

## **THE ANNUNCIATION**

Today, we celebrate the most important event in human history, the moment when the Word of God took flesh in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary and initiated the redemption of the world. As we heard in the Gospel, *the angel Gabriel was sent by God* to invite Mary's free response. The model Christian, she welcomed the Word of God; she believed it in her heart and she gave her total consent: *I am the handmaid of the Lord; let what you have said be done to me.* The Annunciation has changed the course of human history. In choosing to be born of a Virgin, God has interrupted evolution. The Spirit who once hovered over the waters in Genesis now hovers over the Virgin to bring about a recreation, a new beginning, a step-change. Mary is thus the New Eve, and Christ the New Adam, the first-born of many, which also includes you and me who through baptism share this salvation-history.

We live today in an exciting world with advances in many fields. Yet our culture is highly secularised, and secularism has become the fertile breeding-ground for a new conception of man, of what it means to be human. Abortion, euthanasia, eugenics, now assisted suicide gravely degrade the dignity and value of human life, while the breakdown and redefinition of marriage and the family, based on an misunderstanding of sexuality that sunders the unitive from the procreative, is creating a society of isolated individuals, fleeting relationships and unhappiness. Yet today's feast is a corrective. It sounds a note of joy and proclaims an alternative anthropology. It shows us Christ the New Adam, the true Type of human being. It assures us, that you and I are of infinite value and that the natural way of life in Christ leads to true happiness. That's what the Annunciation celebrates. It says, there is another way. There's another way of being human. It's the way to love, joy and peace. The Way of hope, it's the Way of Christ.

So today let us rejoice: for *the maiden is with child and will soon give birth to a Son, Emmanuel, 'God with us.'* Today, let us take a day off Lent! Let us love saying the Angelus, to thank the Father for sending us his Son as our Redeemer and His Spirit as our Sanctifier. In this festal Mass, let us ask Mary's prayers that we will become ever more like her, and so one day joyfully enter heaven, our true home.

