

Reflection for March 25, 2020, the Solemnity of the Annunciation

Readings: Is 7:10-14; Heb 10:4-10; Lk 1:26-38

As we celebrate today the Solemnity of the Annunciation, we must also keep firmly in mind that today is the celebration of the Incarnation of the Son of God. We hear about this in the second reading where St. Paul speaks of our Lord receiving a body to fulfill the sacrifices and offerings the Jewish people had been making for centuries. Recall that the sacrifices of the Jewish people were an imitation of what Moses saw on Mount Sinai. The worship of Heaven, which Moses saw, included the sacrifice of a lamb. St. John saw this same mystery as he recounts in the Book of Revelation.

What our Lord did in taking a human nature to Himself, was to bring the worship of Heaven to earth. The sacrifice which will be celebrated for eternity in Heaven is now able to be celebrated on earth. This is not a mere imitation as Moses had been commanded to do, but it is a true participation in the worship of Heaven. Jesus is the Lamb of sacrifice both in Heaven and on earth. The reception of a body gave Him the ability to offer Himself as a sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins and for the infusion of sanctifying grace into our souls. Even more, His sacrifice at Mass allows us to receive Him into our own self and have true union with Him now as we prepare for that blessed union with Him in eternity.

The Incarnation is the express will of Almighty God. It is prophesied in several places in the Old Testament, but there is one condition. Since Jesus is both divine and human, God made it necessary that this greatest of all miracles would require not only the divine willing of the Incarnation, but also the freely chosen assent of a human person. In order for this to happen, God created a human woman who would be His Mother. She was given many special graces which allowed her to give her consent, but it had to be a free act of the will, that is, she was not forced in any way to make her choice.

What this means is that not only is the Incarnation of the Son of God dependent on Mary, but also everything that follows from the Incarnation. The Passion, death, and resurrection could not have taken place if Mary had not said "yes" to the Angel. This means without our Lady's free assent to the invitation of God, we would be neither saved nor redeemed. Jesus alone is the Redeemer, but that redemption is completely dependent on the Blessed Virgin Mary.

There are many beautiful paintings of the scene of the Annunciation, but we have to look deeper at what happened that day. Beyond thinking about the Archangel Gabriel coming to our Lady and the conversation that ensued, we need to look deeper into the soul of our Blessed Mother. What we see displayed before us in this mysterious moment of the Annunciation is the faith, humility, and charity of our Blessed lady. The invitation did not make sense on the natural level; Mary had to make an act of faith. She did not see herself as being worthy, yet her humility allowed her to receive what God wanted to give her, in this case, Himself! Her charity overflowed in her love for God and in her love for us who, from that moment forward would become her children, to be willing to accept the Incarnation and everything that would follow from it. She knew the Messiah would have to suffer and die, but she was still willing to do what no mother would ever want: to have to assent to the death of her own child.

Jesus came into this world for the purpose of dying. Mary was given the grace not only to believe that, since all things are possible for God, the Lord Himself could become Incarnate in her virginal womb, but that her maternity would not be merely for the life of her Child, but for the death of her Child and for the life of her children who would believe in her Son. Like Mary, we too must believe that all things are

possible for God, even the forgiveness of our sins, the salvation of our souls, and the eternal life gained for us by the One Who is both Son of God and Son of Mary. When we wonder if God really loves us, bring yourself back to the moment of the Incarnation and reflect on the exchange between the Archangel and our Lady. Then beg God for the faith, humility, and charity to accept His love knowing that all things are possible for God.