

**In Celebration & Praise of The Annunciation
of Our Lord Jesus Christ to the Blessed Virgin Mary:
“Hail, thou that art highly favored...”**

A reflection,
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Wednesday Eucharist, March 25, 2009
Lesser Feasts and Fasts, 1994

Isaiah 7: 10-14
Hebrews 10: 5-10
Luke 1:26-38
Psalm 40: 1-11

In the name of God: The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The word of David is fulfilled this day as we celebrate Mary, who says “Yes,” to the Lord. The obedient young woman, the virgin Mary, Mother of God, says “Yes,” to the Lord after the Angel Gabriel greets her: “Hail, you that are highly favored...”

Let us add our voices and hearts with others, as we consider: Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad. The fields shall be joyful, and all the trees of the wood before the Lord, because He cometh. And in what way, what special way, did God give his only Son to mankind? Born of a virgin, bringing into the history of God and man a new life with God in Christ, a new period in the history of the divine-human relationship that will be for ever and ever. For Gabriel said in greeting: “Hail, you that are highly favored...”

The pure Virgin Mary cast in her mind what manner of salutation this might be. And the Angel immediately proceeded to say, *The Lord is with thee: fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favor with God. Behold, thou shall conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call him Jesus.*

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever: and of His kingdom there shall be no end.

Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? Shall I still remain a virgin?

And while she was yet in perplexity as to these things, the angel placed before her the summary of his whole message, and said to Mary, *“The Holy Ghost shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you; therefore also that holy thing which*

shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” Meekly, then, did grace make election of the pure Mary alone out of all generations.

Mary was obedient, and holy. She was pure. It was goodness that brought Jesus Christ into the world, and specifically the goodness of God who loves us that brought the Saviour of the world and mankind. Listen to these words in celebration of Mary by a woman poet:

Virgin
by Luci Shaw

*As if until that moment
nothing real
had happened since Creation*

*As if outside the world were empty
so that she and he were all
there was--he mover, she moved upon*

*As if her submission were the most
dynamic of all works: as if
no one had ever said Yes like that*

*As if one day the sun had no place
in all the universe to pour its gold
but her small room*

Let us imagine together this event, so awesome and holy, so large and cosmic as to create in us the need to recognize that God's ways are not our ways.

The Annunciation of Our Lord Jesus Christ to the Blessed Virgin Mary is the beginning of Jesus in His human nature. It is through His mother that He is a member of the human race. So the story tells us: The virginity of Mary before, during, and after the conception of her Divine Son was always considered part of the deposit of faith. The Incarnation of the Son of God did not in itself necessitate this exception from the laws of nature. Through Mary a new generation begins of the children of God.

We recite words like these that make the miracle real: "...[M]aker of heaven and earth, /of all that is, seen and unseen...God from God, Light from Light, /true God from true God, /begotten not made..."

The Redeemer does not arrive in the way of earthly generations: the power of the Holy Spirit enters the chaste womb of the Virgin, forming the humanity of Christ.

This Holy Spirit, which enters Mary in its creation, creates an incarnate God, a man to be born of woman, in Mary's womb. But the spirit of Christ Jesus is so large, so immense, so cosmic a spirit that He is in reality begotten into the world. In the words of the Hymn by Third Century Syrian Poet Ephrem:

*He dwelt in the vast wombs of all creation.
They were too small to contain the greatness of the Firstborn.
How indeed did that small womb of Mary suffice for Him?
It is a wonder if (anything) sufficed for Him.
Of all the wombs that contained Him, one womb sufficed:*

[the womb] of the Great One Who begot Him.

*The womb that contained Him, if it contained all of Him,
Is equal to the wonderful womb
That is greater than [the womb] of His birth.*

As we celebrate and remember Mary and the Annunciation, her obedience to God, let us thank God for this cosmic act in love of humankind. Let us be grateful for Christ Jesus and his life. Again, the poet Ephrem may with his voice, help us--we join him when he writes:

*Glory to Your coming that restored humankind to life.
Glory to that One Who came to us by His First-born.
Glory to that Silent One Who spoke by means of His Voice.
Glory to that Sublime One Who was seen by means of His Dawn.
Glory to the Spiritual One Who was well-pleased...*

*...Glory to that Hidden One Whose Child was revealed.
Glory to that Living One Whose Son became mortal...
...Glory to that One Power Who fashioned Him.
The Image of His greatness and Form for His hiddenness...
...Glory to that Hidden One Who even to the mind
Is utterly imperceptible to those who investigate Him.*

Of what became of Mary in her life with Christ--we know this of the Lenten season from the Lenten story and text "The Way of the Cross." In the hymn "Stabat Mater," we are reminded that she kept her station at the Cross: how sad and "sore distressed / Now as she, that mother blessed /Of the sole-begotten-One."

At the end, the body of Jesus is placed in the arms of His mother. She tells us to behold and see if there is any sorrow like hers..."for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me." Our hearts go out to Mary. We are moved by her life, and mostly by her faith and obedience.

For His tender mercies sake, let us say together:

*Holy God,
Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One,
Have mercy upon us.*

You have redeemed the world. Amen.