

The Annunciation: Luke 1:26-38

Luke 1:26-38

²⁶ In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High,^[a] and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, ³³ and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴ But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?"^[b] ³⁵ 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. ³⁶ And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived^[c] a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; ³⁷ for nothing will be impossible for God." ³⁸ Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

The Angel's Greeting (Luke 1:28)

From the moment Gabriel first speaks to Mary, it is clear there is something unique, not only about the child he will announce, but also about the mother. "Hail, full of grace," he begins indicating that the grace of God has filled her, specially preparing her for the role she will play in his plan. Over time, the Church has grown in awareness of the truth underlying this "fullness of grace"—that Mary was redeemed and preserved free from original sin from the moment of her conception. (CCC 490-491, 722)

1. Read Luke 1:28. The angel's first word to Mary, "Hail" (Gk., *chaire*), literally means "rejoice." The command to rejoice evokes several notable occasions in the Old Testament, where it is used to address "Daughter Zion"—a biblical symbol for the faithful remnant of God's people.

a. Consider the following prophecies, and record the reasons God's people will one day be called to "rejoice."

Zephaniah 3:14-15:

Zechariah 9:9:

"full of Grace": The Immaculate Conception

"Through the centuries the Church has become ever more aware that Mary, 'full of grace' through God (Luke 1:28), was redeemed from the moment of her conception. That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854:

""The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin."

CCC 491; Pius IX, Ineffabilis Deus, 1854: DS 2803.

b. In light of this background, what do you think Gabriel's command to rejoice signals to Mary?

2. Mary is not the first person to hear the assurance that, "The Lord is with you." This expression is frequently used by God (and his angels) to address someone who is called to an important mission. Read the following verses about the call of two Moses and Gideon. Record the missions they are given, the obstacles or fears they face, and what God says in response. Then do the same for the verses related to Mary.

Biblical Character	Mission	Obstacle/fear	God's Assurance
Moses (Exodus 3:10-12)			
Gideon (Judges 6:14-18)			
Mary (Luke 1:28-38)			

b. What similarities do you notice between these three scenes?

c. Given the way the assurance that the Lord will be with you" is used by God and His Angels in the Old Testament, what do you think Gabriel's words, "The Lord is with you," are meant to indicate to Mary?

Mary's Initial Response (Luke 1:29)

3. Read Luke 1:29. On hearing the angel's greeting, Luke tells us that Mary is "greatly troubled." Why do you think she responds this way?

The Mission Revealed (Luke 1:30-37)

Mary may have good reason to be troubled, but the angel reassures her in verse 30 that there is no need to fear, for she has "found favor with God": "The Father blessed Mary more than any other created person 'in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places' and chose her 'in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before him in love" (CCC 492). Cf. Ephesians 1:3-4.

4. The angel reveals Mary's mission in verse 31: "You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus." Mary is to become a mother. But as the angel continues, he makes clear that the child she will bear will not be any ordinary child. Gabriel's words echo the famous promise God made to King David in 2 Samuel 7 to establish an everlasting dynasty through David's descendants.

a. Read 2 Samuel 7:9-16; then review Luke 1:31-33. Record the similar phrases in the box below.

God's Promise to David 2 Samuel 7:9-16		Gabriel's Announcement to Mary Luke 1:32-33	
2 Samuel 7:9		Luke 1:32	
2 Samuel 7:14		Luke 1:32	
2 Samuel 7:13		Luke 1:32	
2 Samuel 7:16		Luke 1:33	

b. How might these Old Testament Scripture passages shed light on what the angel Gabriel is telling Mary about the child she will bear?

5. Read Luke 1:34-35. Awed by the angel's announcement, Mary wonders how it can be true particularly because she is a virgin.

a. How does the angel respond to Mary's question?

b. Catechism Connection: Read CCC 485 and 723. What do these paragraphs add to your understanding?

6. Read verses 36-37. Here, the angel informs Mary of Elizabeth's miraculous pregnancy with John the Baptist. What details are given to Mary about Elizabeth's pregnancy, and how might they strengthen Mary's faith and provide reassurance?

Mary, Servant of the Lord (Luke 1:38)

7. Read verse 38. In response to God's call in her life, Mary refers to herself as a “handmaid of the Lord.” The word for handmaid (*doile*) refers to a servant or slave. Think about what it meant to be a servant. What does Mary’s description of herself as a servant of the Lord and her response, “Let it be [done] to me according to your word,” tell us about how she views her relationship with God?

b. Read Matthew 6:10. How does Mary's response in Luke 1:38 relate to this teaching of Jesus about prayer?

C. Read Luke 22:42. How does Mary's response relate to Jesus' own example?

Mary the Model Disciple

Luke understands Mary as the model disciple that we must imitate. What qualities of discipleship does she exhibit in the Annunciation?

D. Application

After considering the question for reflection, commit to respond to God in a practical way and then close with prayer.

Reflect Mary's example challenges us to examine how we live our lives. Do we truly seek God's plan for our lives, like Mary, or do we pursue our own plans, interests, desires, and comforts? Mary does not live for herself, but for God, and her example invites us to do the same.

Commit What are some practical ways you can live your relationship with God more like Mary does—as a servant of the Lord? Each day, we should ask God what he wants for our lives—in our marriages, in our families, in our friendships, in our work, in our moral lives, and most important of all, in our relationship with him. Write down one thing you can do this week, and determine to do it with God's help.

Pray Making a prayer of surrender, of submitting our lives to God's plan like Mary does, is something we should do at various points in our lives. Here is one prayer written by St. Ignatius of Loyola.

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all I have and call my own. You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours; do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace, that is enough for me.