March 25th: Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord

Gospel text (*Lk* 1:26-38): The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus" (...). Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

The Annunciation: "Then, the angel left her"

EDITORIAL TEAM evangeli.net (based on texts by Benedict XVI)
(Città del Vaticano, Vatican)

Today, on the feast of the Annunciation, we mull over the last phrase of Luke's description: "Then, the angel left her". The great moment of the encounter with the messenger of God, when life changes, has passed, and Mary is left alone with a commitment which, actually, exceeds all human capacity.

There are no more angels around her... She must keep going through the path that will be crossed by many obscurities, starting with Joseph's bewilderment faced with her pregnancy, or the time when His own family declares Jesus as being "out of his mind" (cf. Mk 3:21; Jn 10:20), till the night of the Cross. In all these situations, how many times will Mary have gone back in her thoughts to the time when the angel of God spoke to her! How many times she may have heard and pondered over that greeting: "Rejoice, Mary full of grace", and over the reassuring words: "Do not be afraid".

—The angel has gone, but the mission remains, and along with it the closeness of God matures through intimately seeing and touching His proximity.

"Jesus unborn" illuminates life from the womb of the mother

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Today, Maria's "Fiat" becomes the door to a long way ahead: that of the Son of God amongst us. This event changes human existence radically: the Lord takes our life and elevates it to a supernatural order.

"Jesus unborn" also illuminates the life of the person in His mother's womb: a new perspective is thus opened when we consider the origin and development of our life.

Tenderness, hope, patience: without these three attitudes life and the growth of the unborn child cannot be respected. Tenderness requires a commitment from us, hope launches us into the future, patience accompanies our waiting in the weariness of seeing the days going by. When these attitudes are not present the child becomes an "object", detached from his father and his mother, and many times "something" that is annoying, an intruder in the lives of adults.

—From His mother's womb, Jesus accepts all risks that selfishness brings along. We ask Mary to give us that tenderness, hope and patience so that all human life may be cared for.