

The Rev. Daren J. Zehnle  
Annunciation Parish, Shumway, Illinois  
26 March 2009

The Solemnity of the Annunciation  
Patronal Feast

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ: may the Lord give you peace!

With exultant hearts do we gather today to celebrate this most magnificent of moments in salvation history. Today the Archangel Gabriel announces the Good News of victory:

You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his Kingdom there will be no end (Luke 1:31-33).

Hearing these blessed words of so worthy a messenger should lift our hearts to heaven with great joy because in these words we know that "God is with us!" (Isaiah 8:10).

In his Angelus Address Yesterday, Pope Benedict XVI pointed out that

The annunciation, narrated at the beginning of the Gospel of St. Luke, is a humble human event, hidden - no one saw

it, no one knew about it but Mary - but at the same time decisive for the history of humanity."<sup>1</sup>

The profound humility of this event is made abundantly clear when we consider the one who brought this announcement to the Blessed Virgin of Nazareth.

The name Gabriel means "Strength of God" and in this way we come to realize that the strength of God is not overwhelming power and force, but is instead humble love. The One who will sit upon the throne of David does not announce his presence with blasts of trumpet or the pounding of the drum. The King of heaven and earth does not arrive with an army of angels to defend him. Rather, he comes quietly and peacefully to a quiet, out of the way village. He invites Mary to receive him and, when she agrees, he dwells within her.

Is this not the beauty of today's celebration? Out of his supreme and infinite love, God has chosen to do the unimaginable and the unexpected: he has chosen to become man, born of a Virgin. The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity humbled himself and took on our flesh, saying to the Father, "Behold, I come to do your will" (Hebrews 10:7). In this way, Mary's "yes" echoes that of Christ. "The Son's obedience is reflected in the

---

<sup>1</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, Angelus Address, 25 March 2007.

Mother's and thus, by the meeting of these two 'yesses,' God was able to take on a human face."<sup>2</sup>

To the gracious invitation of the Lord given through Gabriel, Mary responded, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). Her *fiat*, her yes, though, does not end with her some two thousand years ago. "Mary's reply to the angel is extended in the Church, which is called to make Christ present in history, offering its own availability so that God might continue to visit humanity with his mercy."<sup>3</sup>

This, then, brings us to the particular significance of this Solemnity for this parish on this, our patronal feast day. Today, through Mary's cooperation with the Lord, the Word of God takes flesh within her womb. Thus, "Mary tells us why church buildings exist: they exist so that room may be made within us for the Word of God; so that within us and through us the Word may also be made flesh today."<sup>4</sup>

Every parish exists as the primary place to encounter Christ Jesus, in word and in sacrament. Since 1870 the faith has been strong in this area, nourished by the Scriptures and by the Sacramental life of the Church. Here in this parish Jesus

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Homily, 10 December 2006.

invites us to open our hearts to him and to receive him, to make a dwelling within us for the Son of God.

This is the beauty of the love of God: he desires to dwell not only within Mary, but within each of us. He dwells within us when we open ourselves to the Word of God and receive him in the Holy Eucharist, hidden under the appearance of humble bread and wine. In this way we renew the "yes" of Jesus and of Mary. In this way we encounter "him whom they have pierced," and we become one with him (John 19:37).

As we celebrate today the announcement of salvation to Mary ever Virgin, let us give thanks to Almighty God for the many blessings he has bestowed upon us through this parish. Let us give thanks for the gift of faith that has been handed down through so many generations. Let us give thanks to God for our ancestors who, like Mary, said yes to the Lord and followed after him, giving us an example to follow. As we give thanks, let us invite him into our lives and seek to live always and everywhere for him alone. Amen.