

Tomorrow, March 25 is recognized on the church calendar as *The Annunciation of our Lord*. Falling exactly nine months before Christmas we recall the announcement of the angel to Mary, "*Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.*" (Lk. 1) This is the moment of the incarnation, for Mary did conceive within her womb the very Son of God. As a newly formed fetus in the womb Jesus had taken on flesh and blood and had become a man.

It is notable that we observe the bodily incarnation of God during the season of Lent. The Passion of Christ brings into focus the purpose of His bodily presence among us. The second reading for the *Annunciation* is from Hebrews 10: "*Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me. ... we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*" Christ took on the body of a man so that He might be sacrificed on the cross to make us holy.

Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary so that He might suffer under Pontius Pilate, be crucified, and die. Our Lenten observation takes us on this journey with Jesus from the womb to the tomb. Offered up to God as a sacrifice for the sin of the world was more than a "spiritual" sacrifice and more than an animal sacrifice; it was the sacrifice of the body of Christ, God's own Son. Likewise, the resurrection of Christ is a physical, bodily resurrection from the dead.

Although unseen, Christ is bodily present among us. We receive the sacrificed and victorious body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper. We have the promise that He is with us always to the end of the age. With His body He has redeemed us in both body and soul. With our bodies we also serve Him. As St. Paul says, *You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.* (1 Cor. 6:19-20) With sanctified lives we offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, because of the blood of Christ.