

SOLEMNITY OF THE Annunciation

The story of Gabriel's message to Mary is loaded with doubt and belief, joy and sorrow, fear and comfort. As such it is a story for all of us, whoever we are and wherever we are in life.

Reading between lines Gabriel here does not bring comfort to Mary. The long trip she makes to her relative Elizabeth thereafter is a sign of her uneasiness. The haste with which she goes out was humanly speaking a hunt for comfort, wanting to quickly share in the event of the Annunciation with Elizabeth. Nowhere do we hear of her being entirely settled, unworried, and confident after her meeting with Gabriel. Each and every day she must have wrestled through those words of the angel: *'The Lord is with you, do not be afraid, Mary.'* Maybe even chanting them like a mantra, like a blessing, like a song you can't get out of your head.

At the end of Mary's conversation with Gabriel her response is a definite 'yes.' This was a source of great joy at one level but this did not remove her underlying anxiety or fear, worry or doubt. The inkling of *'something isn't right'* must have consumed her mind regardless of miracle and promise. This is perfectly appropriate; it is something real and perfectly human. The Annunciation is a story ripe for a mixture of rejoicings, questionings and uncertainties that life carries, and it's about opening up and receiving all of it.

Mary's 'yes' is the vessel through which God-among-us steps into our world and opens up to us as one of us. Our 'yes' today is not a claim to perfection or a statement of moral superiority any more than the days we can only bring ourselves to say, *'no, I just can't.'* The openness of God's love is unending, so that wherever we find ourselves we are welcomed and embraced. So whatever these strained circumstances and whatever insecurity they may cause, let us hear again that greeting of Gabriel: *'the Lord is with you, do not be afraid'*.