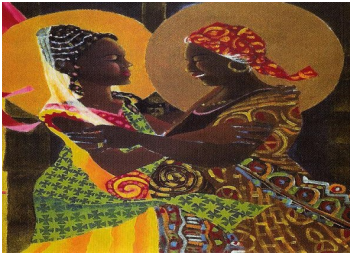


And Mary set out and went with haste...

Luke 1: 39-45

Immediately after the Annunciation Mary set out **'in haste'** to visit her cousin Elizabeth who was also with child. In spite of all that Mary had just experienced, she did not think of herself but thought of her cousin. In so doing Mary becomes the first messenger of Good News. Elizabeth too is filled with the Holy Spirit in greeting Mary, hailing her as **'blessed among women'**. Reflect on this meeting between Mary and Elizabeth and how, as two pregnant women, they would have shared together their remarkable experiences. How might Mary's example inspire you?



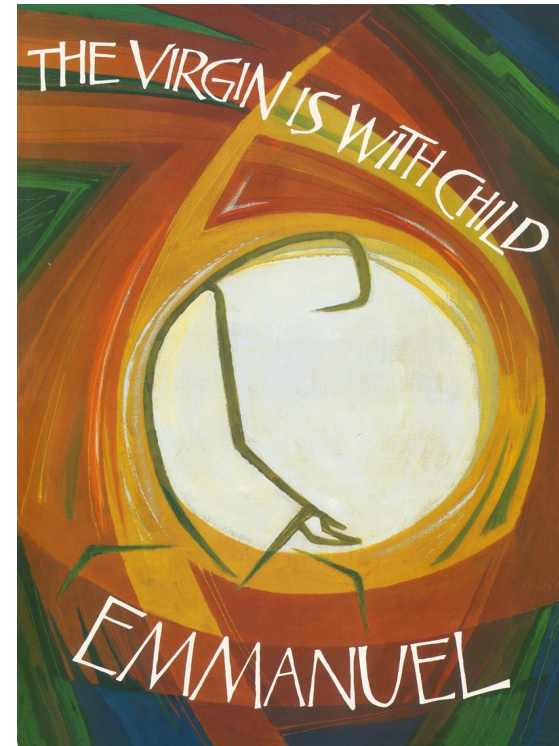
Following Mary's example, who hastened to be with Elizabeth, our community groups are attentive to the call and needs of those around them in order to improve their human and spiritual condition.^{RL 40} In these last few days before Christmas let us journey with Mary and Joseph on their way to Bethlehem. **O Wisdom Come!**

*Mary, Virgin and Mother,
you who, moved by the Holy Spirit,
welcomed the Word of life
in the depths of your humble faith:
help us to say our own "yes"
to the urgent call, as present as ever,
to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.*

Pope Francis/EG 288

*I am the handmaid of the Lord,
let what you have said be done to me.*

Luke 1: 38



*Mary's radical 'yes' at the Annunciation
sets her life on a path of collaboration
with God...*

RL 17

Fourth Sunday of Advent 2020

I am the handmaid of the Lord

Luke 1:28

Today is the fourth Sunday of Advent and the time of waiting is drawing to a close. The Gospel recalls the Annunciation to a young Jewish woman called Mary living in Nazareth, a small town in Galilee and to whom the Angel Gabriel spoke,

Rejoice, so highly favoured! The Lord is with you!

Take some moments to slowly read **Luke1: 26-38** and reflect on the conversation between Mary and Gabriel. Can you put yourself in Mary's shoes and imagine how you might feel, noting that Mary herself was **'deeply disturbed by these words'** and wondered what they could mean. Mary is being called to **'rejoice'**, is **'highly favoured'** by God and that the **'Lord is with you'**. These words are highly significant and are frequently used in the Old Testament when God specifically calls and sends people such as Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Esther and Ruth to carry out a particular mission. In response to Mary's concern, Gabriel assures her **'Do not be afraid, for you have found favour with God'** and asks her to **Listen!**

Have you ever been aware in your life that you have felt called to make a change and have been **'deeply disturbed'** about what this could mean? God may have been inviting you to an unexpected situation, or to face a new challenge. Like Mary, was I troubled and pondered on what God was asking of me? Had I the courage to not be afraid but to listen and open my heart to God's will?

*The Holy Spirit will come upon you
and the power of the Most High
will cover you with its shadow.*

Luke 1: 26-38



You are to conceive and bear a Son, and you must name Him Jesus.

Luke 1: 26-38

Mary is told by Gabriel she has won God's favour and is **'to conceive and bear a Son'**. While very young, she accepted the message of the angel, yet she was not afraid to ask questions. (Luke 1: 38) With an open heart and soul, she replied **'I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me'**. There is a sense of great strength in Mary's 'yes'. Hers was the 'yes' of someone prepared to be committed, with no more security than the certainty of knowing that she was the bearer of great promise and hope. Mary's mission would undoubtedly be difficult but again she would have heard the angel's words, **'nothing is impossible to God'**. She has not chosen this mission for herself, but finds herself chosen by God and consents. Nor is the **'yes'** for just one moment in time but for always as she accompanied her Son to the foot of the cross and remained in prayer with the disciples and other women while waiting for the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost.

What about my 'yes' this Advent?

Mary's radical 'yes' at the Annunciation sets her life on a path of collaboration with God.....In this same spirit, we express our 'yes'. Together, in the light of the Word of God, we discern Wisdom at work and seek, according to our charism, the best way to respond to her invitations. (RL 17,19)

The 'yes' of our baptism and the 'yes' of our Profession as Daughters of Wisdom are lifelong and include the daily 'yes' of small everyday things. Mary's total gift of herself was motivated by love.

*This Advent may Mary guide me to live my daily 'yes'
with deeper love and joy.*