

Dear Friends,

The incarnation is the most extraordinary, mind-dazzling, significant and fascinating event in human history. It has fired the imagination of artists of every kind. Poets, sculptors, writers and biblical experts have used striking imagery to put this unimaginable truth into human language. They've spoken of it as "a divine kiss of peace", an "explosion of God's extraordinary love for us", a "fresh bond of intimacy" between God and humanity, between the mighty God and God's tiny creatures. At the heart of this astonishing story stands a woman who is totally one with us in our humanity.

The annunciation uniquely focusses, not upon a great man, such as a general, a politician or a renowned scholar, but upon a young teenager called Mary. Almost from early childhood she has been hidden away in a tiny village called Nazareth located on the very edges of the mighty Roman Empire. She is the kind of person who might be dismissed as a "Little Miss Nobody". St. John's Gospel records that when Philip, one of Jesus' first disciples, was told that the long awaited Messiah had come and was living in Nazareth, his cool reaction was, "What good can ever come from Nazareth?"

The story of the annunciation begins with the arrival of the unexpected visitor at Mary's little cottage. An angel, the bearer of startling news, reveals that she is to conceive, carry in her womb, give birth and finally be mother to the long-awaited Messiah.

In the days before Jesus' coming, people generally acknowledged God's almighty power. A prophet like Isaiah could picture God holding the whole world in his hands and encompassing the heavens with an outstretched palm. But even Isaiah could never have begun to imagine what we celebrate at Christmas time – this same God coming to live among us as one of us – coming as a tiny baby, a bundle of weakness and helplessness and, in the end, dying in shame on a wooden cross. He comes into our world, just as we did, by being born of a woman. Without a woman's cooperation, there would have been no incarnation. Without Mary's cooperation, there would be no Christmas. It is that thought that leads many people, even small children, to try to reflect her love by practical acts of kindness to their sisters and brothers.

If we take time, make time – even just a few minutes each day in this often hectic period to recall how Mary treasured and pondered "these things" in her heart, we too will ponder them, and come to appreciate why the wonder of Christ's birth – even at the end of a difficult year like 2023 – calls for celebration, for rejoicing, and for gentle, loving wonder, in the company of Mary. It is she who best teaches us how to love Jesus; it is she who shows us, despite our littleness, to love Jesus as she did by making him the love of our lives.

And so as Pope St. John Paul II put it, "the faithful, living in the spirit of the liturgy, by thinking about the inexpressible love with which the Virgin Mother awaited her son, are invited to take her as model and prepare themselves to meet the Savior."

Wish Y'all A Merry Christmas!

Your friend in Jesus
Msgr. Zach