

25 March, Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord

A Biblical Reflection by Fr Kevin Walsh, Sydney, Australia 2024

Isaiah 7:10-14, 8:10 Hebrews 10:4-10 Luke 1:26-38

PREPARE:

For this time of reflection and prayer, we invite you to find a comfortable position, light a candle if you wish and become aware of your breathing. When you are ready, slowly read the scripture reading and pause when you are drawn to stop and reflection on what you have read. Write down your thought and feeling to ponder on these later.

Life is filled with surprises! We hear of people who win millions of \$'s in Lotto, dig up a magnificent opal on their property while excavating to build a dam, or a surprise unexpected visit from a special friend whom you have not seen for years!

Today's Feast is filled to the brim with importance, spiritual meaning, and positive action!

Here we see Mary, a woman of marriageable age with a most unexpected Messenger! The story is not an ordinary one; it is totally extraordinary. Let's go deep sea diving into it.

Firstly, Mary belonged to a Group of Jews whom we call the Anawim, meaning *'the poor of the Lord.'*



We are not talking about people who live on the breadline; no, people who hungered and longed for the fulfillment of the Lord God's Promises were these people. That promise was best articulated in Jeremiah 31:31-34.....*'See, the days are coming, it is the Lord who speaks, which I will make a New Covenant with my people, writing it on their hearts.'* Then of course we have the classical quote from today's Liturgy of the Word from the Prophet Isaiah. Namely, that the new deed of the Lord God will be manifested through the birth of a

child, whose name will be Wonder Counsellor, Prince of Peace; the Emmanuel, God is with us.'

Notice the human elements in this story? We can easily relate to them too because some of this has already happened in us and to us.

Nazareth was not a bustling city; it was a little Village in the Country. Mary, an ordinary young person, with solid faith, was truly human in her expressions and way of life. When the unexpected Messenger came into her house, she was startled and frightened. The closeness of the Lord God filled the room. We have had experiences like that too!

I'm sure that we have felt unworthy, surprised, and frightened when this has happened to us. Being frightened when God comes close to us, is a normal reaction. The Scriptures, the lives of the Saints, and the stories in our own life prove that.

In this Gospel story, we see Mary faced with a seemingly impossible dream! Yet, when the chips are down in God's plan, the impossible becomes possible.

After hearing the extraordinary news about the plan of God for her, we see that Mary's Cousin is also experiencing the impossible made possible with her pregnancy!

Mary's response to the Angel came about through her Biblical Spirituality, which was not only part of her DNA, but active in her life. Her profound yet simple response was **'Yes'** let it happen to me!

Now, Mary's yes did not lead her to daydream about all the possibilities and struggles that might come to her! No, her immediate response was towards her ageing pregnant cousin. So, Mary travelled over the Hills and through the valleys to minister to her cousin Elizabeth.

This passage is the simple yet grand opening to the new deed that the Lord God was going to do and is doing today!

Let's look at its application for us today! George Michael, the British Pop singer has a song saying, *'you've gotta have faith, faith, faith!'* We need to define what we mean by **Biblical Faith**. Scripture Faith is the gift and the ability to see the saving hand of God *'alive'* in the here and now! Faith has a lot to do with *'Seeing.'* In order to see with the eyes of faith, we can't do it on the run. We must gaze into the circumstances of our daily life to be able to SEE the saving hand of Jesus. That in itself is an INVITATION! It is the Spirit within us, as it was with Mary, for us to say **'yes'** it is the Lord!

Finally, in the Gospel reading after Easter, when doubting Thomas is called by the Risen Lord, to put his fingers into the cavity wound in His side, and into the holes that the nails made in his hands; then his YES to the Lord was: **'My Lord and my God!'**

I'm sure that this is our response too.....

