

May it be

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Fourth Sunday in Advent) is Luke 1:26-38. This is the account of the Angel Gabriel appearing to Mary about her upcoming pregnancy even though she is not already married. It is clear that the angel is sent at the command and with the authority from God.

This is the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, not the sixth month of the Roman calendar year. Luke characteristically dates events within the narrative, and the length of time here suggests a total of around four hundred ninety days between Elizabeth's conception and Jesus' presentation in the temple.

Jewish betrothal was binding in ways that modern engagements are not. Betrothal usually preceded marriage by at least nine months to assure that the bride was not pregnant. The young man would give the bride's family a gift. The fathers of the families would sign a marriage document.

Mary was still a teenager and so she is quite overwhelmed at the message from the angel. We may not be teenagers but we may still be dazed by what the Lord is doing in our lives.

Like Zechariah, Mary knows she is hearing something beyond her ken. It will take a miracle surpassing all that God has done before. But unlike Zechariah, her wondering is not laced with skepticism. It is a simple and honest question she poses: "How will this be, since a man I know not?" Mary's question is contrasted with Zechariah's. Mary seeks further information, while Zechariah seeks a sign. God gives us faith to accept what he is going through us.

The Spirit about which Gabriel speaks is the same Spirit that hovered over the waters and brought forth creation (Gen 1:2). This is the same Spirit that overshadows Mary and will also be promised to the disciples by Jesus just before his ascension: they will be "clothed with power from on high" (24:49). It is the same Spirit that entered our hearts at our baptism.

Because nothing is impossible with God, Mary conceives Jesus as holy, the Son of God. This is the same Jesus that we look forward to at Christmas.

Demonstrating great humility and purpose, Mary identifies herself as a household slave. Her words of "Let it be" is a variation of "Thy will be done" when we speak the Lord's Prayer. That is comforting because it places everything in our lives into God's hands and calms our lives.

The angel Gabriel announces Jesus' birth to Mary, who responds in faith. By announcing the Gospel, the Lord likewise calls us to faith and to bear Christ—not as our child—but as the Holy One of God, our Savior.

Prayer: "O holy Child of Bethlehem, Descend to us, we pray; Cast out our sin, and enter in, Be born in us today. We hear the Christmas angels The great glad tidings tell; O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Immanuel!" Amen. (*LSB* 361:4). (*TLSB*)