

4th Sunday of Advent “Say Yes to God”

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The Gospel Reading for this Sunday is a fitting way for us to prepare for the coming week. The Angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she will be the Mother of God. Mary accepts this vocation and now we are ready to celebrate Christmas morning. Or, are we?

This moment in Luke’s Gospel recalling Mary’s fiat is the subject of many paintings, statues, and songs over the centuries and rightfully so. On the other hand, if we were to enter into this passage and contemplate this moment in salvation history, the Annunciation can be unsettling for a number of reasons. Here are my top two:

First, what if Mary said no? Back in seminary, we would debate this point. If Mary was kept safe from original sin at the moment of her conception, how would it be possible for her to refuse? On the other hand, Adam and Eve were not born with original sin either, and look what happened to them. And so, I have always been in the camp that Mary indeed had a choice. She could have said no. The salvation of the whole human race was placed on the shoulders of a young Jewish woman. Without her “yes” we would have never known Jesus. It is beautiful when you think about it. However, it is unsettling that something as important as our salvation depended on one person’s response.

The second aspect of the Annunciation that is unsettling for me is how quickly she said yes. And, from a biblical perspective, this is wise. God can be very persuasive and creative. For example, I bet Jonah didn’t see the big fish coming. However, when I encounter this passage of Mary saying yes so quickly to God’s plan for her, or the passages about the disciples of Jesus leaving their nets to immediately follow him, I find it unsettling. It can take me hours to decide what I want for dinner let alone change the trajectory of my life. God can be very persuasive.

For us today, we can take some time to reflect on what God wants for us this Christmas. This is a strange year and so much is different than in year’s past. However, God still wants something of us this Christmas. What is it? What does God want from you this Christmas? Think about it. Write it down if you have to. You see, like Mary and the disciples later in the story, we are not given a lot of time to answer that question. Christmas is only a few days away. And so, we need to respond to that question quickly and move on that answer in haste. My friends, time is running out. We have lit the fourth candle. What is it that we need to say “yes” to God before Christmas morning?