

## **Luke 1:26-38<sup>vi vii</sup>**

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

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### **<sup>vi</sup> About Luke 1:26-38**

Luke's infancy narratives show that the meaning of Jesus' life, death and resurrection was already implicit in the circumstances of his conception and birth. He emphasizes the theological significance of these events and so presents the gospel message through them.

The annunciation to Mary is similar to the annunciation to Zechariah in 1:5-23. Gabriel, the angel who heralds the fulfillment of God's salvation in Daniel (Daniel 9:20-25), now appears to Mary to herald the birth of Jesus.

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The angel greets Mary as God's wonderfully graced one. He then reveals that she is to bear a son who will be a powerful Davidic King and, in fact, God's own Son. Mary questions how this can be, but Gabriel replies that God's power, the Holy Spirit, will come upon Mary and create this new life in her. Thus, the divine origin of Jesus' earthly history is affirmed.

As with Mary, so the life of God is conceived and nurtured in each of us. But it happens only through God's power, not our own. We need only cooperate as God's willing servants.

## vii **Reflection and Response**

Every year the malls start sooner to create mythical holiday worlds where dreams come true and bills don't arrive for another month. Even the skeptics find themselves getting caught up in it, thinking maybe this year we can achieve harmony, satisfy all hungers and create a perfect peace. How odd it seems then to turn to Advent readings where the only touch of perfection comes with the brief brush of an angel wing, then disappears, leaving unanswered questions.

Many of us would enjoy the house of cedar without the prick of conscience that prompted David to make a costly comparison. How could he enjoy his comfort when God dwelt in a make-shift tent? Yet when David directs that question to Nathan, God answers through the prophet with the delight of a parent whose child has offered some homemade, lopsided but lovingly crafted gift. God responds with overwhelming generosity, promising ongoing support, fame, victory, peace, just government and rest. God tells David in short order: "Let's get the dynamic straight. It is I who build the house for you."

This is a good reminder for those who become obsessive about housecleaning, decorating and family bonding at this time of year. Our efforts never make the home complete, for God is the ultimate builder.

The same spirit permeates the gospel reading from Luke. Mary lacks all the credentials that most humans think important for anyone making such a dramatic change in history. Almost everything is against her: her age, inexperience, gender, marital status and powerlessness. But what is for her outweighs all the apparent negatives: the favor of God and its inner reflection in her willingness. Her poverty is lifted up and turned into wealth by a God for whom nothing is impossible.

There seems to be little in our holiday feasting that celebrates this twist of events. If anything, we go to the opposite extreme, trying to create magic through our own frantic efforts. It never quite works, does it? The cookies burn, the relatives fight, the sweaters don't fit, weariness and depression set in...and then we remember: Christ would come in circumstances like these.