**THE ANNUNCIATION (Luke 1:26-38)**

*Supporting text: Word made flesh (John 1:1-14), Prayer of Response (Psalm 119:145-152)*

God sends the angel Gabriel to announce that Mary is to give birth to “the Son of the Most High” (v32). She is told not to be afraid. God has spoken his Word, and the Word is to become one of us. Of herself, Mary cannot accomplish this. Mary agrees to participate in God’s divine plan: “Let it be done to me according to your word” (v38)

This text reminds us that God’s Word is not merely a book, or a collection of abstract concepts. God’s Word is alive, active and powerful. Most importantly of all, it is personal. So personal is this Word to us that it IS in fact a person! Jesus Christ IS God’s Word to us. And God’s Word is love – true love, tough love, love that lasts forever. As John 3:16 says “For this is how God loved the world: He gave his only Son.” And as John 15:13-17 responds “A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13) and “What I command you is to love one another (John 15:17).

**REFLECTIONS ON THE ANGELUS**

The name of the prayer comes from the Latin version of the first words…”The angel…” (in Latin, “angelus”) The ringing of “The Angelus” is an invitation to briefly stop what we are doing and pause to pray, recalling the mystery of the Incarnation.

When we hear the angelus bell ringing, the number three comes to mind. The bells toll in three sets of three, reminding us of the three Hail Mary’s of the prayer text. However, the symbolism goes much deeper. The three sets of three also remind us of the scripturally-based verses that introduce each of the “Hail Marys”. These three verses recall the main “moments” that enabled the Incarnation to become a reality in the long story of salvation history.

These three moments are:

* the Annunciation, when Gabriel announced to Mary that she was to conceive and bear a son, Jesus.
* Mary’s acceptance of this announcement; her “Yes” to God.
* The consequence of her “Yes” and therefore, what it would mean for the world

The realisation that “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” is given expression in the joyful, constant ringing of the angelus bell which culminates, following the initial sets of three. The Angelus rings faithfully, day in and day out. Like the Incarnation itself, it is present, active and effective. If it wakes you from your sleep at 6am, or interrupts your daily activities at noon, even then it mirrors the Incarnation, God’s very breaking into our human experience, becoming one of us and one with us.

Taken from: http://www.churchstjoseph.org/reflections-on-the-angelus/#

**SHORT HISTORY OF THE ANGELUS**

***Giuseppe Luppino***

***We repeat the words of the Annunciation for the world, the Church***

On 25 March, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Annunciation: an important moment for her to pause to recall what suddenly happened in the history of mankind, so that man could be changed profoundly and saved. Our experience of education in the faith has us continue our formation by reciting the *Angelus* eventhough we know that the *Angelus* in the form we have it was crystallized only around the first half of the 16th century.

**Medieval custom of triple Hail Mary in the evening**

In the centuries before that, this name or the name *Ave* *Maria* was applied to the moment of prayer specifically devoted to the daily recitation of the "angelic greeting", the *Hail Mary* (a custom that seems to have spread in England before it took hold on the continent of Europe). The practice of reciting the *Hail Mary* three times in a row dates at least to the 12th century, and St Anthony of Padua (1195-1231) strongly recommended it. This devout practice was a great favourite also of St Mechtilde of Helfta (1241-1298) in her *Revelations*, andSt Bonaventure, in a Chapter of the Order of the Friars Minor in 1269 proposed they recite these three *Hail Mary's* in the evening after Compline, meditating on the mystery of Christ's Incarnation, urging at the same time that the recitation be preceded always by the ringing of a bell so that the brothers and all the faithful nearby would know that it was time for the *Hail Mary.*

**Morning and Noon Angelus for Christianity at risk**

As time passed, in the Christian lands, the practice was repeated first in the early morning, and then at midday. Testimonies to the noon recitation are found around 1413 in the land now known as Czechoslovakia and in 1423 in Cologne. Pope Sixtus IV, in 1475, was the first to endow the recitation of the Angelus at noon with an indulgence. This indulgence was confirmed and extended by Pope Leo X in 1517 to whoever recited it in the morning, at noon, and in the evening, and Pope Pius XI (1922-1939) seems to have been the last one to grant an indulgence.

This is a moment of prayer, then, that has been used to sanctify the first part of the day for centuries and that even was prayed to rescue Christianity in difficult moments, such as happened in Belgrade in 1456, when the Turks succeeded in invading Serbia.

**Modern form of devotion to Mary and the Incarnation**

The form as we know it appears for the first time—according to J. Fournée in his The *History of* the *Angelus. The Angel's Message* to *Mary* (Lev, 1997)—in *The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (*Officium parvum BMV*),printed in Rome during the time of Pope Pius V (1566-1572), and also in the *Manuale catholicorum* (*Handbook for Catholics*) by the Jesuit St Peter Canisius, published in Antwerp in 1588. In older manuals of devotion, according to the date of their publication, the *Angelus* may mention Pope Benedict XIV (14 September 1742) and Pope Leo XIII (15 March 1884) as its great promoters.

**Artists have shaped our image of the Annunciation: Mary at prayer or in meditation at the angel's coming**

The greatest artists have chosen to immortalize this moment: Mary is usually shown kneeling or seated and sometimes has a book in her hand or nearby. The tradition preferred in the West and known in the East only because of Western influence (see the 16th century Mount Athos frescoes) likes to visualize Mary meditating on the Bible, and more precisely, according to the suppositions of the Fathers of the Church, on the passage by the prophet Isaiah (7,14): "Behold, a virgin will conceive …", or reading the psalter, as reported in the *Meditationes vitae Christi* (*Meditations on the Life of Christ*),a book dear to late medieval artists. Among the earliest works representing the Annunciation, we can mention the frescoes of Giotto (ca. 1305 in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua) and the panel painting by Simone Martini (1333, Uffizi, Florence). And we should not forget Fra Angelico's *Annunciation* in the Convent of San Marco in Florence (ca. 1440), the one by Leonardo (ca. 1475, Uffizi), or *The Angelus* by Millet (1857-59, Louvre, Paris).

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