



March 14, 2014

March 25: Announcement and welcome

"The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a virgin...whose name was Mary. And he came to her and said: "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you...And now you will conceive, bear a son and will name him Jesus...Here I am, the servant of the Lord, let it be with me according to your word..." (Lk 1: 26-38).

The angel is sent by God to Mary to have her know God's plan for her and ask for her consent. God has a plan of love for each one of us and doesn't fulfill it without us. He seeks our free adhesion.

Mary is defined: **"virgin."** Mary's virginity says that what is born from her is pure gift. Virginity is a renouncing to action. In Mary there isn't any human action, only God acts.

Virginity, therefore, shows the highest attitude of man that is the passivity and total poverty towards Him who is everything. Mary is made capable of conceiving Jesus, God made man, because of her virginity..

"And he came to her and said: 'Greetings, favored one.'" The first word that God says to Mary and to each one of us is "Greetings! Rejoice!" The first word of the Gospel is one of joy. Before calling us to mission, God invites us to Rejoice! It's an invitation that we receive every morning.

"The Lord is with you." An unthinkable event happens with Mary. Until this moment, He was the God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, the God of the Fathers; a God of which only others had experienced personally, was now the "God with us." He is a God that welcomes and gives, and grows in the heart of men. It's a living Jesus who acts in the story and life of people. The essence of life is encountering God. When we feel ourselves inside this presence and this presence is Jesus alive in us, then there is space for joy. "Rejoice!"

"Here I am, the servant of the Lord." This is the third name of Mary that appears in the narrative. The narrator has called her "Mary," the angel called her "favored one," and Mary calls herself "servant." Serving is a new way of living. No longer turning into ourselves, but open towards God. The logic of possession is substituted by the logic of gift. "Here I am, the servant of the Lord." These words are said without reserve. Mary enters into the plan of salvation with total availability.

"Let it be" is an optative form of the Greek verb-ghenoito which means "I desire nothing but to do the will of God and do it with joy." The verb, therefore, indicates an intense desire. Mary pronounces a "yes" with all her heart.

"with me." Mary doesn't make only a gesture or perform a task. She risks her life, her person. We do a lot of things. And we complain! Mary shows us the way to existence isn't so much a doing, but is putting one's life at stake. It's a giving.

“Let it be done unto me.” At the school of the Mother of the Lord these words are lived by Father Kolbe to the offering of his life. His mother, Maria Kolbe, in a letter written October 12, 1941 (addressed to the friary Niepokalanow), refers to the apparition of Our Lady to the son. She relates his explanation: “...Our Lady appeared to me, holding two crowns: one white and the other red. She was looking affectionately at me and asked if I wanted these crowns...the white meant purity and the red martyrdom. I answered that I wanted them...then Our Lady looked sweetly at me and vanished.” Maria Kolbe will refer to this apparition at the process of beatification of her son.¹

Father Kolbe isn't asked to choose “which one do you want?” as we have often heard and said. He is asked, “Do you want them?” It isn't he who in his generosity chooses the white crown and the red crown. He isn't asked to choose: “Which one do you want?” He is asked to welcome both. “Do you want them?” Both of them.

This is of enormous importance for me, meaning that Father Kolbe's vocation is born as an entrustment welcomed with the enthusiasm of a child and lived responsibly and gratuitously during his life. An entrustment to which he will remain faithful unto the “here I am” of his final offering. The totality of the gift is also the fundamental characteristic of the MI Movement founded by him. We see it from one of his writings, “...More and more we give ourselves to the Immaculata, without limit, unconditionally, irrevocably and wish to instill these giving of oneself in everyone's hearts...”².

Father Kolbe, in this writing, uses a verb *oddawac' sie'* meaning *giving*: Making of one's life a gift and a total gift. It isn't giving something of oneself, but everything. Who doesn't give all, gives nothing. Father Kolbe wants to belong to Her, the Immaculata, to be all for Jesus; welcoming Mary not to learn about the things Jesus taught, but to learn about Him.³³ Mary is given to us, so that we can know Jesus and enter into a true, beautiful, and deep relationship with the Lord Jesus.

This is well expressed by Father Kolbe in prayer:

Allow me, O Immaculata, to praise you with my commitment and personal sacrifice.

Allow me to live, work, suffer, wear away and die for You, only You.

Allow me to lead the whole world to You!

Angela

¹ Testi XXXV: Fr. Arnoldus Wedrowski, pp. 462-463

² SK 321

³ Cf. Lettera Apostolica *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, John Paul II, 14