



Second Week of Advent

Tuesday, December 8th, 2020

Dennis Hamm, SJ shares his reflections on today's Scripture readings.

GN 3:9-15, 20; PS 98:1, 2-3AB, 3CD-4; EPH 1:3-6, 11-12; LK 1:26-38

If we are really paying attention, today's Gospel reading about the encounter between Mary and the messenger Gabriel can seem a little, well, untimely. This episode in Mary's life is what the Catholic Church has come to call the Annunciation. But there is already another feast day by that name. Why do we read it on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary? On one level, the answer is simple. It is because it is truly the conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in her own mother's womb that we celebrate today. And since there is no biblical passage narrating that event, we get as close as we can by reading a passage that commemorates one of the consequences of that act of God, Mary's own motherhood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Creator, whom Mary's son, Jesus, taught us to address as "Father," was at work in Joachim and Ann, the traditional names for her parents, raising her to live with a heart utterly open to God and fellow human beings within the Jewish traditions of the day. How do we know this? By coming to know the son whom she mothered. That process illustrated what St. Paul taught us to call *grace*, which Paul himself experienced, years later, when he was surprised by Jesus, amid his search and destroy mission to root out the spread of his disciples. You might say that the Catholic Church recognized this divine intervention in the "sense of the faithful" ultimately in the declaration of Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The reasoning was that the young woman who was so full of grace as to identify as a "slave girl of God" in response to the divine interruption that called her out of a simple quiet life into the center of history, such a person must have been exempt from original sin even from her own birth from Ann's womb.

Pope Francis is so convinced of Mary as the ultimate model of any disciple of Christ that he reflects and prays about that reality every chance he gets. For example, recently in a homily urging his audience of visitors to preach the gospel by their deeds of charity and justice as well as by their words, he also urged them to model their own lives on Mary's readiness to serve others in a ministry of mercy.

The entrance of the divine into human history in Jesus of Nazareth came to be called *incarnation*, literally *enfleshment*. I am beginning to realize that this enfleshment is a process

that entails a history (e.g. Joachim and Ann) and, even more importantly, a *promise* that is still unfolding—in our own lives, if we have chosen to join it.

Let us pray. Loving God, as we approach the celebration of your saving engagement with us in the nativity of your Son, help us rejoice in the role you prepared your daughter Mary to play in your fulfillment of the hope of Israel we hear in the promises of Isaiah. Help us be moved to compassion, so that even our own suffering can lead us to live lives in sympathy with the least and the rejected among us. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death.

Faith: Lived, Deepend, Celebrated

During these uncertain times, we welcome your prayer requests. The Bishop Chatard community will lift up your prayer intentions in the weekly BCHS Prayer Chain. **Email Mr. Steven Patzke, at spatzke@bishopchatard.org, your prayer intentions or to join the prayer chain.**