



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

The Annunciation of the Lord-March 25th 2021

Readings: Isaiah 7: 10-14, Psalm 39, Hebrews 10: 4-10, Luke 1: 26-38

In a moment, outside a kitchen in the little dusty streets of Nazareth, in the garden of the little house in the Galilean hills, two thousand years ago, came the moment.

The Archangel, supreme messenger of the one true most high God, appeared to a young peasant girl of secret royal line. The hosts of Heaven held their breath as Gabriel, the power of God, spoke the news of solemn invitation to the chosen one. History hung in the balance. The salvation of Man waited on her assent.

Surprised, in the ordinary, by such an extravagant revelation, Mary was rightly afraid. Shocked by the impossibility of the promise, Mary was puzzled by its implications for her integrity. Overwhelmed by the outrageous and all consuming demand of God upon her life, she would have been justified in declining, retreating, hiding from the blessing of the promised supreme gift and the burden that accompanied it.

As we know, and with ever grateful hearts, Mary did none of these things. She overcame her fear. She tried to understand the strange description of her supernatural destiny. She consented to become the new Eve, truly the

mother of all who will live. She opened herself, image of the church whose ikon she would ever be, to the overshadowing power of the Holy Spirit that she might bring Christ into the world and present Him to all who seek salvation.

This is a sensational moment in the history of Faith. We honour Mary and we treasure the day.

Very often I find that some believers seek to enquire if they should look for a similar calling...complete with Archangelic messenger etc. 'If only God would make it that clear to me etc'' 'If God knocked me over on the Damascus Road, lights, sounds, voice over, I would be obedient to His call etc.'

For most of us it does not come like that, of course. I always say to people, 'If God knocked you over on the Damascus Road He would be looking for you to be St.Paul, fearless, zealous, top preacher, marching into strange cities, beaten, shipwrecked, imprisoned, betrayed, executed etc etc. You OK with that?'

If God wanted you to be Mary, you may merit the Archangelic visit. But are you ready for the shame, the hardship, the exile, the obscurity, the suffering, the standing at the foot of the Cross?

For most of us, thanks be to God, call is a little less dramatic. A word from a friend, the priest's hand upon your shoulder, a poster, a passage of scripture that wont go away, a growing conviction, a poster that says 'God needs you to serve His Church'. The confirming discernment of the Church.

We should not be disappointed at the ordinariness of our calling. Be grateful. The Holy Spirit is no less involved. He intervenes from our Baptism onwards. He ensures the Presence is present at every Mass that we attend. He broods over the Church of God, giving gifts to the faithful and helping us, with Mary, present Christ to the world. He guides His Church - for all the follies and failings of the fools and sinners who make it up.

My former Bishop, dear old Fr. John Richards, a no-nonsense West countryman, used to gather all the boys together whom he was confirming and tell them: 'Every single man jack of you needs to offer himself to God for priesthood before you consider anything else. If He doesn't want you for a priest then you are free to consider other things. Then he would call all the candidates together and talk of their vocations as followers of Christ. Everybody has one. All those callings are rooted in the supreme vocation of Our Blessed Mother. This day, above all days, we give thanks for her response to that call, that reply in the garden in Galilee that led Man back to the possibility of re-entering the gardens of Paradise.

SALVE REGINA – Blessed Mother of Christ and of all the Faithful