

THE ANNUNCIATION.

I would like to think of the Blessed Virgin Mary as God's greatest problem solver. But what is that problem? God looks upon the pinnacle of his creation, humanity and finds it has gone utterly astray. There is discord between his children, there is scant regard for God's majesty and the whole of humanity measures its actions by its own selfish desires. This is not what was in the vision of God when out of a superabundance of love he created us in his image.

So much for the problem; what about the solution? The solution is the Incarnation, for God to come himself amongst his creation and save it from itself, and to return to him. But to do that, to become human, or to use theology speak, to become the second person of the Trinity; it would require God to become man without the natural means of becoming man which perpetuates the problem of sin.

How to become man without inheriting original sin; He had to be a true man in order to atone for man's sins. So how could he be both; both God to actuate the forgiveness of humanity and human to suffer fully for those sins?

It could only happen by being born of women, and that women would need to be particularly special to break that cycle of what we call original sin. That woman was Mary, the solution to the problem. She could bring God into the world, in the fullness of his divine nature alongside the fullness of human nature because she herself was full of grace, sinless

from the moment of her conception. Forgiveness of our sins began that first moment the archangel Gabriel confronted Mary and Mary gave her all in her response of "yes". This moment has since merited her title as Theotokos, God bearer, a name which the Orthodox Church always inscribes in gold letters like an eternal crown on her statues and icons. In the annunciation, Mary stands on the threshold of divinity; she is that final rung of the ladder that links earth and heaven. This is why the church rightly gives her the honour that she deserves. St Anselm said, "The son of the Father and the son of the virgin naturally become a single and identical son." And so it follows Mary, through the Annunciation becomes the queen of the human race and is to be venerated by all.

Mary's "yes" will reach its climax at the moment Christ utters the words "it is finished" from the cross on Good Friday. St Matthew tells us that the curtain in the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. For those in the Temple at the very moment Mary uttered her "yes" they would have noticed that curtain already beginning to fray.

God Bless you all.