

Annunciation of the Lord (Vespers II) – 3/25/2020

At the heart of today's Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord, 9 months before Christmas, is the Blessed Virgin Mary's *fiat*, her reply to the revelation of God's plan brought to her by the angel Gabriel, "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word."

Removed by many years from this pivotal moment in salvation history, we tend to picture it as many great painters, musicians, sculptors, poets and other artists have so magnificently portrayed it – an encounter distinguished by beauty, serenity, and trusting faith.

Consider how those few generous phrases changed Mary's life. She opened herself to the marvels the Lord could do, to how the Lord could build upon and magnify her own natural, God-given gifts. She also opened herself to uncertainty, to worry and fear, to watching her beloved only Son stalked by enemies who sought to take his life, and ultimately, to the sword that pierced her heart, his Passion and Death and burial. Only by passing through all this did she become the first witness to the Resurrection, the greatest disciple of the Lord, the Mother of His Church.

Mary had been exceptionally prepared, of course, from the moment of her conception, to make this response – she was preserved from the rebelliousness of original sin. Every baptized Christian should remember that they have died and risen with Christ in Baptism, which washed away original sin and all sin, and introduced us to a new way of life as His disciples.

Together with our brothers and sisters around the globe, believers and nonbelievers alike, we are passing through a time of deep uncertainty, worry and fear – feeling stalked by illness and death. We do so, though, as disciples of Christ, and in the season of Lent, when we are preparing to renew the promises of our Baptism. We can and will and should do this, even if on Easter Sunday we are praying in our own homes, perhaps in the company of those to whom we are closest, perhaps joined to a larger community of faith by electronic media.

The Blessed Virgin Mary is acclaimed on this feast only because she remained faithful as a disciple of her Son. Through the Church, through our Baptism, we have been prepared for and summoned to the same perseverance, expressed through the particular vocation to which the Lord has called each of us. Following Christ, even when we are uncertain or fearful, is always salutary, always the way of health and salvation and life, in this world and into the next. Through our prayer together this evening, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, may the Lord grant us this grace.