



**LEGION OF MARY**  
**Reflections on Joyful Mysteries**  
**The Crib, O'Connell St. Dublin 1**  
**18th December 2010**

**THE ANNUNCIATION**

One good spirit of Advent is that of forgetting self and thinking out beyond self to others. It is good to see in the city so many groups trying to collect for worthy causes. Family members reach out to others by their cards and by their buying of gifts for others. Think of those on Christmas day who will help others have a decent dinner. All of this is the good spirit of Christmas because it shares in the great reaching out which Jesus did when he came to join us. It is God who reaches out to us in creating us and in redeeming us.

In this mystery of the Annunciation we see God, represented by the Angel, reaching out to you and me, and to all humanity, represented in the person of Mary, who is given the offer of being the mother of God. God knows how much the world needs redemption and so in his kindness he stoops down. The virgin is aware from the long history of the struggle of sin in her people that salvation is needed. But also because she has already been redeemed in her Immaculate Conception she knows deeper than anyone else the value of redemption. And so she says "Yes". She reaches out to God to help him in his work of redemption and she reaches out to you and me and all of humanity on whose behalf she also says "Yes".

Let us offer this mystery that a spirit of genuine generosity and good will towards God will fill our hearts so that we will, like Mary, be channels of his grace.

**THE VISITATION**

Mary reached out to God and humanity in her "fiat", in her "yes". Now she shows this reaching out in a most practical way showing how grounded she is. Although only a young teenager she is very mature and can stand on her own feet and make her own decisions. She goes to stay with Elizabeth. I don't think any of us doubts that she went to assist Elizabeth whose advanced years must have made the pregnancy and birth that more difficult. Like the Good Samaritan she does not consider her own needs or the possible risks to herself. She goes because Elizabeth needs her.

But in case we think the need is just material or bodily we have to recall that by the angel's message Mary has picked up that in some way Elizabeth's child is relevant to the work of salvation. Somehow or other the two mother's are in this together and each has a role to play in the work of salvation. One is carrying the herald, the other the King. So before they are born the two children are brought together by the mothers so that a partnership begins. The Word touches John and sets him on his way to be the voice in the wilderness. And that voice will eventually point out who the other child is, The Lamb of God.

We could all usefully reflect that as well as pooling our material resources for a common cause, so we can pool our spiritual strengths. So let's unite in prayer for all those mothers who are with child, that they may have safe deliveries, that they may welcome their children with love and care for them till death. And let us not forget the many mothers who for various reasons have not had their children reach a successful birth and ask God to heal them.

We pray too that no child will be rejected in abortion.



## THE BIRTH OF JESUS

In art we so often see the baby Jesus depicted in the manger with arms stretched out. His arms are outstretched because he is saying “yes” to all of us. He is embracing us all as his family, his brothers and sisters. That stretching out of his arms in the crib is the fore-sign of another stretching out of his arms that he will do on the Cross as he embraces the whole of the world in his act of redemption.

He is born in the humble manger showing that God wants to identify first with the poor and humble. The shepherds are the first to hear the news of his birth only emphasising again that God is reaching out to the lowest in society. His death among criminals will later on show again that God is at home among sinners. There are no barriers in God’s heart.

Lest we get the wrong impression God is also appreciative of those who are the educated and wise and those who govern. We see how he received also the wise men who are often represented as kings. We must always remember that God doesn’t look at appearances but at the heart. And we dare not let our hearts be prejudiced in any way towards others. The baby Jesus is the King of the Universe who has come to redeem all humans and indeed all creatures.

Let’s offer this mystery that all people everywhere may allow their hearts to be ruled by God and to see with his eyes, eyes of compassion and kindness, eyes that will recognise the brother and sister in every other person irrespective of their social status or material condition.

## THE PRESENTATION

Again we have a mystery of reaching out. Mary offers her child to God. But in doing this she is handing over the whole of her future life which will, like any mother, be bonded to her child. God is working through her and her child and she places it all at God’s disposal.

The truth is that God makes us and gives us our lives. And while we may seem small against the backdrop of time and space yet God has made us for a purpose. Each of us has some role in the unfolding plan of God. We are not accidents of evolution nor aimless drifters. The meaning and destiny of our lives are with God. Like Mary we have to offer our whole lives and those dearest to us into God’s hands. From our hearts we have to engage with what God is at and place ourselves at the disposal of the work of God.

To make yourself an offering to him is to offer yourself as a victim to the divine love. And in that we will suffer. Holy Simeon knew this when he said to Mary, “Behold a sword will pierce your own heart.”

We offer this mystery for all those in this city that they may make a place for God in their lives and learn to place their lives at God’s service.

## THE FINDING IN THE TEMPLE

*“Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”*

The young adolescent in Jesus is growing up. He is seeking his identity and his place. He is trying to hear what God is saying to him. So he tries to see how he’d get on in the Temple. And in fact he did well. St. Luke tells us, “After three days they found him in the Temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.” You can hear some of the experts saying, “A lad of great promise.”



But in the pain of his mother's heart Jesus hears what house God wants him to be in so the public ministry must wait. The heavenly Father wants Jesus in a better school and university, that of Nazareth. It is there he will learn about the love of God and learn in the ordinary things of life how God is really at work. It is in Nazareth that he would learn more about the human heart than in centres of learning where often the heart is the last thing considered. Let us, all of us embrace our own Nazareths.

Think of the tulip or daffodil. They might appear as attractive bulbs sitting on top of something but in fact it is only by being hidden in the humble earth that they will grow and mature and bear flowers and fruit. In Nazareth Jesus learnt more and more how to bear spiritual fruits, fruits of the heart.

I mentioned the Blessed Charles de Foucauld to you before. He died in 1916, the year of the Rising here in Dublin. Like those involved in 1916 he had been a soldier, a fighter. But in the end he opted for the hidden life of Nazareth about which he wrote much. Let me repeat to you a line of his from the time he lived in Nazareth: "I'm in the house of Nazareth, between Mary and Joseph, like a little brother close to his elder brother Jesus."

Let us pray that each home in this city and country will be a place above all where the warmth and love of God will reign and where children of all ages will find a true welcome.

Fr Paul Churchill