

Advent: *adventus*, or "presence, arrival"

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"So reflecting, I meditated on the mysteries in turn, thinking of the notable fruit that Our Lady saw our Lord bear at the Annunciation, at the Visitation, and at the Nativity. She saw the shepherds raised to higher knowledge; she understood the meaning of the mystery of the Circumcision; she saw the kings bow down so low." – *The Spiritual Writings of St. Pierre Favre, SJ.*

### I. Mary, and the "presence of God" at the Annunciation

- Mary knows God- the interplay of dialogue suggests a familiarity and trust (contrast with Zechariah's doubt)
- Place is important – the angel comes to Mary in Nazareth, in her lowliness—an unsuspecting place. (compared with the angel that visits Zechariah, in the Temple, while conducting his priestly duty). Two Marian questions for us:
  - Where do I not want to look for God, or where I have glanced over because it is too lowly? The Son of God comes here, and is here.
  - In faith, can I submit to God that He finds me in the most "out-of-way" places?
- Mary is troubled, but dialogues with God—"she pondered within her heart." Question for you and me: Where do we habitually get stuck in an endless rumination instead of dialoguing with God? [Fear can give rise to erroneous conclusions]
- Mary asks a clarifying question, not calling God into question, but revealing she is at the human limits of her understanding. This is a posture of humility—there is no intellectual pride here. [example on finding new life at the "limit" areas]
- Her "Yes"—which is a perpetual meditation for the Church—listening to God, and responding is fruitful.
- Finally, the angel departs and Mary is left again in the silence, with all the uncertainty of this annunciation. Mary's faith is a model for our Church – Listening to the Word of God, speaking with God, responding (often without full understanding), moving forward in faith. [Mary shows us how to relate to God in the ordinariness of life]

"I consider it important to focus also on the final sentence of Luke's annunciation narrative: 'And the angel departed from her.' The great hour of Mary's encounter with God's messenger-- in which her whole life is changed--comes to an end, and she remains there alone, with the task that truly surpasses all human capacity. There are no angels standing around her. She must continue along the path that leads through many dark moments—from Joseph's dismay at her pregnancy to the moment when Jesus is said to be 'out of his mind', right up to the night of the Cross." -- Pope Benedict XVI *Jesus of Nazareth.*

## II. Mary, and the “presence of God” in Joseph.

The Virgin, weighed  
With the Word of God,  
Comes down the road:  
If only you'll shelter her.  
--St. John of the Cross

“Joseph wanted to protect Mary with secrecy. But what God wanted was open proclamation of salvation...”

–Erasmus Leiva-Merikakis (Commentary on the gospel of Matthew)

A prayer consideration:

1. Mary ponders God within, while Joseph is searching, deeply, over what to do. At times you and I have searched...deeply....
2. There is no despair in Joseph; rather surrender... in his sleep...after his searching. And God enters.
3. Do you finally rest at the end of your prayer, at the end of the wrestling with God, so that he may enter?

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- Jesus grows up hearing the story of the betrothal and pregnancy of Mary. Also learns from Joseph.
- We wonder of the influence of Joseph on Jesus's mind and heart as he encountered the woman caught in adultery, or the woman at the well. “Is there no one to condemn you?” “No one, Lord.” “Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.”
- We may wonder at Jesus as he carries the cross—the wood he would have felt while working with Joseph. Mary, pondering as well, what Jesus learned in his humanity from Joseph in Nazareth.

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## III. Mary, and the “presence of God” in the Church

- Mary/the Church as witness to the ways God acts within the soul and the effect it has on the person. (Nicodemus, the apostles, Joseph of Arimathea).
- Church/We recover Marian dimension of contemplating the action of God in people and in the culture. Keeps the Church from being turned in on itself—effect of love of neighbor. Also, aides our prayer when expectations fall short (apostle flee at the cross, but who does Mary see that is unexpectedly there?)
- Mary gives birth to Christ, who in turn gives birth to the Church
  - [See icon on screen- “Roses in December”]

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