Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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“Do not be afraid, for you have found favor with God” (Luke 1:30).

Is 7:10-14; 8:10; Ps 40; Heb 10:4-10; Lk 1:26-38

Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord

Every encounter with God in the Bible begins with terror. The floor goes out from underneath a person’s sense of reality. This can’t be happening. But it is, and the time-space continuum is altered to suddenly bring the past to a decisive passage into a different future.

The call of the prophets, Moses’ encounter with Yahweh in the burning bush, Paul’s conversion, the resurrection appearances to the disciples – all of these moments of revelation interrupt the ordinary narrative and inject it with enormous power, what German theologian Rudolf Otto called the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans,* the name of God.

The angel’s visit to Mary in what we call the Annunciation, asking her consent to be the mother of Jesus, was such a moment, and Luke says that Mary was afraid. Gabriel, the messenger, reassures her. “You have found favor with God,” then lays out for her the plan. She will conceive and bear and son, and he will be called the Son of the Most High.

Mary’s consent to the Incarnation alters history forever. We share the grace given through Mary to the whole human race, which opened us to a divine destiny. The birth of Jesus makes possible the birth of the church at Pentecost and infuses every

baptism with hope that points toward eternity, life with God.

But the journey into that altered future will not be automatic or without cost. Each of us must share Mary's human journey through the sluggish resistance of old, failed stories generated by human pride and selfishness. A sword of sorrow awaits Mary as her son becomes a sign of contradiction.

By baptism we bear the sign of the cross. Lent is our journey toward a different future made possible by Jesus, who went before us and opened up the path to Life. "Don't be afraid. You have found favor with God."

Pope Francis has chosen today and this solemnity to call on the world to consecrate Russia and Ukraine to the Heart of Mary. The conflict there now threatens global peace and points to a different future for Europe and beyond. The flight of millions of mothers and children from their homeland emphasizes the cost of war and the threat to international stability.

Here is a link to the prayer the pope has issued to share his concerns: https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/250756/vatican-pope-francis-text-for-march-25-consecration-prayer

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