

March is the month of the Feast of the Annunciation. That's why the first Saturday in March of Jubilee 2025 takes place at the **shrine of Loreto** in Italy, the place where the house of Nazareth was miraculously transported. This first Saturday of the month is therefore an opportunity to meditate on the Annunciation. The Annunciation is the first mystery of the Rosary, and not by chance. Indeed, the Rosary is the praise of the work of Redemption, and this Redemption is about to begin on earth at this precise moment of the angel's announcement, followed by Mary's "yes".



Before we turn to the scene itself, we need to consider a first astonishing fact. At the Annunciation, God does not come to impose His will on the Blessed Virgin. God comes to **ask** Her if She accepts to be the Mother of God. "*But, to add to the glory and merit of His Mother, He [God] did not wish to become her Son, without first obtaining her consent,*" explains Saint Alphonsus Liguori. What an unfathomable mystery it is that God, all-powerful, creator and master of Heaven and Earth, should decide to rely on the decision of a humble virgin, whether or not to save the human race! This is the mystery of our freedom, willed by God.

This freedom has nothing to do with the modernist view that we can do whatever we want. True freedom is in fact a great responsibility. It allows us to choose God or, on the contrary, to turn away from Him. We might ask ourselves why God gave us this freedom. Wouldn't it have been simpler just to take us to Heaven without giving us a choice? That's forgetting an essential notion: God is Love. Just as He created us in His image, we too must Love. In fact, this is the first commandment: You shall love your God with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind. But Love in essence requires freedom. Without freedom, Love is impossible. To Love God, we must be free to Love Him... or not. Adam and Eve's sin was the result of this misuse of freedom, which plunged the human race into chaos. To repair this misuse of our freedom, we needed a new free act which, on the contrary, fully adhered to God's will. Mary's free "yes" was needed to make up for Adam and Eve's "no"

Let us now enter the house of Nazareth. The Blessed Virgin is praying, as she so often does. Suddenly, the Angel Gabriel appears and gives her the great greeting. Let's take a look at the deference and respect with which he addresses her. Although he is an Angel of Heaven coming in all his magnificence, he stoops and prostrates himself. This should make us reflect on our own attitude towards the Blessed Virgin. We are only human beings. Let's not be overly familiar with our Queen of Heaven, as if she were a friend. Of course the Blessed Virgin wants us to be close to her and to love her as her children. But familiarity is not love. To love someone is first to get to know them. And the more we get to know Our Lady, the more she commands our respect, admiration and veneration. And the smaller we feel before her. So let's pray to our heavenly Mother as her children, yes, but while meditating on the Angel Gabriel's respect for her.

After the angel's greeting, Our Lady's first reaction was to be troubled. But why? Saint Alphonsus de Liguori explains that it wasn't the angel's magnificence that troubled her. It was the honor bestowed upon her that upset her profound humility: "*This disturbance was caused by her humility, hearing praise so contrary to the unfavorable opinion she had of herself. So the more she heard the angel exalt her, the more she lowered herself and concentrated on the idea of her own nothingness. (...) She was troubled, for being full of humility she abhorred all personal praise, and desired that her Creator and benefactor alone should be praised and blessed.*"

The angel had to reassure her. So the Blessed Virgin pulls herself together and begins to use the intelligence God has given her to try and understand on a natural level: how is this humanly possible? There is no refusal in her question, no expression of doubt, no pride, but a legitimate quest to try and understand the truth announced. But as soon as the Angel explains that this is the will of Almighty God, outside the natural framework, his faith immediately takes over from his intelligence and he accepts God's will. This is a wonderful example of the balance between faith and reason. In our spiritual life, we must neglect neither. But in the end, it is our humble faith that must express itself when the limits of our intelligence are reached. We'll come back to faith in our meditation on the resurrection.

Back to Mary. From now on, the fate of the world hangs on her decision, and Saint Alphonsus de Liguori describes this moment in marvellous detail: "*My sovereign, the angel awaits your answer, we all await it, we who are already condemned to death. If you accept him as your Son, we shall be delivered from death at once. The more your Lord falls in love with your beauty, the more he desires your consent, according to which he has resolved to save the world. Make haste, my sovereign, respond, no longer delay the salvation of the world, which now depends on your consent.*"

Then will come the most beautiful and important words in the history of the world: "*Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word.*" Here, the Blessed Virgin makes a supreme act of faith. It would be the same act of faith she would make thirty-three years later, on Holy Saturday, when she would not doubt her Son's imminent resurrection. Yes, she is the very example of a faith that moves mountains. And her faith did much more than move mountains: it enabled the Son of God to open Heaven to us. To achieve such perfection, which changed the course of history, we must ask ourselves: what is Mary's secret? The answer always lies in her perfect humility. St. Alphonsus de Liguori explains: "*She had just received from the angel the news that she was this happy chosen Mother of the Lord. But She does not esteem herself any more for this, She does not stop to indulge in her elevation; seeing on the one hand her own nothingness, and on the other the infinite majesty of her God, who chooses her for His Mother She recognizes herself unworthy of such an honor, but She does not want to oppose His will.*" Man has fallen because of pride. You will be like gods. At this very moment, the Blessed Virgin will make amends for this sin of pride with a perfect act of humility. And thanks to this, the Heart of God will join the Heart of Mary to carry out its work of Mercy and save the human race, cut off from God until then.

Alas, more than two thousand years later, our modern world has once again fallen into unprecedented hubris. The power of new technologies and globalization give the world's great and good the impression of having become like gods. Satan reigns supreme. Yet God has not abandoned us, and has sent us **the means of salvation** for our time: devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, as requested at Fatima. We are today as we were at Cana, but this time it's God who tells us: **do what she tells you**. And at Fatima Our Lady told us what to do: recite your rosary and do it on the 1st Saturday of the month. For 100 years, God has been waiting for our own "Fiat". God has been waiting for our act of faith and humility, like Our Lady's on the day of the Annunciation.

It's high time to respond. Let's be that small "**army of the humble**" that follows Our Lady's requests. She doesn't need a crowd of people, many of whom don't want to listen or obey, and imagine they can save the world with their own spiritual recipes. She encouraged us at La Salette: "*Fight, all you few who see*". Is this small number a sign of weakness? During the apparitions of the Sacred Heart at Paray Le Monial, Saint Marguerite-Marie also worried about her smallness in the face of her mission. Our Lord replied, "*And what, don't you know that I use the weakest to confound the strongest?*" So let's not be afraid. In the face of the pride of the sons of Lucifer, let us clothe ourselves in the humility of the children of Mary. In the face of the disobedience of this apostate world, let us be perfectly obedient to the demands of Fatima. Only by doing so, will we allow the Blessed Virgin to intervene as She promised: "*In the end, My Immaculate Heart will triumph (...) and the world will be given a certain time of peace.*"

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