Feast of the Annunciation (March 25)

by Robert Bouffier, SM

She knows her texts. She can quote Zechariah, Zephaniah, Isaiah, Joel, Samuel (1). She owns the hopes and prayers of the great women of her race: Miriam, Hannah, Deborah, Esther, Judith (2). She has suffered oppression the likes of the Egyptian slavery and the Babylonian Captivity. She has shed her tears for the little ones: the poor, the hungry, the powerless. It is time. "How long, O Lord? How long?" (3).



Fra Angelico, Annunciation of Cortona, c. 1433-1434, tempera on wood, 175 x 180 cm, Museo Diocesano, Cortona, Italy, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Angelico_Annunciation_(Cortona).jpg.

"Rejoice, o highly favored one! The Lord is with you!"

Could this be it? Is the Great Time, the Year of Favor come? Hurrah! But . . . hold on. Who . . . me? Oh . . . my God!

"Do not be afraid."

In the middle of Lent, trying to turn around the great Flood of human pride, greed, ruthlessness, we raise the Icon of the Annunciation: the maiden and the awesome Power of God . . . the young girl and the Ancient of Days . . . the barren and the Creator.

We need to know, too, that "nothing is impossible to God"—a watchword she undoubtedly kept in her heart, treasured and pondered, and passed on to her son (4).

In the hope that is near despair, we too, in the shadow of the Spirit, must trust in the God who promises peace, truth, justice, and love in the "reign that will have no end." We must use our memory of the history of our people, the history of our God to make sense out of the ashes around us. We must use our small lights to meet the vast darkness.

So, what's it to be?

Question, consider, puzzle out—as much as you are able. "How can this be?"

Hear the answer of the Holy Word: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you!" "The Spirit will lead you to complete truth" (5).

In the face of all you do not—cannot—know, surrender. Abandon yourself to the adventure beyond all telling. Remember you are "God's servant." Pray that it may "be accomplished as you have said." "For eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it even entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love him" (6).

Run to work "in haste." Seek out companions in faith to share the miracle, the call, the challenge. But above all, "Rejoice in the Lord always" (7). Let your spirit rejoice in God your Savior, your Yeshua, your Jesus (8). Let your soul proclaim God's greatness.

Reflection Questions

- In what ways can my situation right now be compared to events in Sacred Scripture?
- What is God asking me to do today that is beyond my strength? How is God "troubling" me?
- What about God's call really frightens me?
- What question do I really need to ask God?
- With whom is God asking me to share faith? Hope? Love? The miracle of salvation?

Cited

1. See Zec 9:9; Zep 3:14; Is 7:14; Jl 2:21ff; 2 Sm 7:12-16.
2. See Ex 15:21; 1 Sm 2:1-10; Jgs 4, 5; Est 4, 5; Judith 15, 16.
3. Ps 13.
4. See Mk 10:27; Lk 18:27; Mt 19:26.
5. Jn 16:13.
6. 1 Cor 2:9.
7. Phil 4:4.
8. Jesus means "God saves."
