

The Angelus

℣. The Angel of the LORD declared unto Mary,

℟. And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Hail Mary, full of grace ...

℣. Behold the handmaid of the LORD.

℟. Be it done unto me according to thy word.

Hail Mary, full of grace ...

℣. And the Word was made flesh.

℟. And dwelt among us. *(Bowing slightly.)*

Hail Mary, full of grace ...

℣. Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God.

℟. That we might be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray,

Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O LORD, Thy grace into our hearts; that, we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord.

℟. Amen.



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A catechetical moment of reflection:

What does Mary's reaction say about her perpetual virginity?

Mary's question is sometimes translated as "How shall this be, since I have no husband?"

This is not a good translation, because she *does*, in fact, have a husband: Joseph. Luke has already told us that she is betrothed to Joseph, which means that they were legally married (thus Joseph would have had to divorce her, not just "break the engagement" as one might today; cf. Matthew 1:19).

What the text literally says in Greek is "since I do not know man."

This relies on the common biblical euphemism of "knowing" for sexual relations. Mary's question indicates that she understands the facts of life, and it is surprising since she is legally married and awaiting the time that she and Joseph would begin to cohabit.

If she were planning on an ordinary marriage then the most natural interpretation of the angel's statement would be that, after she and Joseph begin to cohabit, they will together conceive a child, who the angel is now telling her about.

The fact that she asks the question indicates that this is not her understanding, and it has often been taken as a sign that she was not planning on an ordinary marriage. Early Christian writings from the second century onward, beginning with the *Protoevangelium of James*, indicate that Mary was a consecrated virgin who was entrusted to the care of Joseph.

How does Gabriel respond to Mary's question?

Gabriel informs 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.

Here Gabriel indicates the involvement of all three Persons of the Trinity: Through the action of the Holy Spirit, the Father causes the Son to be conceived in human form. There will be no human father, making clear the fact that the child will be the Son of God.

As a further illustration of God's power, he points to the fact that Elizabeth, though old and apparently barren, has miraculously conceived a son and is in her sixth month of pregnancy. "For with God nothing will be impossible."

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