

4th Sunday of Advent : Year B

Prayerful preparation

Luke 1:26-38. *I am the handmaid of the Lord.*

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice, so highly favoured! The Lord is with you.' She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.'

Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?' 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you' the angel answered 'and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.'

'I am the handmaid of the Lord,' said Mary 'let what you have said be done to me.'

And the angel left her.

Prayer prompt

A Thomistic Approach to praying with today's Gospel

Meditatively read the Gospel passage often enough to engage head and heart. Focus maybe on the virtue of faith, Mary's faith. Write down the qualities of Mary's faith as you read about her faith in action in the Annunciation.

WHAT do we mean by faith? What is entailed in the practice of faith? What reasons are there to want to increase my faith? What value does faith have in my life?

WHY should I have faith?

HOW do I practice my faith?

WHO are the people in the Scripture who are examples of the practice of faith?

WHERE in my life do I need to practice faith?

WHEN in lockdown do I need to increase my faith?

HELPS: what can help me practice faith?

I conclude by making one resolution to change one behaviour today which will help increase my faith.

These are the seven Questions recommended to get a full grasp on the topic, virtue, you have chosen, been inspired, to dwell on. Seven may be too many today, feel free to focus on as few or many as you feel drawn to.

Adapted from *Prayer and Temperament*, Michael and Morrissey (1984).