

Today, March 25, is the Solemnity of the Annunciation of our Lord. This feast quite naturally occurs exactly nine months before Christmas. So even though it occurs during the season of Lent, we put Lent aside for a day to celebrate the fact that Jesus, the second person of the Holy Trinity, became man on this date. He began his life as all of us do, as a fertilized egg, growing into a fully formed baby.

Unlike the gods of mythology, who appeared in the *guise* of a human, Jesus actually become a man. There is a small sign on the altar at the grotto in the basement of the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth the reads, in Latin, Verbum Caro Hic Factum Est, “The Word was made flesh here” (from the prologue to John’s Gospel) The grotto is the place believed to be the site of the Annunciation.

Why is this so significant? Entire books have been written on the subject through the years but let me try to offer one important thought.

Only God could grant us the redemption we all so desperately needed. .But only a man could satisfy the debts of our sins. Therefore only a God-Man—Jesus—could restore our relationship to the Father that had been destroyed by centuries of sin. By ourselves we were incapable of offering the perfect sacrifice necessary.

As Athanasius, an early Church Father put it so well, “What has not been assumed has not been redeemed.” Therefore Jesus had to *fully* human in order to redeem us. He was, as St. Paul wrote, “a man like us in all things but sin”.

Jesus came to earth, became a man, for the sole purpose of dying and rising so that we who we who were dead to sin might live again in Him.

We must not overlook on this Solemn and happy day, the contribution of Blessed Mary. For God's plan to be fulfilled she had to say "yes". There is a wonderful line (I can't remember its source) that says the angels in heaven held their breath in anticipation of her answer.

Think of it, this young girl, perhaps 15 or 16, who had vowed a life of virginity, was willing to undergo the scandal her pregnancy would surely cause by agreeing to become the mother of the Savior!

We also mustn't forget St. Joseph, who also said yes by agreeing to take Mary, his wife, into his home and become the protector and foster father of Jesus.

These two were willing to follow God's plan, no matter how it looked to others, and no matter the difficulties they would face.

God has a plan for us, each and every one of us. Are we willing to say "yes" to God as wholeheartedly as did Mary and Joseph. Are we willing to endure slander and gossip in order to follow our Lord? Are we willing to humble ourselves before God, as Jesus humbled himself by taking on our humanity with all its frailties?

There is much to ponder on this day. I invite you to spend some time meditating of the wonderful and awesome gift that came to us in Jesus. Thank Him for his gift of redemption from sin and the possibility eternal life with Him. Ask for the intercession of Mary and Joseph as we struggle in this time of fear and uncertainty; they know these emotions because they felt them themselves!.

Peace be with you!

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