

## Homily

### The Annunciation of our Lord Jesus Christ to the Virgin Mary

When I was growing up, a high school friend of mine in our Southern Baptist Church seemed to identify other Christian denominations, not by what they believed, but by what they were against. Of course, Southern Baptists were against drinking alcohol or even going to places where it was served. We couldn't go bowling because beer was served there. Roller skating was a questionable activity.

Roman Catholics couldn't practice birth control. Members of the Church of Christ couldn't have musical instruments in their church. Christian Scientists couldn't take medication. This was how she identified other denominations.

One morning on our way to church, we passed by our local Episcopal Church with its little red door, and I asked about the Episcopalians. Her quick reply was "Oh, they don't believe *anything*,"

Perhaps, the fact that Episcopalians didn't sensationalize what they were against, or had a tendency toward being all-embracing, meant that they didn't really believe anything to my friend. Bless her heart, as we'd say in the South.

But I think when it comes to Mary, the Blessed Virgin, what we believe, rather than what we don't, can require some . . . finesse.

In preparing this homily, there was one thing struck me. And it was the title of today's commemoration: "The Annunciation of Our Lord Jesus Christ to the Virgin Mary." The Annunciation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

One thing I've learned as an Episcopalian and as a member of the Community of the Mother of Jesus, is that **any** devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary should point to Christ. It should be Christ-centered. Always.

And the Annunciation of our Lord Jesus Christ is just that. We have a wonderful example of a willingness to bring Christ into the world. A wholehearted readiness to serve.

I do like the fact that the author of this gospel has Mary first being **perplexed** when the angel Gabriel appeared with the announcement. She **pondered** what sort of greeting this must be. And she also **questioned**, “How can this be?” She didn’t just suddenly acquiesce. She practically invited a broader spectrum of theological questions. To me, that is very Episcopalian.

But how do we bring Christ into this world? How do we do this?

The motto for my Community is “Quodcumque dixerit vobis facite” which means “Do whatever he tells you.” The words that Mary spoke to the waiters at the wedding at Cana.

So, in the mornings, I ponder on these words, and meditate as to what Christ would have me do that day. I might also add that the first part of our community’s Rule is to be attentive to God breaking into our day.

I must admit that I’m probably the biggest sceptic there is with regard to God directly interacting in our lives. But when I ponder on what Christ would have me do that day, I must admit that an answer often comes to me; and it’s something I would not have thought of on my own. Quite often, I might be facing a challenging situation with one of the patients I’m trying to help at the treatment center where I work. Or it could be dealing with one of the members in my community who’s irritating me to no end. An insight will come to me and it’s usually a way to empathize with this person. To see the situation from their point of view rather my own. A view or an insight I had not thought of on my own. My soul is calmed. A wave of peace washes over me. And the insight I receive is not unlike an angel named Gabriel making an announcement to me.

And quite often, I think, “How can this be?” How can God be interacting with **me** in a world that can often seem so devoid of God’s providence? . . . In a world where so many lose innocent loved ones at hands of gun violence. Why would God be speaking to **me** among all this? How can this be?

It **can** be, because the annunciation is an invitation to serve. Against insurmountable obstacles, like being pregnant, unmarried and a virgin, to bring Christ into this world that so very desperately needs it. The Christ who blesses the poor in spirit, those who are humble, those who crave

righteousness, those who show mercy, and those who are peacemakers. And the Christ who blesses those who mourn These are the ones who bring Christ into this world. When we do, we become grace-filled. **We** become full of grace.

The annunciation of our Lord Jesus Christ is indeed a call to each of us to serve. To bring Christ-ness into this world. It is a call to say, “Let it be done with me according to your word.”

Amen.