Weekdays of Advent: December 20th

Gospel text (*Lk* 1:26-38): In the sixth month, 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, favored one! 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. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God." 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.

"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word."

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Today, once more, we contemplate the impressive scene of the Annunciation. God, always true to His promises, lets Mary know through the Angel Gabriel that she is the one chosen to bear the Savior of the world. As we learn to expect from the Lord, the most important event in the history of mankind —the Creator and Lord of all things becoming man, just like us— takes place in a very simple way: a young woman in a small village in Galilee. No fireworks.

The way of going about it is simple; the event is as magnificent as are the virtues of the Virgin Mary: filled with grace, the Lord is with her, who is ever humble, simple, available for God's will, and generous. God has plans for her, as He has for you and for me, but He relies on our free and loving cooperation to carry them out. Mary is our example: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38). It is not only a “yes” to the message of the Angel; it is putting herself in the hands of God the Father, abandoning herself to His intimate providence, and to letting God work through her now and in all the circumstances of her life.

Of Mary's answer to God's will, as of ours, Saint Josemaría Escriva writes, “Many great things depend — don't forget it — on whether you and I live our lives as God wants.”

We are preparing to celebrate Christmas. The best way to do so is to be with Mary, contemplating her life and trying to imitate her virtues in order to receive the Lord with the right heart: What does God expect from me, now, today, at work, in my relationships with others, and in my relationship with God? Many great things depend on our response to the little things of every day!

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Being obedient she became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race.” (Saint Irenaeus)

- “Mary is the docile servant of the holy Word. There were reasons to be afraid, because carrying the weight of the world, being the mother of the King of the universe was stronger than any forces of a human being. That is why the Archangel repeated to her “Don’t be afraid”; so typical of the Scriptures.” (Benedict XVI)

- “The angel Gabriel at the moment of the annunciation salutes her as ‘full of grace’ (Lk 1:28) In fact, in order for Mary to be able to give the free assent of her faith to the announcement of her vocation, it was necessary that she be wholly borne by God's grace.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, № 490)