



Advent meditation 22 by Father Robbie Low

ADVENT XXII

MARY

Few stories have captured the imagination of Man more than St. Luke's account of the Annunciation. Sacred art blossoms with the attempt of every significant artist to capture that moment when history changed forever and the destiny of Man hung on the response of a simple and unconsidered peasant girl in an out of the way northern town. The appearance of the great archangelic messenger of God and the words he had to speak echo down the centuries. Gabriel does not greet Mary by name but by her unique quality that will form the basis of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. He says simply: 'Hail – you who have been already filled with the grace of God'. The Greek word **KEKARITOMENE** - κ ε χ α π ι τ ω μ ε ν ε is the past participle feminine passive of the word – hence the translation 'highly favoured' is utterly inadequate – as if Our Lady was being made 'Head Girl' – but much more profound. God has prepared here a pure vessel of grace. Her offspring, God's Son, will not therefore be subject to original sin. He will be the New Adam- Man as God intended. Mary is the New Eve, the true Mother of all who will live, the ikon of the Church. Understandably afraid in the presence of the angel, apprehensive, puzzled Mary goes right to the heart of the issue. 'How can I honour God by losing my honour? How can I be a mother of virtue by sacrificing my own?' And the great Archangel explains. This salvation is not a work of Man but of God. The Holy Spirit, the Presencer, the Word ordering force of all creation, will

overshadow you, as He did in the beginning and as He will do again at the Pentecost, and the world will begin anew and Eden will be brought back within the hope of Man. God will honour His faithful servant and all generations will call her 'blessed'.

This hinge of history, this determinative encounter, be it at the garden gate of the home of Nazareth, by the kitchen range, the nearby hillside, has many artistic representations as the hearts that respond. For we too have to be Mary, be the Church, be willing to listen to God's call to us, experience the puzzlement and confusion and fear of responding to so great a caller and so great a call – not knowing where it will lead except its final destination. Accepting the risk of suffering, misunderstanding, persecution, loss of everything for the supreme freedom of obedience.

And all history waits on Mary's response. The destiny of Man hangs in the balance – Heaven holds its breath- waiting upon Our Lady's answer.

And she replies – and so must we

'Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum' – 'Be it unto me according to your Word'

As her Son would later teach us, 'Thy will be done' and, in His extremis in Gethsemane, 'Not my will but thine.'

Hail Immaculate Conception – the new Eve.

Hail Mother of Christ – the God-bearer

Hail Ark of the Covenant – pure vessel of The Word.

Hail Queen of Apostles – presenter of God's salvation to the world.

**SPIRITUAL EXERCISE:** Spend three minutes praying for women with child - especially those in difficult circumstances. Make a special gift this Christmas to a charity that cares for them e.g. Aid to the Church in Need (war zones/persecution/refugee camps)Life (fearful with unwanted pregnancy), Mary's Meals ( school meals & education for poor and hungry children) Crisis (homeless).