

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Mar 25th 2014

I have always been struck by the simplicity of the Annunciation story. There is so much drama here, but the story is told in such a straight-forward and direct way that the drama takes second seat to the reality of the situation. It is as if the drama draws back so as to highlight the magnificence of the mystery of the Incarnation.

A young girl is visited with astonishing news and she accepts willingly. God's love visits the earth and the process of redemption goes into warp speed with Mary's yes. Mary says yes to the process seemingly convinced that Gabriel's message, the Lord is with you, was really the only thing that mattered. Yes, she was fearful (she was greatly troubled at what was said) and that fear would not simply disappear when the messenger assured: Do not be afraid, Mary. This would be only the beginning for Mary, the young girl, who would be turned into the woman of faith in her relationship with Christ.

Mary is, to be sure, our model for acceptance and invitation to faithfully respond to the word of God in our lives. Mary's discerning response to Gabriel's announcement models for us our acceptance of God's invitations in our own unique circumstances.

Am I ready? Am I fit for the task? Do I deserve to be in this position? How will it all work out? These and many similar questions, all of which focus on me, pale in comparison to the recognition and the response to the One who calls me. I need, like Mary, to focus not on myself, but on the Lord who calls. And that makes all the difference in the world.

How could Mary, a teenager, respond adequately to the wondrous message she hears as she goes about the daily routines of her life? Gabriel's The Lord is with you is really all that matters. The carrying out of God's call is not due to any strength that Mary possesses of herself (as grand as that may be).

As with Mary, my call is to recognition: that God is with me and to trust in that despite what I see as my failings or any hesitations I may have.

Ultimately, the carrying out of an invitation like the Annunciation to Mary depends only on the YES she said in response to Gabriel: I am the handmaid of the lord. May it be done to me according to your word. The rest is up to God; and that's clearly the most important point of the Annunciation account, and any call/announcement that reaches our ears/hearts.

Tom Shanahan, S.J