

## 4th Sunday of Advent

The angel Gabriel was sent from God  
to a town of Galilee called Nazareth,  
to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph,  
of the house of David,  
and the virgin's name was Mary.  
And coming to her, he said,  
"Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you."  
But she was greatly troubled at what was said  
and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.  
Then the angel said to her,  
"Do not be afraid, Mary,  
for you have found favor with God.

"Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son,  
and you shall name him Jesus.  
He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High,  
and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father,  
and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever,  
and of his kingdom there will be no end."  
But Mary said to the angel,  
"How can this be,  
since I have no relations with a man?"  
And the angel said to her in reply,  
"The Holy Spirit will come upon you,  
and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.  
Therefore the child to be born  
will be called holy, the Son of God.  
And behold, Elizabeth, your relative,  
has also conceived a son in her old age,  
and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren;  
for nothing will be impossible for God."  
Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.  
May it be done to me according to your word."  
Then the angel departed from her.

*Lk 1:26-38*

How do you really know somebody? When we are waiting for the meeting with God, this question keeps coming back: How would we know him?

If he were human, there are different ways of making sure that somebody is who he says he is. If you really want to know a human being, you need to meet him when he is doing something personal. You need to meet him when he or she takes down her defenses, or even more importantly, when this person offers the most precious gift to somebody he or she loves the most. That moment, if you are ever invited to such level of intimacy, reveals this person completely. It's unforgettable.

In the last step leading to the mystery of Incarnation, God invites us to witness such a moment.

He wants us to be present when he asks Mary, his chosen handmaid (as she herself describes her life) to be the mother of his beloved son. He wants us to witness himself in the most vulnerable moment, when the almighty creator of the stars waits for the answer of his beloved creature.

He prepared this moment to the last detail. Mary has been protected from sin even before her birth. She is placed in the middle of the beloved nation, a nation guided by angels and prophets, to be ready when the Son comes. She is safely tucked in the remote corner of the world, protected by the ancient tradition of her faith. Everything is ready. The message itself is delivered by an angel as a conversation, to not allow any stain of fear or misunderstanding to destroy her freedom of expression. "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you."

Mary's answer, when it comes, is neither pre-arranged by Him nor coerced in any way. The vulnerability of God is answered with the complete trust of Mary. "I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to thy word."

After the amazing prophecy of John the Baptist, after the Word of God becomes present among us through the mouth of the prophet, the next step is even more surprising. New words are spoken, and they perfectly express God's intention and the human answer. They are so true that they express the greatest miracle, happening under their protection: God becomes man, although nobody can see it yet. Mary is the perfect temple of the Lord, although nobody can even guess it yet.

God wants us to know him very well so he asks us to pay attention. He wants us to understand his way of speaking. He wants us to receive his proposition of friendship into our lives. He is the true friend who offers to us the greatest joy of his life.