



Daily Reflections

December 8, 2018

Scripture

Luke 1: 26-38

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

And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you."

But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

Then the angel said to her,

"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus.

He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his Kingdom there will be no end."

But Mary said to the angel,

"How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?"

And the angel said to her in reply,

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.
Therefore the child to be born
will be called holy, the Son of God.
And behold, Elizabeth, your relative,
has also conceived a son in her old age,
and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren;
for nothing will be impossible for God."
Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.
May it be done to me according to your word."

Our Scripture Reflection

As you read today's Gospel text, can you "hear" the profound simplicity of the message? A young, Grace-filled woman confronted by God almighty whose angel carries to her a world-changing message. And the height of the simplicity of this passage is her response: Yes. Let it be done to me according to Your word. With all the prayers, rituals and traditions of our religious experience, especially during this Advent/Christmas season, it must always begin with and remain rooted in one word: Yes.

Food for your Journey

The entire family - several generations - has flown in for Christmas. They rise early and dress in their new holiday outfits. After a morning church service, they open their gifts. It takes two hours, but in the meantime Mother is putting the final touches on the huge dinner featuring everyone's favorite dishes. After the children play with all their new toys, they stack them neatly and help set the table with the best lace tablecloth and the recently polished silver. Dad lights a roaring fire, and then everyone sings carols and sits down to the wonderful feast.

What's wrong with this picture?

To begin with, this festive scene is an ideal for which many strive but which few attain. Even those who do are probably suppressing feelings of exhaustion and worry about impending credit-card bills.

The Bible's picture of Christ's birth in poor and humble circumstances contains basic elements and symbols of the faith: longing and expectation,

the joy of new beginnings, the intimacy of shared belief, the faithfulness of devoted seekers and followers. The simplicity of the manger scene as birthplace is profound. And yet in our culture, these symbols have become twisted and their meaning often turned upside down. Commercialism reigns, and the Advent-Christmas season has become one of panic and purchase instead of calm waiting and culmination.

Most religious people want to reclaim and retain a simple joy and celebration without the hype, yet they are unsure how.

-Linda-Marie Delloff, "Unwrapping Christmas joy."

A Prayer from the Heart

Dear Jesus, This season of preparation for the celebration of Your birth is filled with so many sights and sounds and smells. There is excitement and anxiety and a host of other emotions. However, Lord, may each day of this Advent season begin with one, simple thought: I am here, doing what I do during this season because Your Mother said Yes to God's plan. May I strive this day to do the same. Amen