



**December 24, 2023**

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

*But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid Mary;  
you have found favor with God." Luke 1:30*



Dear Friends;

Recently Pope Francis stated, *"There is no salvation without woman."* But as scripture tells us he was conceived in the womb. It was there that God made humanity his own. In the womb of a woman, God and humankind are permanently united. Even in heaven Jesus lives in the flesh that he took in his mother's womb. This only happens because Mary was willing to take a great risk.

In the ancient Mediterranean world believed that unless prevented by appropriate measures a man and a woman left alone together would inevitably have sexual relations. With the appearance of a presumably male angel Mary finds herself in a precarious situation. Mary appears to be quite alone. A male figure in the inner part of the house is suspicious. Should anything happen to her in the home, her father and brothers would be shamed, this is a volatile situation. However, the angel acts honorably, he reassures Mary, "do not be afraid." He recognizes her honorable status as God's favored one.

The angel explains God's plan for her. Despite the angel's honorable assurances Mary is concerned about her own honor. *"How can this be? Although I am betrothed, I am still a virgin."* In an instant Mary realizes the problems that will emerge with her betrothal, and the crisis the pregnancy will cause between the two families.

The angel tells her *"Nothing is impossible with God."* The angel explains that God will empower her (*"the spirit will come upon you"*) and protect (*overshadow*) you. These are the two duties of a traditional Mediterranean husband. The meaning of this is not lost on the young woman. Her response is like saying *"as you wish."*

In the incarnation we celebrate the marital union between God and humankind that took place in the womb of a woman. God is permanently fused with our humanity. And Mary will be forever the Mother of God. She is both woman and mother. In her God was united to us. Pope Francis says if we want to unite ourselves to God we must take the same path as God through Mary, woman, and mother. If we want to unite humanity as one in our time *"we need to start again from woman."*

Pope Francis tells us, *"The rebirth of humanity began from a woman. Women are sources of life. Yet they are continually insulted, beaten, raped, force to prostitute themselves, and to suppress the life they bear in the womb... Humanity's salvation came forth from the body of a woman: can we understand our degree of humanity by how we treat a woman's body.... they must be respected and honored..."*

*Born of woman, Jesus, newly born, was mirrored in the eyes of the woman, in the face of his mother. From her he received his first caresses; with her, he exchanged the first smiles. With her began a revolution of tenderness. The Church, looking at the Baby Jesus, is called to continue that revolution."*

Peace,

*Sr Ron*

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