

## **Annunciation 2019**

IS 7:10-14; 8:10; HEB 10:4-10; LK 1:26-38

Today we celebrate a new beginning - an event that brought about a new era. Today we celebrate the day when God the Son took on flesh in the womb of Mary - with this event God began to live among us as one of us - the important first step that would lead to Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, and resurrection from the dead, that we will celebrate in a couple of weeks. If there was no body, there could be no sacrifice and death on the cross, if there was no body to be resurrected then we would not have that glorified Body to join to for our own salvation. This day truly represents a new beginning for all people - an event which transcends barriers of race, or background, or situation.

When calendars began to count the years from the coming of Christ (that is started numbering years as BC and AD), this day was originally assigned to be New Years day. This was done to indicate that God coming to us in the flesh at the Annunciation creates a new beginning. Each time we come to this day we have the chance to see what can be new, to see what new creation God may bring. Mary certainly wasn't sure about what God was doing on that day more than 2000 years ago. She trusted God, but was not sure how God could do what was being proposed - she could not see how such a thing was possible - she says: *How can this be?* We all can get to a point of asking God "how can this be," or wondering of God "how can you possibly do this?" - "will this ever be better?" But God brings about healing, resolution, and things that others may have thought were impossible. God has done this through history - a universe is created out of nothing, elderly woman give birth, impossible diseases are cured, a virgin becomes pregnant with the incarnated God, a man is raised from the dead. The angel's response to Mary tells us all we need to know about how God does this: *The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.* We can be led to despair when we look only to our resources, only to what is possible to humans, only what we can understand for the solutions to our problems. It is in our opening to the power of God, it is saying to God "Fiat" - "Let it be done" from our heart - that we begin to stand aside enough so that God can achieve what we think is impossible.

We sometimes have to let go of the things we have clung to for control in order to take this step, and this can be scary. Mary too had to step into the unknown. She could have played it safe and held on to her fears, she could have said to God "find someone else, this is too scary," she could have locked herself into ways of thinking that placed a barrier to God - but she does

not - she gives her "Fiat" she does not demand explanations, she does not waffle, she does not expect God to do things to her satisfaction before she agrees. It is in this abandoning our own way that the way to another path is opened. In our second reading we heard that after Jesus says: *Behold, I come to do your will* to the Father that things start to happen. It was this letting go of human pride and willfulness that allowed a positive change and that cleared the way for God to take away what was there to establish something new.

In this parish we have been on a journey over the last several years - journey that continues to go on. In today's feast we can see the reality of what happened when *the virgin [came to be] with child, and [began to bear] a son, [whose] name [is] Emmanuel, which means "God is with us!"* Can we recognize how much God has been with us as we have moved on the ups and downs of this journey? Perhaps we can see that when a Man called Joseph could agree to enter into a union that he was worried about, when a young woman named Mary could agree to be part of something bigger than herself, when the power of the Holy Spirit entered into that situation of confusion bringing the Divine presence that becomes Jesus - in this event a wonderful reality is formed. In the courage of Joseph, the trust and openness of Mary, in the beating heart of Jesus Christ in her womb - all united by the power of the Holy Spirit - God begins the movement to the act that ultimately saves the world. As a parish let us celebrate and be glad that we are so uniquely positioned to give witness to that great event.