

Day Two

1. **Place yourself in God's presence**
2. **Ask Him for the grace you seek:** *to acquire knowledge of yourself and sorrow for your sins.*
3. **Today's Meditation:**

And the angel departed from her (Luke 1:38).

St. Luke concludes his narration of St. Gabriel's announcement to Mary by stating, "And the angel departed from her." These are probably not the most commonly used words for a meditation on Mary's *faith*, and yet I think they offer a wealth of truth. New depths of understanding are only afforded to those who make the effort in finding them. With the help of God's grace, the light of the Holy Spirit, and brilliance of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, we can rise to the occasion.

Pope Benedict XVI, reflecting on the moment Gabriel departs from Mary presence, writes,

"The great hour of Mary's encounter with God's messenger—in which her whole life is changed—comes to an end, and she remains there alone, with a task that truly surpasses all human capacity. There are no angels standing around her. She must continue along the path that leads to many dark moments—from Joseph's dismay at her pregnancy, to the moment when Jesus is said to be out of his mind (cf. Mark 3:21; John 10:20) right up to the night of the cross.

How often in these situations must Mary have returned inwardly to the hour when God's angel had spoken to her, pondering afresh the greeting: *Rejoice, full of grace!* And the consoling words: *Do not be afraid!*

The angel departs; her mission remains, and with it matures her inner closeness to God, a closeness that in her heart she is able to see and touch (*Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives*)."

Mary is the Mother of God, but that does not mean she shared in God's omniscience (perfect divine knowledge). She was a woman of *faith*. She was called to live every moment of her life in *faith*. God chose to do "great things" in her, but that did not make it easy on her. As Pope Benedict said, how often in the course of her life with Christ, Mary must have "returned inwardly" to that moment when the angel departed from her. Think about it. An angel bursts onto the scene of her ordinary day. This messenger of God greets *her*. He, the one sent from heaven, reverences *her*. He who is a pure angelic spirit calls *her* "full of grace". He, the one sent from God's throne, affirms that the Lord is with *her*. And if that was not enough, He invites *her* to be the virgin-mother of the Savior, the Son of God, the New King of David.

And the moment she gives her assent to the marvelous announcement, he departs. Mary is left alone. Everything goes back to the way it was moments before. Mary is alone. There is silence in Nazareth. There is silence in her home. There is silence. What comes next?

Faith. As Pope Benedict writes, "the angel departs; her mission remains, and with it matures her inner closeness to God, a closeness that in her heart she is able to see and touch." How? Through faith. It is faith that she sends her quickly to assist Elizabeth in her final months of pregnancy. It is faith that consoles her as Joseph himself tries to grasp his bride's new pregnancy. It is faith that strengthens her that holy night when neither she nor Joseph can find a fitting place for her Son's birth. It is faith that sweetens Simeon's announcement of her suffering in union with Son. The litany could go on. In all these moments that follow the annunciation, there is no angel there to confirm

God's will. Mary is alone; and yet at the same time she is not. Through *faith* Mary discovers God's closeness—not one she can touch physical, but spiritually—one that is only discoverable through faith.

At every moment in her life's litany of faith she does not know how God's will is going to play out, and yet she assents to it with the confidence that the One who called her will bring it to fruition. It is in Mary's faith that we glimpse her humanity, and it is equally from her faith that we too must learn how to give our own response to the God who wants to do "great things" in our lives as well.

So, consider these questions as a means of examining your own life of faith:

Is my worldview one of faith? Does the vision of faith touch every aspect of my life as it did in Mary's? Is the strength of my faith dependent on circumstances or is it constant? Is it strong when things go well? Does it grow weak in the midst of suffering? Do I have a sentimental faith or is it truly spiritual? Do I have the courage to echo Mary's *fiat* at every turn on this road of life? Or do I place limits to my confidence in God and His will? Where is one place in my life that I can stop trying to control the situation and surrender it in faith to God?

- Today's Prayer -

*HAIL, O Star of the ocean,
God's own Mother blest,
ever sinless Virgin,
gate of heav'nly rest.*

*Taking that sweet Ave,
which from Gabriel came,
peace confirm within us,
changing Eve's name.*

*Break the sinners' fetters,
make our blindness day,
Chase all evils from us,
for all blessings pray.*

*Show thyself a Mother,
may the Word divine*

*born for us thine Infant
bear our prayers through thine.*

*Virgin all excelling,
mildest of the mild,
free from guilt preserve us
meek and undefiled.*

*Keep our life all spotless,
make our way secure
till we find in Jesus,
joy for evermore.*

*Praise to God the Father,
honor to the Son,
in the Holy Spirit,
be the glory one. Amen.*