



Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish

Advent Retreat - Week One

Guided Reflection on the Annunciation (Luke 1:26-45)

Adapted from Jane Ayer's *A Quiet Place Apart*

The Annunciation to Mary begins our preparation for the coming of Jesus among us. We invite you to pray with the Advent Gospels; as you pray with this Gospel be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image or any feeling that emerges.

As I enter into prayer:

I allow my spirit to rest a little and consider where I am going and for what purpose.

I make a gesture of reverence and humility.

I ask for the grace to direct my whole self towards Mary.

I desire to find delight and meaning in this Scripture.

Read the Scripture slowly.

Be with Gabriel, Mary and Elizabeth as the scene unfolds.

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, '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 holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

Mary Visits Elizabeth

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leapt for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.'

After praying with this Scripture:

- ✦ What phrase, words or image stood out, what meaning does this have in my life?
- ✦ Surprising calls can evoke fears and questioning, leading to a desire for a sign before saying yes. Have I ever had that experience?
- ✦ In my prayer I ask for Mary's freedom and openness to God's surprising ways? Could my fears get in the way of a generous response to God?

Closing Prayer:

Lord, open my heart, so that I may see You as You come,
help me to hear Your voice among the many that clamor for my attention.
Help me to hear You even in the silence.
Amen.