

December 10th: Our Lady of Loreto

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.

Today, as Advent has just begun, we celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Loreto (Patron Saint of Aviation), and the Church invites us to meditate on the Gospel of the Annunciation of the Lord to the Blessed Virgin, through the angel Saint Gabriel.

The encounter of the angel with Mary is one of the greatest moments in the history of Israel and all of humanity. In a unique way, heaven and earth, the greatness of God and the smallness of his creature come together. In Mary's womb God's promise will come true: "The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever" (Luke 1:32-33), the angel announces to her.

God prefers the humble, the small, the simple. That's why he chooses Mary. She is humble. Mary feels like a small and insignificant daughter of her people. That is why she is disturbed when the angel greets her: "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." (Luke 1:28).

Mary's response in this decisive hour is exemplary for all of us: "May it be done to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38). She accepts, even though she doesn't understand. Therefore, the most extraordinary thing about Mary, at the hour of the Annunciation, is her faith.

Pope Francis said at one of the World Youth Days: "With just a few words, she was able to say "yes" and to trust in the love and promises of God, who is the only force capable of renewing, of making all things new."

The Virgin is the first believer of the Church: the Mother of all believers, as the Fathers of the Church call her. She is a model of our faith. We have in Mary a Mother who preceded us on this path and who accompanies us, again, with her help. And at the end of our life, She waits for us to take us to the Father's House, forever.