the child within her.

Luke presents Mary as a model disciple. She is the first to hear the gospel, the first to accept it and the first to proclaim it. Mary, the first follower of Christ, the first Christian, lives out the essential task of discipleship.