

The Annunciation of the Lord – 2026 Year A

Isaiah 7:10-14; 8:10c; Psalm 40 (39); Hebrews 10:4-10; Luke 1:26-38

When God speaks to Mary, through an angel, he begins by saying ‘Rejoice, O highly favoured one, the Lord is with you!’ Mary is chosen. She is greeted as one who is set apart for a great task, by God himself. God is with you. God’s presence rests upon you. God has visited you and set you apart! The angel then responds to Mary’s perplexity and awe with the words,

“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.”

Now it is nine months before Christmas, when the natural human term for a pregnancy is over, and Jesus will enter the world. God has chosen Mary so that His Son may enter the world as a human being, born of woman, fully man yet whose Father is God, and therefore fully God. True God and true Man as the Creed says.

It is true that this emphasis on Mary as mother is given, perhaps preponderantly, in an understanding of Jesus as fully human. He is not just a spirit. He is not God in control of a human body, or clothed in flesh. He is man in mind and body. The angel is the messenger of the miraculous: God is in control; he has determined to enter into the world of flesh with His divinity.

But it is Mary I want to linger with. I am reading a little book by Peter Khan entitled ‘*Behold your Mother*’. The author recounts how, a few years after Vatican II, an elderly gentleman recounted to him how one day a priest entered the pulpit, held up a rosary and announced. “We don’t need this anymore”.¹

Needless to say, the author disagrees with this priest. I disagree with him.² I think that we need to return to the Rosary more than ever. And we need to pray it when we can, together. We need to pray together because our Lord calls us into communion, not just at Mass, but in our whole life of prayer. Why? Simply because it is a *living out* of our love for God and neighbour. Jesus says it very explicitly in Matthew’s Gospel Chapter 18:20: ‘*For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.*’

But why the Rosary? Because it is particularly powerful form of prayer. It is powerful because Satan hates Mary, he even hates Mary more than he hates Jesus, because Mary said yes to God, fully and completely and let Jesus enter into the world through herself. She was a weak human girl with a such humility that she said ‘*Behold, I am the servant of the Lord, let it be to me according to your word.*’ It is no wonder that the devil hates her above all creatures. And it is for this reason that she should be most dearly loved by us, as our Spiritual mother. Many saints have known this: the Cure of Ars, Pope St John Paul the Second, Maximillian Kolbe, Faustina, Mother Theresa of Calcutta, Bernadette, The Children of Fatima. Did I say many saints? I meant

¹ Kahn, Peter, *Behold your Mother*, CTS London 2023. P.7

² Perhaps he is a Cardinal, or at least a Bishop by now.

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to say, as far as I can tell, all the Saints had a deep devotion to the Blessed Virgin along with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

The rosary is the Gospel of Jesus with a Marian flavour – I think that is what St John Paul the Second said. Yes, it allows us to accompany Jesus through the heart of Mary. ‘Hail Mary full of grace...’³ repeated over and over. Prayers, like gentle waves eroding a hardened cliff face of my soul. The rosary is a focus of our prayers to lift up our souls to heaven. The rosary is like an exercise routine that strengthens our hearts to say ‘yes’ to God, just like Mary did. The rosary should wind through our hearts and minds, giving us refuge from temptation, and a sword for spiritual battle. I often imagine that I am sitting beside Mary as she prays, and as she watches Jesus, waiting to act on his commands. On Monday I drove the three hours to Walsingham to pray the Rosary. The Chapel was empty all the while. I know that she was really there with me, directing my prayer, being patient. Then I drove the 3 hours back.

Praying the rosary does not have to be easy. It does not have to give a feeling of happiness all the time, although it can. Sometimes it might be hard work and feel a bit like an uphill slog. That is okay. Love is often an act of will. I have come to know that I want to love Mary the way Jesus did, and love Jesus the way Mary did. This is becoming a child of God. The proven and easiest way to holiness is to ask the help of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, to immerse ourselves in her heart. We have the means in our possession. We need to use it.

³ Set apart in the magnitude of grace. Overflowing in Grace. Full of grace *before* the annunciation.