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Gospel for 20 December: God's Favored Ones

Gospel during Advent for
December 20, and commentary.

Gospel (*Lk 1:26-38*)

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!"

But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind

what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name 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 father David,

and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever;

and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

And Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I have no husband?” And 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 called holy,

the Son of God.

And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.”

And Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

Commentary

Scripture testifies to a number of women who conceived and gave birth in a way that defied human expectations. Sometimes these births are announced by the Lord or by a

messenger of his; other times, the women themselves ask God for this gift. Sarah, being barren, gave birth to Isaac (cf. *Gen* 21:3). Isaac in turn implored God to enable his wife Rebekah, also barren, to conceive; and she gave birth to Esau and Jacob (cf. *Gen* 25:21). Rachel, Jacob's wife, was also barren, until God made her fruitful (cf. *Gen* 30:22-23). Hannah, after praying earnestly, conceived and gave birth to Samuel (cf. *1 Sam* 1:20). The angel of the Lord announced to Manoah's wife that she was going to have a son; and she gave birth to Samson (cf. *Judges* 13:24). And the angel announced to Zechariah that the Lord had heard his prayer, and that his wife, barren and already advanced in years, was going to conceive and give birth to John, the precursor of the Messiah (cf. *Lk* 1:13).

God, the author of life, is faithful to his promises and is always listening

to his children's pleas. In these women he has been preparing his people to welcome the definitive fulfillment of all the prophecies. And so another daughter of his, named Mary, the favored one of the Lord, without stain of sin right from her conception, who was a virgin and espoused to Joseph, was chosen from all eternity for the Only Begotten of the Father, by the work of the Holy Spirit, to become incarnate in her womb. What an amazing wonder worked by God! The maiden of Nazareth freely accepted her call to be the virginal Mother of the Messiah, and she placed herself at the Lord's service. The Church's liturgy helps us to contemplate with wonder the greatness of this mystery: "For the Virgin Mary heard with faith that the Christ was to be born among men and for men's sake by the overshadowing power of the Holy Spirit. Lovingly she bore him in her immaculate womb."^[1]

As Christmas draws near, we too want to welcome this announcement by which we have been made children of God. And we want to unite ourselves, through our own lives, to Mary's unconditional service to the work of redemption "for men's sake." This is a joyful and self-denying service that will help many other people discover their own calling. Saint Josemaría drew great light from Mary's "let it be done": "Mother, Oh Mother! With that reply of yours – *fiat*, 'let it be done' – you have made us brothers and sisters of God and heirs to his Glory. Blessed art thou!"^[2]

^[1] Preface for the Solemnity of the Annunciation.

^[2] Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 512.

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