

25 March 2024
Holy Monday Vespers

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

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Holy Monday Meditation
Text: Luke 1:26-38

March 25th is the day the church remembers and celebrates the Annunciation of Our Lord - the day when the angel Gabriel came to the virgin Mary and spoke to her the Word of God: that she would be a mother. But not just a mother, the mother of Jesus, the mother of the Saviour, the mother of God.

Since this day falls during Holy Week, our celebration is subdued. But at the same time it seems quite appropriate that it should fall in Holy Week, for it is for this week, and what is done this week, that the Son of God took our human nature: to restore our human nature. That by His dying and rising, we who die might also rise to life with Him. That we might live again as the men and women we were created to be.

That we don't - that we don't live as the men and women we were created to be - is evident. Surely, we sin in many and various ways, but we also sin against the very manhood and womanhood our Lord has given to us. In our world today we see men becoming women and women becoming men. We see not just the fact, but also the promotion, of mothers to kill their babies, and of scourge fathers abandoning their wives, children, and families. We know this should not be, and yet it is. Lord, have mercy upon us.

But thanks be to God it is not so everywhere and in all places. There are women who rejoice in being mothers, and fathers who faithfully serve their families. It was so with Mary. She would fulfill her womanly vocation, that for which her body was designed and created, by conceiving a bearing a child. This was good news! But the even better news was that she was also given another vocation - of being the mother of the Saviour, the promised Messiah. Through her the Son of God would receive His human nature. She could have said no, as so many today say no to bearing a child. But instead, her soul magnified the Lord, and her spirit rejoiced in God her Saviour, as we will sing in just a moment. I am the servant of the Lord, she said. A task that though joyful, would not be easy.

And the Son she would bear would also be the servant of the Lord. And for Him, too, it would not be easy. He would be the suffering servant. He would fulfill His vocation by laying down His life for the life of the world. He would be the perfect servant of the Lord where we are not, and He would be the servant of the Lord in serving us. For we have a God who not only demands perfection and righteousness, but gives it. For we could not,

we could never, be perfect and righteous, just as Mary could not and could never conceive while still a virgin. But she did, and we are, for as the angel Gabriel told Mary, nothing is impossible with God.

So the Son of God is enfleshed, incarnated, this day of His Annunciation. The Son of God becomes a son of man, that we sons and daughters of man might be sons of God in Him. And at the end of this week, we hear why, as the darkness and death of Good Friday become the life and light of Easter. The life that began in the womb of a heretofore unknown virgin, nailed to a cross, and then risen, that all might have hope in Him. Hope of life now, and hope of life forever. That along with Mary, our souls, too, magnify the Lord and rejoice in God our Saviour. Words we now rise to sing . . .