

The Joyful Mysteries of the Holy Rosary. 17th October

After each reflection: one Our Father, 10 Hail Mary's and one Glory Be.

1. The Annunciation:

Since the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, God's purpose perhaps slow and baffling and yet relentless has been to restore humanity to himself. Think of the countless stories in the old Testament where we read God's chosen people have betrayed him, turned away from him and rejected his laws and his love. In this great scene when the Angel Gabriel visits Mary and she is hailed as "full of grace", we see the moment at which Mary, born without the stain of sin, will consent freely to be the new ark of the covenant. To be the bearer of the God-Man.

Our Lady's "yes" is possible because she was chosen and at the same time given the grace of participation in God's difficult and perhaps mysterious scheme. Grace, a free gift of God, gives us the ability to believe, to trust and go forward, but we so often shrug off grace all the time in order to go our own way, satisfy our own minds, serve our own attachments.

We should pray for the same courage to accept what the Lord God Almighty asks of us!

2. The Visitation:

In what Pope Benedict XVI describes as the "*first Eucharistic procession*," Mary visits her cousin, Elizabeth, who rushes to greet her and cries out with mysterious knowledge: "*How is this that the mother of my Lord come to me?*" (Luke 1:43) Mary blooms into a prayer that echoes Hannah's joy in the Old Testament; the canticle we call the *Magnificat*. In Elizabeth's womb, the forerunner, John the Baptist, leaps for joy! Here is flesh-and-blood recognizing flesh-and-blood, but alive with something more, as-yet undefined. This will all unravel in the months and years ahead, when Our Lord shows to the people he has come to save, who he really is.

3. The Nativity of Our Lord:

And then there is a crack in history as the God who created the world, the God of Israel does something unthinkable; he becomes enfleshed in the form of a vulnerable baby boy. This happens in the most remarkable way. God does not come as something or someone 'better' or unrecognisable. He is born of flesh and

blood, the blood of Our Lady. His birth is entirely natural and yet entirely supernatural. God enters into our world not with a cacophony of noise and a display of raw power, but as the humblest and most dependent of creatures: a baby, lying in a manger, a place for the feeding of animals. He, who became Food for the World, entered with silence, as though he had put his finger to the quivering mouth of a troubled, sobbing world and said, "*Ssshhh...it is alright, I'll keep you company...*" God submits to his creation in order to save it.

4. The Presentation:

Joseph and Mary bring Jesus to the temple. Imagine how difficult it was to stay hydrated while traveling even a short distance in that region, especially for a new mother who is nursing her baby. They would have needed to know where all of the wells were, and to have water nearby if they had any hope of conjuring up the strength needed for the journey. Here the Creator God, now a vulnerable baby, is dependent upon the very basic element of water which his spirit hovered over as we read in the book of Genesis.

So Jesus is brought to the priests and is circumcised like every Jewish male. Even he, Son of Mary, Son of God, must be vulnerable, sensitively exposed to God and the world, in this way. Flesh is cut, blood appears, the baby yelps and is quickly embraced and consoled by his mother. The God of All Consolations cries out in pain, completely vulnerable, allowing humanity to comfort him.

Anna and Simeon have been awaiting the appearance of Jesus; they recognize the his birth, and Simeon speaks words that must simultaneously soothe and grieve Mary's heart: "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted and you yourself a sword will pierce your heart..."

5. The Finding of Our Lord in the Temple:

In this mystery we jump ahead twelve years; the adolescent Jesus has stayed behind in Jerusalem. Three days he is there, mirroring the three days in the tomb. Mary and Joseph, who love Jesus and live with him, and know him well must have been in a desperate panic. They too must seek out this Jesus no doubt in sorrow at his disappearance. This is the event that breaks the silence of the Gospels about the hidden years of Jesus. Here Jesus lets us catch a glimpse of the mystery of his total consecration to a mission that flows from his divine sonship. His reply to his parents, 'Did you not know that I must be about my Father's work?' The submission we see to his mission but also to his parents, will come again when we will see Our Lord submit flesh and blood, once for all; heart pierced for the life of the world on the life giving tree of the cross.