Annunciation
Questions for Reflection

Luke 1:26-38

It is said that St. Luke is an artist with words, that he paints a portrait in words that draws us into the event. Read Luke 1:26-38 and be with it, allowing yourself to be drawn into the portrait. Be with Mary when the Angel comes to her. Experience the passage as though you were present. Hear the Angel’s message to Mary and her response. Speak to Mary. Ask her how she feels as she hears the Angel’s invitation. Let her talk to you about her prayer, about her confidence in God. Ask her to help you grow your trust in God.

Questions for Reflection

Despite the seeming impossibility of the Angel’s message, Mary demonstrated her faith and trust in God by her acceptance of God’s invitation. Do I say “yes” to God in the small, everyday situations of my life? When the yes is hard, do I ask God for the grace to respond to his call?

We are all challenged to help make flesh the Word of God. How do I respond to that invitation? In what ways do I help birth Jesus into the world?

Where are the places I have difficulty saying yes to God? How can Mary help me in those places?

Matthew 1:18-25

How many people, having such a dream, would attribute it to imagination, or to a badly digested dinner interfering with his sleep? How many would have believed that Mary’s pregnancy was not the result of sin? How many would have been willing to endure the snickers of the other young men in town at taking Mary into his home?

Joseph was obviously a man of strong faith, tremendous faith. He believed in God’s plan and so cooperates in it. He takes Mary in, and not unwillingly, but with love, allowing Jesus to be born into a family environment. He trusted God and worked to see God’s plan fulfilled.

Reflect on this passage from Matthew’s Gospel, and on what we learn from this man who was chosen to be the guardian father of Jesus.
A Poem of the Annunciation

Annunciation, by Denise Levertov

‘Hail, space for the uncontained God’
*From the Agathistos Hymn, Greece, VIC*

We know the scene: the room, variously furnished,
almost always a lectern, a book; always the tall lily.
Arrived on solemn grandeur of great wings,
the angelic ambassador, standing or hovering,
whom she acknowledges, a guest.

But we are told of meek obedience.
No one mentions courage.
The engendering Spirit did not enter her without consent.
God waited.
She was free to accept or to refuse,
Choice integral to humanness.

Aren’t there annunciations of one sort or another
in most lives?
Some unwillingly undertake great destinies,
enact them in sullen pride, uncomprehending.
More often
those moments when roads of light and storm
open from darkness in a man or woman,
are turned away from
in dread, in a wave of weakness, in despair
and with relief.
Ordinary lives continue.
God does not smite them.
But the gates close, the pathway vanishes.

She had been a child who played, ate, slept
like any other child – but unlike others,
wept only for pity, laughed
in joy not triumph.
Compassion and intelligence
fused in her, indivisible.

Called to a destiny more momentous
than any in all of Time,
she did not quail, only asked
a simple, 'How can this be?'
and gravely, courteously,
took to heart the angel’s reply,
perceiving instantly
the astounding ministry she was offered:

to bear in her womb
Infinite weight and lightness; to carry
in hidden, finite inwardness,
nine months of Eternity; to contain
in slender vase of being,
the sum of power –
in narrow flesh,
the sum of light.
Then bring to birth,
push out into air, a Man-child
needing, like any other,
milk and love –

but who was God.

This was the minute no one speaks of,
where she could still refuse.

A breath unbreathed,
Spirit,
suspended,
waiting.

She did not cry, “I cannot, I am not worthy,”
nor “I have not the strength.”
She did not submit with gritted teeth, raging, coerced.
Bravest of all humans,
consent illumed her.
The room filled with its light,
the lily glowed in it,
and the iridescent wings.
Consent,
courage unparalleled,
opened her utterly.