



In this week's Gospel (Luke 1:26-38), we hear the inspiring account of the Annunciation – the angel Gabriel humbly approaches the virgin Mary and announces God's intention to bless her with the greatest vocation ever given to a human person: she was to become the mother of God! Mary's response to Gabriel continues to serve as a profound model of what it means to live the Christian life. Mary listens carefully to hear God through the words of the angel; she receives and embraces the message even though she cannot understand how it could possibly be fulfilled; then, she surrenders her entire life to God in an act of consummate love and trust: "I am the maidservant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say."

As we approach Christmas, we do well to imitate our Blessed Mother Mary. First, we must carefully listen to what God has spoken to us through this great mystery we call "Christmas." The message is rather simple, yet it touches and transforms the meaning of every aspect of our life: God is with us!! Almighty God has united Himself with each one of us . . . He truly loves us and desires to live not just with us, but within us! Not just on our "good days" but every day and always, in good times and bad, in sickness and in health! With Mary, we might ask, "How can this be?" Am I to believe that God is with me when I've been hurt, when I'm in pain, when I'm lonely and feeling helpless, when I'm afraid of what the future holds, when I see people I love suffering? Yes! Like Mary, we must believe that all things are possible with God and He can in fact cause "**ALL THINGS** to work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). But how can this be? Our confusion can only find healing the way Mary's confusion found healing. Once we surrender to the truth of God's word what happens is what happened to Mary: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and power of the Most High will overshadow you."

In the final analysis, Christmas challenges us to believe and to embrace the supernatural: God is Love and He humbly emptied Himself was born in poverty and suffered for love of ME – to become one with ME and to save ME! This wonderful mystery remains true, it is permanently engraved in human history, no matter what happens to me or anybody else. Yes, this is a great mystery, but it is not beyond our reach. We have 2000 years of living proof, especially in our Catholic Saints, that we can respond like Mary to the mystery of Christmas: "I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say." And with these words, the impossible becomes possible: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you."

Merry Christmas! Or should I say, have a Mary Christmas!

Your Servant in Christ,
Fr. Terry Staples



POF:

- 1) For pastors and all members of the body of Christ, that they may listen attentively to the word of God and bring the life of Christ to our generation, we pray to the Lord.
- 2) For all nations where atheistic or secularist ideologies threaten or restrict religious freedom, we pray to the Lord.
- 3) For the grace of perfect trust in God, through the intercession of our Blessed Mother Mary, we pray to the Lord.