

## **The meeting with the Word of God**

*in the lectio of the Holy Scriptures  
in our charism  
in the events of today and of our life*

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### *2<sup>nd</sup> section*

*“We are not human beings living a spiritual experience.*

*We are spiritual beings living a human experience”*

*(Teilhard de Chardin)*

## **First Part**

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### **AT NAZARETH**

### **THE ANNUNCIATION OF A “NEW HUMANITY”**

**Luke 1: 26 - 38**

#### **What does Luke tell us, really?**

A journey across the text ...

drawing from tradition and from modern exegesis

## The history of the text ... the history within the text

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Our time is apocalyptic, positively apocalyptic, because, if on one side it reveals that our way of living is conflictual, that our way of being human is unsustainable and destructive, on the other side it announces, that a *new era* has begun. The era that all observers of our time, believers or not, call “time of the relational ego we want to call it “era of the Spirit”.

When did this era, historically, begin? ... Where? Is there a place and a moment in human history, about which we can say, obviously with the certainty of faith and not of a calendar, that *there, in that moment* humanity faced its turning point? ... *Is it there in that moment* that the end of the conflictual ego began? Where can we situate *the beginning, the dawn of the new humanity*?

*Once, in a small village in the extreme North of Galilee, at Nazareth, the angel of the Lord - Gabriel - **knocked** at the door of a small girl, Mary ...*

*Why do I say: “knocked” and not: “appeared”? Speaking of an angel, it would be more logic. Because the evangelist Luke tries his best to prevent us from thinking of a mysterious and sensational event, out of history.*

*The story of a pregnancy and then of a birth began in this way ... the story of “a new man”, beginning in the womb of a “new woman”.*

*And that story, an illustration and symbol of every story, or better, “of the” story, is the story **the Spirit “covered with its shadow”**: **taking possession of it in a definitive way.***

*Entering into the body of that woman, the Spirit in fact entered into the body of history ... This is how “the era of the Spirit” began. The Spirit who “makes everything new”.*

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*Now, I request you, dear sisters and friends, to read slowly the narration of Luke 1:26-38, following, with patience, the comment I suggest you.*

*Read the text on your personal Bible, the one you are familiar with ... at the same time, with some bookmarks, fix your attention on two other pages, which will help you later, to understand the text. I indicate, in particular, the **book of Zephaniah: 3:14-18**; and the **Second book of Chronicles: 5-6:2** (which you can read, in parallel, with the First book of Kings: 8:1-13).*

*Certainly, you may use other comments, other exegetical texts, if you think they help you ... when doing a lectio, it is important to understand well the text: what does Luke say? The historical reading of the text is the first decisive step, to “enter” into the experience of salvation indicated by the Word of God ...*

*Two more steps are equally important: what does it tell to us? (I, you, we, our time ...)... To what conversion-transformation does it call me-us?*



## Foreword

The text, called the “**Annunciation**”, is certainly the most famous and most loved page of the Christian tradition. Along the centuries, many artists, painters, sculptors represented this scene, which we find with various styles on old coffins, in gothic cathedrals, in many icons, in paintings of Flemish, South-Americans and German painters, as well as among the works of Italian, French and Spanish masters ... today we can admire it represented on the African, Pakistani or Indian cloth. Many Fathers of the Church, many theologians and spiritual authors of any time left innumerable homilies, commentaries, meditations ...

### Why so much interest?

No doubt, it is one of the most beautiful pages and, at the same time, it is the narration of the most “scandalous” event of the whole sacred history: the womb of a woman receives, enshrines, and reveals *the infinite mystery of God*.

The womb of the humble girl of Nazareth becomes the new and definitive “temple”: the most majestic, the most splendid, holier than the one built by Solomon, because in it dwells the only begotten Son of God, God himself. In it the Spirit fecunds the seed of the New Man, the Humanity that will overcome forever the conflictual ego.

In Mary and in the mystery of her pregnancy, the Eternal enters into time, the Mystery becomes history, God becomes man. The Son of the Most High will be called Jesus of Nazareth and history will go towards its accomplishment.

If an enchanted Augustine will ask himself: « *How can the one who made you be in you?*” Bernard of Clairvaux, grasps fully the reason of so much success for this wonderful page of the Scripture, when, in one of the most beautiful Marian homilies, with heartfelt and highly lyrical words, raises his supplication:

« *Did you hear, o Virgin, you will conceive and give birth to a son; did you hear it will happen not through a man but by the work of the Holy Spirit? ... We are waiting, o Lady, for your word of compassion ... O Virgin, answer the word and receive the Word. Say your human word and conceive the Divine Word, pronounce the word which passes and receive the Eternal Word*».

Reflecting closer on the mystery of the annunciation to Mary, as it is told by Luke, means to take also into account the event that immediately precedes this and has Zechariah, the spouse of Elizabeth, as a protagonist.

In reality, Luke narrates two annunciations: *the first one* involves an elderly, Zechariah, a priest in Israel; *the second one* a girl, Mary, just a little older than an adolescent. *The first one* happens in the temple, in Jerusalem, in the South of Palestine; *the other one* in a house, in Nazareth, in the North. Both announcements bring the happy news of a “prodigious” birth: the *first one* from the *sterility* of Elizabeth, the *second one* from the *virginity* of Mary.

However, between the two events there is an infinite distance of meaning and of value. In fact, *the first one* is about the birth of John. A man, a prophet, who, though known as “*the greatest among those born of women*” (Mt 11:11; Lk 7:28), will always remain only a man. *The second one* is about the *birth of the Son of God*, Word of the Father and Saviour of the world, who will take flesh in the womb of Mary - *Jesus* – fully man among men, like us in all things, except sin.

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## 1. THE ANNOUNCEMENTS

It happens often, in the Sacred Text, both in the Old and in the New Testament, to meet episodes in which God, through a *messenger*, reaches a specific person for a particular reason: usually, to entrust a task connected with the event of salvation. In general, the sacred author uses the *literary gender of the announcement*: which can be the announcement of a prodigious **birth**, but also the announcement of a call to a **particular mission**.

### 1.1. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF BIRTH

Both in the Old and in the New Testament, there are some cases, in which a celestial messenger announces to a *woman*, physically unable because old or sterile, that she will become a *mother*, thanks to a special intervention of God, who goes beyond the law of nature. Among the most famous texts, we remember: the announcement that *Sarah*, the old wife of Abraham, will become the mother of Isaac (Gn 18:9-15); the announcement to the *sterile wife of Manoah*, who will give birth to Samson (Judges 13:2-7); the announcement to Zechariah, that *Elizabeth*, his wife, old and sterile, will give birth to John (Lk 1:5-25).

These **announcements of birth** are narrated according to an almost standard literary scheme: the apparition of an angel, messenger of God; the reaction of the person: fear, wonder, doubt; the message; the objection of the person, because of the natural impossibility of the event; a sign offered by the angel, as a demonstration of the intervention of God.

### 1.2. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF VOCATION/MISSION

God reaches a person in a special way, not only to announce a mysterious and humanly impossible birth, but also to reveal a particular **vocation**, to entrust a specific **mission**. For example, typical in the Old Testament, is the announcement to *Gideon*, at the time of Judges. He is reached by an angel, messenger of God, revealing to him his vocation, entrusting him with the *mission* of saving Israel from the oppression of the hand of Midian (Judges 6:11-24).

The plan is similar to the previous one, but the content of the message changes: not a prodigious birth, but a task of salvation, of freeing others: a specific mission in favour of the people.



## 2. THE ANNOUNCEMENT TO MARY

Luke, through the combination of various Old Testament texts, makes a synthesis of both literary genders in the annunciation to Mary.

In fact, to Mary is entrusted the **mission** of being the Mother of the Son of God, hence she is asked to make her virginal womb available for the Most High ... and at the same time, the "prodigious" **birth** of a Son is announced to her.

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## The story: Luke 1: 26 - 38

« *In the sixth month* » (v 26) ... « *Approximately three months* » (v 56)

These *two chronological indications* situated one at the beginning of the episode of the **Annunciation** and the second one at the conclusion of the **visit of Mary to Elizabeth** after the song of the *Magnificat*, work as a "*literary containers*", as the "*borders*", within which the evangelist intends to develop his narration.

To understand this, we need to know a little the historical time and in a more specific way the literary style used by Luke because the composition surely followed some cultural models very different from ours, beginning with the punctuation which was completely unknown. The evangelist, therefore, to orientate the reader about the beginning and the conclusion of his story, uses almost a symbolic punctuation to open and to close the text. Luke uses two chronological references as *literary indicators*: *the sixth month*, which opens the story, linking it to the previous episode, and *the three months* underlining the time of the stay of Mary with Elizabeth.

This indicates that the text of the "Annunciation" does not tell *an independent fact*, opening and closing in the house of Nazareth, *but an event*, including also "*the visit of Mary to Elizabeth*" (vv 39-45) and the "*song of the Magnificat*" (vv 46 - 56).

Our reading will not be complete. We will just read the Annunciation to Mary, connecting it with what precedes it, but not with what follows it, being aware that a complete reading demands an integral exegesis.

It is the **6<sup>th</sup> month** of pregnancy for Elizabeth, the wife of the priest Zechariah. About her, Luke only underlines that, having become pregnant, though old and sterile, she keeps herself hidden "*for 5 months*" (v 24). Later the angel, indicating again the humanly impossible maternity of Elizabeth as **the sign** for Mary of the intervention of Yahweh, explicitly will say: "*This is the sixth month for her*" (v 36).

The chronological indication of the 6<sup>th</sup> month, therefore, not only opens the story of the Annunciation, but links the event to the previous episode, in which the angel announces to Zechariah the prodigious birth of a son from his wife Elizabeth, old and sterile. It even seems that Luke builds up the two stories in a parallel way: presenting them as events of birth, both prodigious, both told as *announcement* by the divine messenger *Gabriel* (vv 19. 26).

### *In the sixth month*

(v 26)

*Elizabeth  
conceived and kept  
herself hidden  
for five months  
(v 24)*

However, looking at them in parallel, the two episodes will manifest all their theological distance, notwithstanding the literary closeness. They are similar in the structure, but very different in the events narrated.



The first Christians, who were familiar with the messianic prophecies, hearing Luke mentioning the angel Gabriel, immediately thought of the eschatological prophecy contained in the book of Daniel.

During the persecutions perpetrated by the foreign oppressor Antiochus IV, **Gabriel**, messenger of Yahweh, revealed to Daniel the end of all persecutions, the surrender of the stranger, and the coming, within *70 weeks*, of the kingdom of the righteous one of Israel, the "holy", governed by a *son of man*, whose empire will never end (Dan 8-9).

Now, hearing the name of **Gabriel**, the first readers of Luke think immediately to the accomplishment of those events and to the close coming of the *Son of man*.

*Gabriel came back, as the prophet had announced. So if he is here, it means that the time of waiting, called in a symbolic way: "70 weeks", is fulfilled: salvation has come! Our ransom is at hand. The liberator, better the Saviour, the Son of Man, bearer of a "New Humanity" is coming!*

The presence of **Gabriel**, therefore, leads immediately to the interpretation of an event as a message of freedom, salvation, a change in the route of human history.



Gabriel *appears in a vision* to Zechariah, while he is serving in the temple as a priest (v 8-11). Later the same messenger of God *comes* to Mary in her house.

Of him, Luke does not say that he appears in a vision to the girl of Nazareth, but that he *is sent* (v 26) ... *went to her* (v 28) and in the end, *he leaves* (v 38).

It seems that the evangelist wants to present the event of Nazareth in the most ordinary way possible, avoiding surrounding it with mystery, rather, showing a great difference between the event in the temple and the event in Nazareth.

*In Jerusalem*, the angel can show itself only in a vision ... The place itself demands it: the temple, the ineffable abode of Jahweh; and the context: the liturgical action, with the offering of incense.

*In Nazareth*, instead, the angel seems to come, as a friend would do; he enters the house of Mary as a neighbour would come in; and then he leaves as if it were a relative, an acquaintance, a visitor ...

Not just that! While for Zechariah it is said that the angel appears "*standing at the right side of the altar of incense*" (v 11), to underline

## *The angel Gabriel*

(v 19)

*Gabriel ... told me  
these words:  
«Seventy weeks are  
decreed for your  
people and your  
holy city»*

...  
(cf Dan 9:21-24)

*was sent  
by God  
in a city  
of Galilee,  
called  
Nazareth*  
(v 26)

*While Zechariah  
was serving before  
God ...*

*an angel of the Lord  
appeared to him,  
standing at the  
right side of the*

that the temple is at the centre of the action; for Mary, it seems that all the geographical references disappear, except the indication of Nazareth, and what is central is the *person-Mary*.

In fact, the text says that the angel went “*to her*” (v 28). Highlighting that it is the *life of Mary the place*, where the events will take place and not any more in the temple.

It is as if Luke wished to anticipate, from these very first lines, the sense of the whole story: Mary is the new and definitive temple. Mary is the “human shrine” of the Eternal God ... the “tabernacle of flesh” of the Divine coming into time.

*To send ... To go ... To leave ...* are three verbs of movement, three human actions. In this way Luke seems to draw our attention towards an event that – *though having the Ineffable, the Mystery, Heaven as a protagonist* – in reality is taking place within time, history, humanity.

It is as if he wanted us to perceive already that the Eternal has come out of the temple to come into ordinary time. If God enters into time, the traditional rules to understand the divine, eternity, time, the infinite and history do not work any more. Here is a “turning point” of history! From now on, it will never be as before.

We see how the messenger of God, before speaking, already through his movements, reveals the unprecedented novelty, the “scandalous truth” of God coming into our daily life, revealing Himself in a human way, behaving like a friend.

The veil of the temple was torn and the Ineffable is now within our reach. That is why *the two places*, where the announcement takes place, are far from one another, not only according to geography, but also according to theology.

The two Annunciations, in fact, happen at the extreme borders of Palestine: Jerusalem in Judea (South) and Nazareth in Galilee (North).

*The temple*, holy and majestic, leaves the place to the *person-Mary*, small and humble girl. And *Jerusalem*, the holy city placed on the mountain, leaves the place to *Nazareth*, the anonymous village of the “Galilee of the Gentiles”, from which perhaps, nobody thought “*something good*” could come out (Jn 1:46).



About *Zechariah*, it is underlined that he was a *priest* of the division of Abijah, married to Elizabeth, of the tribe of Aroon (1:5). While about *Mary*, it is said, simply, that she is a *girl (parténon)* of the village of Nazareth. Her roots remain unknown, most likely they were humble, opposite to those of the boy with whom she is engaged, *Joseph*, belonging to the royal lineage of David.

About *Joseph*, the text simply says that he was “*righteous*” (Mt 1:19). It does not describe him as an old man, as the popular devotion always presents him.

*altar of incense.*

Lk 1:8-11

*to a virgin,  
pledged  
to be married  
to a man  
of the house  
of David,*

About Mary, the text says that she is a girl, simply a girl; obviously, a *virgin*, as it was the habit in the Jewish culture for any serious girl getting ready for marriage.

Many saw in the use of the word "*parténon*", the clear intention of the evangelist to underline, with this expression the virginity of Mary and her conscious will of remaining a virgin forever.

In reality, Luke is simply saying that, unlike Elizabeth, the spouse of Zechariah, the old and sterile woman, Mary, pledged to be married to Joseph, is instead a young and fertile woman (a *parténon*, exactly).

While Elizabeth is in the 6<sup>th</sup> month of her "surprising pregnancy", Mary is getting ready for her marriage. Rather, according to the Jewish customs, she is already married to Joseph though they do not yet live together.

Hence, in this passage of the text, which in a way compares the two women, the evangelist gives a theological indication. He is telling us that these two women are very different. The first is old and sterile; the second one is young and fertile. Nonetheless God touched both; both received a salvific task. However, the two tasks are infinitely distant. The two women are "related" (v 36), "consanguineous" ... Sure they are blood relatives, though *far blood relatives*, not really "cousins" as the tradition says (Elizabeth was almost eighty and Mary more or less fifteen). They are "relatives" in faith ... "united" in a vision.

What scenario would this page of Luke open for our future!

*"... I will pour out my Spirit on all people.*

*Your sons and daughters will prophesy,*

*your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions"*

(Joel 2:28).

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#### NOTE

##### *About the marriage in Israel*

*It is important to remember, that in the Jewish tradition, the marriage – as a religious and social contract - concluded primarily between the two families, was a rite unfolded in two times, at a certain distance one from the other one.*

*In a first moment, there was the signature of the wedding agreement, according to which the two young people, by the will of their families, became, by law and in front of the society, husband and wife, though neither the marriage should be consummated nor the couple should live together. A period of some months followed, during which the girl kept living with the parents, within her clan, while the boy built the house.*

*When the house was ready, there was the second part of the rite, in a rather suggestive and involving way. The boy, accompanied by the ten girls of the village whose marriage was closer, with lit lamps, went to the house of the bride at midnight and in the midst of dances and songs took her to the new house, where they consumed the marriage and began living together. In the*

*called Joseph*

(v 27)

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*"The Kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who, took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom ....*

*At midnight, the cry rang out: Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!"*

Mt 25,1-6

*parable of the "ten virgins", we find something of this rite (Mt 25: 1-13).*

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Most likely, the announcement of the angel to Mary happened in the time between the first and the second part of the marriage.

Hence, Mary should have been a girl of approximately 15 years and Joseph a boy of 17-18 years: this was the praxis in Israel and the text does not give reason to think of something different.

It comes spontaneous to ask ourselves why the popular fantasy, and consequently the devotion developed about Joseph, presented him as an adult man, quite old ... and in some cultural context he is represented holding a lily.

Tradition comes to our help with the *Apocryphal Gospels*, written two centuries after the canonical Gospels, and as such, presenting a post-evangelical mentality.

The ecclesial community of the second century was experiencing the institution of the "*Consecrated Virgins*", so Mary, in the collective imagination, should resemble to these, more than to a normal Jewish girl of her time, blessed if fertile and mother, cursed if sterile and alone.

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#### NOTE

##### *The marriage of Mary in the apocryphal Gospels*

*Well, the Apocryphal Gospels, inspired the legend that Mary, since she was 3 years old, lived, near the "Holy of Holies", the only worthy house for her, since she was the only human being preserved since eternity from the original sin, in view of her divine Maternity.*

*Then, when she was 14, since according to the law of Moses, even the purest of virgins should marry, a plenary meeting of all the widowers of Judah, of the stock of David, was called in the temple, to choose among them a husband, worthy but only apparent, to put at Mary's side.*

*All of them had to come to the Temple with a dry stick and put it into the Holy of Holies. The stick that would be refreshed would indicate the spouse chosen by God for Mary.*

*Then, only the stick of a certain Joseph, old widower and already father of 6 children revived and was crowned by the presence of a white dove.*

*Therefore, the high priest permits himself to celebrate the marriage, demanded by the law, between the righteous Joseph and the virgin Mary.*

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*"In your old age you have been blessed, o father Joseph, therefore God indicated you worthy of receiving Mary".*

Pseudo-Mt : 8:4

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#### **Mary is the spouse of Joseph**

Therefore, a legend was born and spread much later after the writing

of the text of Luke. The purpose was to defend the virginity of Mary, which in reality, does not need to be justified when reading attentively the evangelical narration. Within the sacred text, there is already this Ineffable Announcement of a maternity in virginity for the girl of Nazareth. We will see this later.

When Gabriel arrives in Nazareth, Mary and Joseph, like any other human couple blessed by God, are planning and preparing the wedding.

How could, then, Mary think for herself a perpetual and consecrated virginity in that cultural context, she, being an authentic daughter of her people, and consecrated virginity an ecclesial institution of the second century?

Perpetual virginity was not a value, in the Jewish culture. The vow of virginity was unknown and the fertility of a woman was considered a blessing of God while sterility was like a curse.

God himself expressing his blessing to Abraham, thousand of years before, promised him descendants as numerous as the stars (Gen 15:5), and Elizabeth, contemporary of Mary, speaks of her miraculous maternity as the end of her “*disgrace*” among the people (Lk 1:25).

Then what does really happen in Nazareth? ... What happens on the day when God, through his messenger, decides to reveal fully his Plan of salvation to this humble and hidden girl, getting ready to marry a young man, who, like her and like all youth of all ages, looks forward to fulfilling the dream of his life? Let us read the text patiently ...



It is not simply a greeting. It is true that imagining in a human way, one could expect the angel addressing Mary with a warm “*good morning*”; however, the Greek word, “**kaire**”, expresses an invitation to joy, addressed, in the Old Testament, to the “*daughter of Zion*”.

Gabriel, therefore, addresses the Chosen one of God, using the messianic “greeting” par excellence: “**Rejoice!**”

To understand well the theological-spiritual value of this word, and its ineffable poetry, it is important to go back to the text Luke is referring to, that is the prophet Zephaniah, who lived at least 600 years before the event of Nazareth.

At this point, there is need for two short explanations: one at a **literary** level and the second one more at **historical level**.

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*The angel  
went to her  
and said:*

**Rejoice**

(v 28a)

**A literary explanation**

Is 12:6; 14:32; 30:19; 33:20; 40:9; ...

### **Zion = Jerusalem**

The city of Jerusalem, built on the hill of Zion, is indicated often in the Sacred Texts as the city of Zion. **God himself**, addressing the inhabitants of Jerusalem to encourage them when facing a threatening enemy calls them: «My People, who live in Zion» (Is 10:24). **Zephaniah** echoes it when stating with certainty «on that day they will say to Jerusalem: "Do not fear, Zion, do not let your hands hang limp!"» (Zeph 3:16). Also **Isaiah**, at the time of the supreme song shouts with joy: «Awake, awake, Zion, clothe yourself with strength! Put on your garments of splendor, Jerusalem, the holy city» (Is 52,1a).

**Zion**, as we can see, becomes synonymous of **Jerusalem**. So when the Prophets speak of Zion, prophesy over Zion, address Zion, in fact their attention is addressed to Jerusalem. As well as the people of Zion, the hill of Zion indicates the people of Jerusalem, Jerusalem itself.

It is important to keep this in mind so as to understand, through the literary style of Luke and the tradition from which he draws, the great announcement of the Mystery entering the womb of a girl belonging to the people of Zion.

### **A historical explanation**

Is 10:32; 16:1; Jer 6:2-3; Lam 1:6; 2:8; Zech 2:14; ...

#### **The "daughter of Zion"**

The expression "daughter of Zion", in the beginning indicated only the ridge of the hill of Zion, on which stood Jerusalem. With the passing of time also the outskirts that developed on that ridge were included in this expression.

Jerusalem, situated on the hill of Zion, developed as a city on the rock. At its centre, there was the temple, indicated by the prophets as the core of Israel, the holy place where the Ark of the Covenant dwelt. The temple, standing majestically in the heart of the city, was visible by any side of the hill, from any slope, gathering around itself the outskirts, as a mother gathers sons and daughters.

Particularly famous was "the daughter" situated on the ridge at the right side of the temple. With the passing of time, all the poor, the least, the marginalized, who did not find place in the city, packed themselves in it. Among them, there were those who came back from the Babilonian exile, indicated as the "the remnant of Israel", (cf Is 10:20; Jer 6:9; 31:7; 42:15), finally free after the long slavery which followed the deportation.

These, after the liberation, not having found luck while being in the diaspora, slowly came back home and found place there, living free, yet poor, in this outskirt loved by God: "the daughter of Zion", par excellence, whose only heritage was the majestic and holy Temple, at the core of Zion.

The prophets identified the "remnant of Israel", with the poor of Yahweh, the beloved of God (cf Is 41:17); those who could find their joy only in Him (cf Is 29:19). To them was promised the heritage of the Liberating Messiah.

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You, who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You, who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout...

Is 40:9

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O daughter of Zion so beautiful and delicate, you are ruined. Shepherds with their flock will come against her; they will pitch their tents round her each tending his own portion.

Jer 6:2-3

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Therefore, Isaiah can prophesy with hope: «Say to the daughter of Zion, 'See, your Saviour comes! See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him'» (Is 62:11)

**Zephaniah**, knowing that only from this "remnant" will begin the spiritual renewal of the whole people invites "the daughter of Zion", therefore the poor and the least, to the messianic joy. This joy can shine only on the face of those who know Yahweh at the "core" of Zion, in the heart of Jerusalem, in the holy temple of God.

**Zeph 3: 14 - 18a**

[14] Sing, O Daughter of Zion,  
shout aloud, O Israel!,  
Be glad and rejoice with all your  
heart, O Daughter of Jerusalem!

[15] The Lord has taken away  
your punishment; he has turned  
back your enemy. The Lord, the  
King of Israel, is **with you**; never  
again will you fear any harm.

[16] On that day they will say to  
Jerusalem,  
Do not fear, O Zion;  
do not let your hands hang limp.

[17] The Lord your God is **with you**,  
he is mighty to save. He will take  
great delight in you, he will quiet  
you with his love, he will rejoice over  
you with singing ...

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*Sing and rejoice,  
O daughter of Zion!  
See, I am coming to  
dwell among you ...*

Zech 2:14

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The expression: "**with you**", could be understood in a more suggestive way as "**in your heart**". In fact the prophet, is inviting "the daughter of Zion", that is "the remnant of Israel"- the least, the derelicts, the oppressed, the marginalized, the poor – to rejoice, because though they do not have neither riches nor power, they have God at their side. He is the true liberator, the Saviour, dwelling among his people, living in the heart of Israel, in the temple, sure heritage of the poor: symbol of their ransom.

In the "daughter of Zion", are included all poor. To them the salvation is announced. It is truly meant for them.

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Luke and his Christian community, in majority composed by Jews, knew very well the messianic prophecies and draw from the rich background of the old testament. Therefore speaking in his Gospel about the "**greeting**" of the angel to Mary, Luke wants to communicate to us all the theological-spiritual meaning that the greek word "**kaire**" carries in itself: *rejoice ... be glad... exult!*

*You, Mary, who are the poor of Yahweh, you who are in your history, in your origins, in your life the "remnant" of your people, you belong to those who do not have neither riches nor power ...*

*You, "daughter of Zion", marginal daughter of the great Israel, fully daughter of the poor Israel, rejoice, exult and be glad: Salvation is within you in your temple; the Saviour is in your heart.*

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In the tradition of Greek Fathers and in the Byzantine liturgy, the first word of the angel, “kaire”, was almost universally understood and explained, for what truly is: *an invitation to joy!* It is enough to remember the song of the akathistos: the Greek hymn in 12 parts, composed - *in honour of the Mother of God* - by Romanos the Melodist, between the VI and the VII century AD. In it, the mysteries of the Incarnation of Christ and of the virginal maternity of Mary are celebrated.

The akathistos, in its first verses, interprets faithfully the messianic greeting of the angel, according to the words of Luke:

*« An Archangel descended from Heaven and said to the Théotokos: Rejoice! And beholding You, O Lord, taking bodily form, he stood in awe, and with his bodiless voice he cried aloud to her such things as these:*

Rejoice, you through whom joy shall shine forth;  
Rejoice, you through whom the curse will vanish;

Rejoice, the Restoration of fallen Adam;  
Rejoice, the Redemption of the tears of Eve.

Rejoice, O Height beyond human logic;  
Rejoice, O depth invisible even to the eyes of Angels.

Rejoice, for you are the King's throne;  
Rejoice, you bear Him, Who bears the universe.

Rejoice, O Star revealing the Sun;  
Rejoice, O Womb of divine Incarnation:

Rejoice, you through whom creation is renewed;  
Rejoice, you through whom the Creator is born a Babe.

Rejoice, O Bride Ever Virgin! »



Mary, then, is the first and the most sublime «image of the daughter of Zion»; she is the “*type*” of any poor, of all poor, of all those who have no value in front of people, but who trust fully in God, who is their heritage already on earth.

Each poor of yesterday as well as of today, in Palestine as well as in any corner of the world, can look at Mary and find in her the model of all aspirations, the living model of faith, the caring mother of all expectations.

If, Mary is the *living image* of all those who have impressed in their life the condition and the destiny of the “daughter of Zion”, it comes consequently that the **poor** – *historical image of the daughter of Zion* – find their ransom and their dignity, simply because, in her, they become voice and face of the Eternal. The Son of God coming to human life in his Mother, in fact comes to live in the poor.



Mary, clear sign of messianic salvation, is the person who synthesises in herself all the chosen people, born from that “*remnant of Israel*”, loved by the Lord.

As the expression “*daughter of Zion*”, the expression “*full of grace*” (kekaritoméneh) also takes up a great theological value. It is used only twice and only in the New Testament: in Luke 1:28, and in Ephesians 1:6.

Paul, writing to the Christians of Ephesus, opens with a beautiful hymn blessing God, who, in his free and gratuitous Plan of salvation, included *all of us*, predestining us since eternity to be adopted children of his Son, *transformed by his grace*, therefore elected, sanctified and freed.

In the Plan of God, therefore, since eternity, there is our salvation, which is *our election* to be children in the Son: gratuitous and free *gift*, passed on by the Father through his Son. Therefore, salvation is full grace, “*gratuitous grace*”, a total and free gift of God.

Well, Luke, agreeing with Paul, presents Mary as the first among the saved, the predestined and the chosen. That Plan of salvation, thought for everybody, is anticipated in Mary, who, exactly because is called to become the Mother of the Only Begotten Son of God, is the “*full of grace*”, the chosen one, the holy one, since eternity.

Hence, Mary, in the order of grace, is the first and the totally full of grace, both in a chronological sense and in a theological sense: *first* among the chosen and *fully* chosen; *first* among the believers and *fully* believer; *first* among the saints and *fully* saint.

As such, she is the model and, at the same time, the mother of all believers, “the saints”.

She, first among human creatures, member of a sinner race, but preserved from the original and universal sin, to be the virgin dwelling of the Son of God, is the image of what the creative work of God accomplishes. At the same time, she anticipates the destiny of the new People, born from the new covenant sealed in the blood of Christ.

Mary is the full of grace since the beginning and as such, she does not experience the original sin, therefore she does not have a conflictual ego. We are not “*full of grace*” since birth, but we are called to become it by vocation ... We start from a condition of sin, and lack of freedom, but our aim is holiness, grafted in us with our

*full of grace*

(v 28)

◇ ◇ ◇

*Blessed be God,  
Father of our Lord  
Jesus Christ*

...

*He chose us in Him  
before the creation  
of the world*

...

*to the praise of his  
glorious grace with  
which he has  
blessed us in the  
Beloved ;*

Eph 1:3a.4a.6b.

◇ ◇ ◇

baptism. Mary has always been holy.

This is the meaning of the expression “*full of grace*”: an aspiration for us but for the Mother of God a characteristic of her being, or an ontological openness to the being of God, his image fully accomplished and visible.

In the specific context of the two annunciations told by Luke, we see how Mary is completely different from the parents of John the Baptist. Zechariah and Elizabeth are “*righteous*”, because they observe the law (cf v 6); she is the “*full of grace*”, because she is gratuitously chosen, since eternity.

“*Justice*”, is the sign showing the human effort to reach God, therefore what is important is the merit we have in front of Him. The “*grace*”, instead, is the sign measuring the gratuitousness of God; therefore, what is important is His Infinite Mercy.

Consequently, justice shows the ascent of the human being towards God. Grace instead shows the descent of God towards humanity. Beginning with Mary, the law that justifies and binds leaves the place to grace that reedems and frees.



The joyful greeting of the angel ends with the expression “*the Lord is with you*”. Reassuring words for Mary, because they reveal to her the closeness of Yahweh, which is the company of God who neither leaves alone, nor abandons his poor.

Often we find this expression in the Scriptures; it is there any time a person receives from Yahweh the *special mission* of bringing or becoming a mediator of salvation for his people (cf Ex 3:12; Judges 6:12.16; Dt 20:1-4).

It is the case of *Moses*, who, frightened by the task of taking Israel out of Egypt, a mission entrusted to him directly by God, is reassured by God himself saying: «*I will be with you*» ( Ex 3:12).

It is also the experience of the judge *Gideon*, who, afraid of the mission entrusted to him of saving his people from Midian, hears the angel saying: «*The Lord is with you!*» (Judges 6:12); while God adds: «*I will be with you!*» (v 16).

The same happens to *Mary*. To her, *the daughter of Zion, the full of grace*, Gabriel, with his messianic greeting, already announces that God is about to entrust to her a very particular mission. And she understands all that it means, since, like the great mediators of the Old Testament, she is troubled, at the point that the angel feels the need to reassure her, inviting her not to be afraid and to trust in God, because she “*has found favour*” with Him since eternity.

This is the experience of Mary. This was the experience of all great mediators. Among them: *Abraham* (Gen 15:1;26:24); *Jacob* (Gen 46:3); *Joshua* (Dt 31:8; Josh 8:1); *the prophets* (Is 40:8; 41:13; 41:14; 43:1; 43:5; 44:2; Jer 30:10; 46:27.28).

## *The Lord is with you*

(v 28 b)



*The angel of the Lord  
appeared and said to  
him: «The Lord is  
with you mighty  
warrior!».*

Judges 6:12





The versions, in the modern languages, of the text of Luke leave out the expression “*in your womb*”, which is present in the Greek text. Certainly, it is a pleonasm, in fact, where could Mary conceive if not in her womb? It is as to say, “I eat with my mouth”.

We might think that it was a distraction of the evangelist, if he, in a following passage, would not insist with the same obvious specification: «*On the eighth day when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived in his mother’s womb*» (Lk 2:21).

We wonder if Luke did not want to draw our attention exactly on the symbolical meaning of the *womb* of Mary, of her *bosom*, since he emphasizes it though it is obvious.

In reality, in the culture of the Old Testament, *the bosom, the womb* has a strong theological value. We have already underlined how for the prophet Zephaniah (3:14-18), the joy of the daughter of Zion is caused by the fact that Yahweh is in the “*bosom of Zion*”. The poor lost everything but not God, whose Presence remains in the *bosom of the Holy City*.

The bosom of Zion, as we saw, is the *temple*. It is in the temple, exactly in its inner part, in the “*Holy of Holies*”, that the Ark of the Covenant safeguards the Presence of Yahweh (cf Joel 2:27).

Well, going beyond the words of Zephaniah, it seems that Luke wants to announce that the time of the full Presence of Yahweh in the temple of Solomon is over. Now there is a new temple: the person of Mary. There is a new “*Holy of Holies*”: her womb. Mary is the centre of the new Jerusalem; she is the new and definitive tabernacle in which the Saviour dwells.

It is not by chance that in the Christian tradition, Mary, is also invoked as “*foederis arca*”: the *ark of the Covenant*.

She, the true daughter of Zion, becomes the mother of the Messiah. Therefore, at the moment of his virginal conception Yahweh comes to dwell in her womb, as his Law dwelt in the Ark of the Covenant.

Mary does not have to be afraid because the Lord, who called her, consecrated her as the new and definitive Temple, in which his Presence remains. He, Messiah for his people and Saviour for all peoples, is in her womb.

That is why Luke clarifies what is already clear; he states what is already obvious; he reveals what is fully visible: *it is in her womb that Mary conceives her son*.

It is in the womb of Mary that God comes to dwell among people ... it is in her womb that He builds his human house. The veil of the temple has been torn “*from top to bottom*” ... God has come out from

*You will  
conceive*

*\*in your womb\**

*a son*

(v 31)

◇ ◇ ◇

*On the eighth day  
when it was time to  
circumcise the child,  
he was named Jesus,  
the name the angel  
had given him before  
he was conceived in  
his mother’s womb.*

Lk 2:21

◇ ◇ ◇

his Invisibility, to show himself in the Flesh of His Son, conceived in the flesh of the girl of Nazareth.



The angel announces to Mary the accomplishment, in her womb, of the messianic promise. The Messiah in the Old Testament is not any saviour of the chosen people, but the ideal King, the true and definitive descendant of the lineage of David. Mary is openly requested to participate, freely, through her maternity, to the fulfilment of the promise made to David. She understands all this, when the angel reveals the content of his message, using the words the prophet Natan addressed directly to David (2Sam 7:9.13.16), and which Luke repeats almost identically:

**2Sam 7:9.13.16.**

*I will make your name great (v 9b). I will be his father, and he will be my son. (v 14a)*

*I will establish the throne of his Kingdom forever (v 13b).*

*Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever (v 16)*

**Lc 1:32-33**

*He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High (v 32a)*

*The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David (v 32b)*

*and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end (v 33)*

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The "fruit" of the womb of Mary, the son she will call Jesus will be the new David, whose kingdom will never end.



The first answer of Mary, while expressing all her trouble, is a clear confirm to her full understanding of the message.

Someone sees in the statement "*I am a virgin*", the proof of the intention of Mary to make a vow of virginity. We have already seen, how in the Jewish mentality, which is the mentality of the girl of Nazareth, this was not possible:

*for a cultural reason:* the Semitic culture of Israel did not know the vow of virginity; the only vocation possible for a woman was maternity; the greatest tragedy was sterility;

*for a contingent reason:* Mary is *already* the "wife of a certain Joseph", waiting to go and live with him.

Mary stating, "*I am a virgin*", should rather support the supposition that the angel came to her in the time between the first and second part of the wedding rite, as we said in the previous pages. At the same time

***He will be  
great and  
will be called  
Son of the  
Most High  
(vv 32-33)***

***Then Mary  
told the  
angel:  
« How will  
this be  
since  
I am  
a virgin? »  
(v 34)***

it is a direct witness, through her own words, of her state of virginity. Her reaction between wonder and doubt shows that she understood well that it will be a true pregnancy, though she had never been with a man.

Having understood clearly that she is becoming the Mother of the Messiah and knowing well her situation, the girl of Nazareth wonders how it could be possible for her to become a mother since she is “a virgin”.



The Spirit comes over Mary as it came over the initial chaos. As in the beginning of times, the Spirit generated the universe, so today, in Mary, the Spirit generates the New Man.

To understand well the words of the angel, it is very important to remember the background of the old testament supporting the narration of Luke.

In fact, the angel, to make Mary understand how the conception will happen, without any intervention of man, but being exclusively by the work of the Holy Spirit, gives her just a hint recalling the whole spiritual patrimony so dear to the Jews and which Mary, like any Jewish girl certainly knew.

Luke refers to the theology of the *cloud*. In fact, the expression used by Luke “*will overshadow*” reminds of the presence of the cloud in the great events of biblical history, through which God remains visible at his people side. *Three moments of that history* are evoked in a particular way:

*the first*, during the experience in the desert, when Moses goes on Mount Sinai where Yahweh gives him the “*the tablets of stone: the law and the commandments*” (cf Ex 24);

*the second*, again in the desert, when the people *build the Tent* for the Ark of the Covenant, containing the tables of the law (cf Ex 40).

*the third*, at the time of Solomon, during the *solemn inauguration of the Temple*, wanted by the wise king (2 Chr 5-6; 1Kings 8).

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### **First moment**

**Exodus 24 - 31**

Moses goes on Mount Sinai, and there, Yahweh reveals himself to him, appearing in a “*cloud*”, which becomes the visible sign of His Presence. The *cloud* covers the mountain for six days and on the seventh day, God reveals His Glory, letting his voice heard, from the *cloud*.

The Israelites, from far, see *the cloud* like a fire, while Moses, for 40

*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.*

(v 35)

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*The Glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain*

Es 24,16

◇ ◇ ◇

days and 40 nights, remains on the mountain (Ex 24). God instructs him (Ex 25-31) and gives him, as a permanent witness of the Covenant sealed between Him and the people, "*the two tablets of the Testimony, the tablets of stone, inscribed by the finger of God*" (Ex 31:18).

Since the experience of Sinai, *the cloud* becomes the presence of God among his people. It is the origin of the **shekinâh**: that is the visibility of the Glory of God, in the sign of a cloud.

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### Second moment

#### Exodus 40

While the people live in the desert, nomad and itinerant, God gives order to Moses to provide a house to the Tablets of Testimony. Moses tells the people to build the Tent of Meeting, where the Ark of the Covenant with the Tablets of the Law is kept.

The *cloud*, which on Sinai showed to Moses the Presence of Yahweh, now, covers the Tent all the time, becoming a visible *witness* of that Presence and at the same time being a *guide* and a protection of the people, along the journey towards the promised land.

Therefore, the people walking in the desert are sure that God is with them: by day through the sign of the cloud, by night through the sign of the fire.

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### Third moment

#### 2 Chr 5-6: 2 (cf 1Kings 8:1-13)

Once the people settles down, Israel does not have any more reason to keep the Tablets in a Tent. Therefore, Solomon builds on the hill of Zion a worthy House, sign of the visible Presence of Yahweh. The Tent, sign of the precarious situation of the people in the desert, is replaced by a Majestic Temple, definitive Abode of the Ineffable Presence of God among His people, not anymore nomad in the desert, but settled in a Kingdom.

The Ark of the Covenant leaves the Tent and moves, with a solemn liturgy, to the Temple, in the *Holy of holies*: the "inner sanctuary" (cf 1King 6:16), built with *cedar boards* within the Temple, the most sacred place, the *womb of Jerusalem*. The cloud that until that moment covered the Tent, like a witness guaranteeing the Presence of Yahweh, is now gone, its mission is over. The Temple itself is there to witness, in a holy and visible way, that Yahweh is Present.

When the high priest puts the Tablets in the *Holy of Holies*, the cloud takes possession of it and *nobody will ever* be allowed to enter into the innermost place filled by the Presence of God. The Glory of Yahweh – *the Shekinâh* – took possession of it.

◇ ◇ ◇

*The cloud of the Lord was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel during all their travels.*

Ex 40:38

◇ ◇ ◇

◇ ◇ ◇

*The temple of the Lord was filled with a cloud, and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the temple of God.*

2Chr 5:13c-14

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Well, Luke knows the theology of the *Shekinâh*, when he puts on the lips of the angel the answer awaited by Mary, facing the bewilderment and wonder, caused by the announcement of a rather unusual maternity.

The Spirit, permanent Presence of God, takes possession of the womb of Mary, as the cloud took possession of the "Holy of Holies".

The humble girl of Nazareth becomes the new and definitive Temple; her womb becomes the tabernacle of the Presence of Yahweh, where the permanence of the Holy Spirit does not allow anybody to enter. Mary is the exclusive dwelling of God. God came out of the Temple of Jerusalem and entered the Temple-Mary, consecrating this young woman as his abode, making her human virginity the effective place of a divine maternity.

As the cloud, taking possession of the "Holy of Holies", reserves the womb of the temple exclusively for God, preventing everybody from going in, so the Spirit made the body of Mary a sacred place, making it the exclusive Dwelling of God.

The virginity of Mary, from a personal story, becomes in this way salvific event for everybody.

*Does Mary understand all this at that moment?*

Surely, she understands that God is calling her to an extraordinary and unique mission: *to become the Mother of the Messiah*. She understands that the messianic time has come, and that she has a precise role to play in it.

She understands also that she will become a Mother by a direct intervention of Yahweh. She, a common girl, who, like everybody, knows the Scriptures and waits for the Liberating Messiah, now led by the angel Gabriel, knows that *the time of waiting is over; the Messiah is here in her womb, by the direct intervention of the Spirit*.

Her journey of faith begins from this moment leading her from understanding the Son as the Messiah to understand him as God: the Liberating Messiah, awaited by his people, announced by the prophets, presented now by Gabriel, is the Son of God, who is going to become man in her womb.

This will be her itinerary as a mother and as a disciple of Jesus: a journey "of faith", which, starting from *Cana* (cf Jn 2:1-12), will lead her until *the foot of the cross* (cf Jn 19:25).



*Nothing is*

From a literary point of view, the expression of the angel is the same

contained in Gn 18: the announcement of the birth of Isaac. When Sarah laughs, unable to believe that she, as old as she is, could be pregnant, the Lord through his messengers replies: «*Is there anything too hard for the Lord?*» (Gen 18:14).

Well, the Greek word “rema”, used here by Luke, and translated inappropriately as “*nothing*”, in reality means “word”. It corresponds to a word of the Old Testament: “*dâbâr*”, used in Genesis: «*God said: let there be light. And there was light* (1:3) ... *God said: let there be the firmament ... and there was the firmament*» (1:6-7). It is therefore an expression loaded with theological-salvific meaning and it means always: *the word that creates*.

Therefore, the expression pronounced by the angel can be translated more faithfully: «*No Word of God is unable to create*». All Words of God are followed always by a creative action. His Word is creative just because it belongs to Him. Then, once the Spirit came into Mary the Word of God becomes creation: “*And the Word became flesh* (cf Jn 1:14).

In addition, this word of the angel, confirming the coming of the Spirit in the life of Mary, is fruitful, is creation, and it will be so well understood by the girl of Nazareth, that she, responding to God and giving her consent, will conclude: “... *Be it done to me, according to the creative word, you brought in me*”.



The expression *servant*, translating the Greek *doule*, corresponds to the Hebrew *ebed*, which does not indicate a condition of slavery but a state of belonging.

To be *ebed*, means *to belong*. It is a bit the condition of women in the Jewish culture who, through marriage, become property of the husband ... his belonging.

Mary, in this highest level of dialogue, with disarming humility and awareness, is stating: “*I am the property of God; I belong to Him*”. It is not the statement of a servant, but of the spouse. It is not an act of yielding but it is a consent. The Spirit of God coming in her may generate in her the Flesh of the Son.

It is the yes given by a free Mary. The yes of faith, that the whole person, body included, expresses by serving the Creative Word. Augustine will say that Mary conceived first in her heart then in her womb.

Recognizing herself as “servant-*ebed*”, the humble girl of Nazareth, preserved since eternity from sin and from selfish urges, places her whole person at the service of a Project having as protagonists God and humanity.

I would say that in the words of Mary, there is the awareness of the

***impossible to  
God***  
(v 37)



*Is anything too hard  
for the Lord?*  
Gn 18:14

*The Word of God  
is alive and active ...*

Heb 4:12a



***Behold, I am  
the servant  
of the Lord,  
may it be  
done to me  
according to  
your word.***

(v 38)



*Then I said: Here I  
am – it is written  
about me in the  
scroll - I have come  
to do your will my  
God.*

humanity generating, from itself, the new humanity. Mary is the sign-model of that relational-humanity towards which the conflictual humanity is called to turn. She can speak to us of the relational-ego! Her body becomes the body of the "new humanity". *It is no longer she who lives, but it is Christ living in her!*

Heb 10:7 (Ps 39: 8-9)

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*"The Virgin Mary conceived Christ first in her heart then in her womb ...  
believing she gave birth to whom she conceived believing"  
(Saint Augustine)*



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Second Part

## THE EVENT OF THE ANNUNCIATION

### A spiritual reading questioning us

*AN "ANNOUNCEMENT" FOR OUR CHARISM*

*FOR OUR TIME ... FOR MY/OUR HISTORY*

**Work-Sheet A**

*In Jeanne Antide, an "announcement" for our charism*

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Jeanne Antide Thouret lived in a time of great tension and conflict. Her life goes through the whole French Revolution considered by modern historiography like a true watershed between the modern era and our contemporary time. Moreover, in Naples, where she dies in 1826, though she does not mention it in her

writings, she lives all the social and political tension of this Kingdom, culminating in the so-called “riots of 1820”.

Well, in this period of history mostly conflictual, Jeanne Antide lives some decisive experiences for her life; some true “annunciations”: passages of the Spirit, revealing to her the Will of God, determining events for her life and for what follows it. **We recall 3 of them ...**

### ✚ *The origin of her vocation:*

*“One day her father told her that a rich man asked to marry her ...”*

Manuscript of sr Rosalie. **READ in LD: pp. 19 - 22**

### ✚ *The confession in the sanctuary of Einsiedeln and the meeting in Landeron :*

*« My daughter this is the will of God: he wants you in France ... go like a good daughter of Saint Vincent de Paul to evangelize the poor... ».*

Manuscript of sr Rosalie **READ in LD: pp. 66-67**

*Some priests ... asked to see her. They told her: «We are going back to France ... You also must come back. There you will select young women and form them as you have been formed and you will establish yourselves in Besançon for the education of the youth and the care of the sick poor » ... « I am not capable ... »*

Memorandum of Pure Truths **READ in LD pp: 4 - 5**

### ✚ *The call to Naples:*

*"Her Imperial and Royal Highness particularly recommended to His Excellency the Minister for Rites your request for the concession of the so-called house of the Benedictines. She hopes that her right and proper recommendation will be accepted soon ... **But** Her Highness asked me to write to you about **another even more important question** concerning the growth and utility of your Congregation ..."*

Letter of Mr. Guieu, 28<sup>th</sup> May 1810 **READ in the biography of Rey-Mermet, pp 283ff**

*« ... The special concern animating me for the success of the great plan of His Majesty the King of Naples, as well as the glory of God who inspired him, give me the strength to undertake this journey ... »*

(Letter to Laetitia Bonaparte, 10<sup>th</sup> June 1810 **READ in LD pp. 249-251**)

**Work-sheet B**

***In the era of the Spirit, an “announcement” for our time ...  
for my-our history***

---

When the Spirit, through the word of the Angel, entered into the life of Mary making her fecund, in reality it entered into human history.

Since that day, nothing is as it was before. History has become the “temple” of the Holy Spirit and time entered into the apocalyptic era of the “last” struggle ...

Let us read the “signs” of this struggle: in their ambivalence of darkness and light, death and life ...

- *in the scenario of the present world*
  
- *in our context of life*  
*(community, family, local church, etc ...)*
  
- *in my/our history*



### **The Angelus Domini**

*(From the apostolic exhortation of Paul VI: "Marialis Cultus" (2<sup>nd</sup> February 1974)*

- (No. 41) "The Angelus does not need to be revised, because of its simple structure, its biblical character, its historical origin which links it to the prayer for peace and safety, and its quasi-liturgical rhythm, which sanctifies different moments during the day, and because it reminds us of the Paschal Mystery ... These factors ensure that the Angelus, despite the passing of centuries, retains an unaltered value and an intact freshness".
- Three times a day the Church recites the Angelus Domini, as three times it prays the Our Father (Lauds, Eucharist, Vespers), on the rhythm of the "Shemà, Israel".
- From our tradition, that goes back to Saint Vincent the Paul and which Jeanne Antide kept, we also recite - *3 times a day* – the Angelus Domini ... as a community whenever possible. This is our way of venerating the mystery of the Incarnation everyday.