

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Apr 8th 2024

I am the handmaid of the Lord (v. 38a).

We celebrate the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord. In the Gospel account, one must never forget that the evangelist Luke did not give an eyewitness account of the event. Luke attempts to present Mary as the favoured one of God – or the beloved of God – and how God reveals his plan to his beloved and her willingness to accept the plan of God

In Nazareth, they called her Mary; in Heaven, she was known as the Beloved of God – that’s how the angel addresses her. Gospel gives her a third name, which the Christian community identified her with: the Servant of the Lord.

In the Gospel, Luke presents Mary calling herself as the Handmaid – the servant of God. This title does not mean— “a humble servant,” but it is a title of supreme honour. The authors of the Old Testament books reserved this title for the great men who were faithful to God (this title was never given to a woman). Samuel, David, the prophets, and the priests in the temple who night and day bless God (Ps 134:1-2) were all called “servants of the Lord”. Whenever the Old Testament mentioned the name of Moses, the sacred author often added the title: “servant of the Lord.”

It is unlikely that Mary attributed to herself such a high title, although nobody deserved it more than she did. It is more likely that the early Christian community—chose this biblical title to qualify her, and Luke, while writing the Gospel, has put it on her lips.

Then comes her famous response: Let it be done to me as you have said (v. 38b). It does not mean a resigned consent to the message of the angel. Instead, it expresses a joyful desire. On the lips of Mary, it reveals her anxiety to see the plan of the Lord realized in her.

Where God enters, joy always comes. The story, beginning with the call, ‘rejoice’, ends with the joyful exclamation of the Virgin ‘let it be done’. No one in the likes of David, Nathan, Solomon, or the kings of Israel had understood God’s plan; They all had high ambitions and expected God to fulfil their dreams. Mary does not behave like them; she has not put any of her personal dreams or projects before God. She only asked him to show the role he intends to entrust her clearly. After having understood, she joyfully welcomed his will.

With the announcement of his coming into the world—he reminds us that he cannot be happy in heaven without us.

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