

Sunday 4th (B) of Advent

Gospel text (Lk 1,26-38): In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth. He was sent to a young virgin who was betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the family of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. The angel came to her and said, «Rejoice, full of grace, the Lord is with you». Mary was troubled at these words, wondering what this greeting could mean.

But the angel said, «Do not fear, Mary, for God has looked kindly on you. You shall conceive and bear a son and you shall call him Jesus. He will be great and shall rightly be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the kingdom of David, his ancestor; He will rule over the people of Jacob forever and his reign shall have no end». Then Mary said to the angel, «How can this be if I am a virgin?». And the angel said to her, «The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the holy child to be born shall be called Son of God. Even your relative Elizabeth is expecting a son in her old age, although she was unable to have a child, and she is now in her sixth month. With God nothing is impossible». Then Mary said, «I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me as you have said». And the angel left her.

«You shall conceive and bear a son and you shall call him Jesus»

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Today, the Gospel sounds rather like a popular tale. Many stories begin like that: «Once upon a time, there was...», and then, personages, epoch, place and storyline are presented. This one will attain its peak with the core of the tale; we shall finally know the happy end.

In fact, St. Luke, narrates, with a popular and understandable tone, the greatest story of all times. He presents to us, not a yarn out of his imagination, but an actual reality woven by the very hand of God himself with human collaboration. The climax is reached when the Angel says: «You shall conceive and bear a son and you shall call him Jesus» (Lk 1:31).

This message tells us that Christmas time is near. Mary will open the door for us through her collaboration with the Work of God. This humble girl from Nazareth is astonished at the Angel's announcement. She was precisely praying God to send the Anointed One, to save the world. In her modest dreams, little did she think that God would just choose her to carry out His plans.

In her Heart, Mary experiences some tense and dramatic moments: she was, and wanted to remain as, a virgin; God, now, proposes her to divine maternity. Mary cannot understand it: «How can this be?» (Lk 1:34), asks she. The Angel explains that virginity and maternity do not contradict each other; on the contrary, thanks to the Holy Spirit, they integrate perfectly together. Not that she understands it better now, but that is enough for her, for the prodigy will be God's will: «With God nothing is impossible» (Lk 1:37). Hence, her answer: «Let it be done to me as you have said» (Lk 1:38). Let it be done! Fiat! Yes. Total acceptance of God's Will, half groping, but unconditionally.

In that very instant, «the Word became flesh and dwelt among us!» (Jn 1:14). That popular tale becomes, at the same time, the most divine and human reality. Paul VI wrote in 1974: «In Mary we see God's reply to the mystery of man; and the question man asks God about the meaning and purpose of his life».