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Annunciation of the Lord

Date: Tuesday, March 25, 2025 | **Season:** Lent | **Year:** C
First Reading: Isaiah 7:10–14, 8:10
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 40:7–11 | **Response:** Psalm 40:8a, 9a
Second Reading: Hebrews 10:4–10
Gospel Acclamation: John 1:14ab
Gospel Reading: Luke 1:26–38
Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House **in the** Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia**.**

The Annunciation of the Lord is a moment of immense significance, a turning point in the history of salvation. As we pause today to reflect on the message of this feast, we are invited to consider the beauty of God's plan, the mystery of His timing, and the courage of one humble woman—Mary. Her willingness to say "yes" to God, despite the uncertainty and overwhelming nature of the call, speaks not only to the great mystery of the Incarnation but also to our own response to God's invitation in our lives today.

In the First Reading from Isaiah, we encounter the prophecy that foretells the coming of a child who will be a sign of hope for the people of Israel. The prophet Isaiah speaks words of consolation to the house of David, assuring King Ahaz that the Lord Himself will give a sign—a young woman will bear a son, and He will be called Immanuel, which means "God with us." This promise, given in a time of political uncertainty and fear, is a light in the darkness. It is a reminder that, in moments of great trial, God's presence will be with His people. The name "Immanuel" echoes through the centuries as a constant reminder that God does not abandon His people, even when the world feels dark and distant.

The connection between this prophecy and the Annunciation is powerful. For in the Gospel of Luke, it is Mary who hears the angel's announcement that she will conceive by the Holy Spirit and bear the Son of God. The words of the angel —"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God" (Luke 1:30)— mirror the promise in Isaiah. Just as God promised to be with His people in the Old Testament, now He comes to be with us, not in a distant way, but in the flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ. This is the moment when God's great plan of salvation begins to unfold in a most personal and intimate way.

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In the Psalms, we hear the cry of the heart that longs for God. “Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will” (Psalm 40:8). These words are echoed in the life of Mary, who humbly and willingly accepts her role in the divine plan. Like the psalmist, Mary listens to the voice of God and responds with a heart open to His will. In a world filled with distractions and competing voices, Mary’s obedience is a model for us—showing us what it means to say yes to God with a trust that transcends our understanding.

The Second Reading from Hebrews speaks to the fulfillment of God’s plan. It tells us that Christ came into the world not to offer the blood of sacrifices, but to offer His own body in obedience to the will of the Father. “Sacrifices and offerings you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me” (Hebrews 10:5). This verse reminds us that Jesus, fully divine and fully human, would be the perfect sacrifice, offered once and for all. Through Mary’s “yes,” the Word became flesh, and through His sacrifice, humanity would be reconciled to God.

In the Gospel, Mary’s response to the angel’s message is a model of faith and surrender. She asks, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” (Luke 1:34). Yet, in her question is not doubt but a deep desire to understand the mystery of God’s plan. The angel answers her, revealing the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, and Mary’s response is a declaration of total surrender: “I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38).

In this moment, Mary becomes the new Ark of the Covenant, carrying within her the Word made flesh. Her “yes” opens the door for the Incarnation, and through her, God enters into our world. It is not just a personal journey for Mary; it is a journey that affects the world, as God’s love enters history in a new and radical way.

As we reflect on these readings, we are reminded of the urgency of God’s call in our own lives. The story of the Annunciation is not just about a young woman in Nazareth; it is about all of us, called to be open to the will of God, however it may unfold. In our own time of Lent, when we are invited to journey with Christ to the cross, we are challenged to be like Mary, to say “yes” to God, to trust in His plan for us, and to allow Him to transform our lives.

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In Zambia, as in many parts of the world, there are communities in desperate need of God's presence—whether in the struggles of the poor, the marginalized, or the suffering. The Annunciation is not just a historical event but a call to bring God's love into the lives of those who most need it. In a world that often seems dark and uncertain, we are called to be bearers of light, just as Mary bore the Light of the World.

We can draw inspiration from the life of Jesuit brother St. Alphonsus Rodriguez. St. Alphonsus, in his humble service, said "yes" to God's will in the small, everyday tasks of life. He reminds us that no task is too small when done with love for God and for others.

And on this feast of the Annunciation, as we celebrate the wondrous mystery of God's Word becoming flesh, we also mark a significant milestone in the life of the Southern Africa Province of the Society of Jesus. Today, we observe the fourth anniversary of our province's formation, a moment that calls us not only to reflect on the past but also to look forward in hope. As we journey through the implementation of our Apostolic Plan for 2025–2030, we ask for the grace to continue our work with wisdom, humility, and trust in the discernment that has guided us over these last few years. Just as Mary said "yes" to God's plan with courage and openness, so too do we pray for the strength to say "yes" to the call to serve and to live out our mission with faithfulness and creativity. In this spirit, we trust that God, who has always been faithful to his people, will continue to guide us in our mission to the poor, the marginalized, and all whom we are called to serve.

So, as we consider these readings and their relevance to our own lives, we are called to reflect on the following questions:

- In what areas of my life am I being asked to say "yes" to God's will, even when I do not fully understand it?
- How can I make space in my life, during this Lenten season, to listen more closely to the voice of God and respond with openness and humility?
- What are the ways in which I can bring God's love and presence to those who are most in need in my local community?

May the example of Mary inspire us to live with courage, humility, and faith, trusting that God's plan for us is good and that He is always with us.

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.