

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Gospel according to Luke (*Luke 1:26-33*)

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give Him the throne of David His father, and He will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection – The greatest love story ever told

God is so in love with His people. *For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life (John 3:16).* People in love do "foolish" things. God was solely motivated by pure, selfless love when He sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ as a sacrifice to atone for the sins of His people. Which parent will not do the utmost to save one's child? *(God) Who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4).* God's greatest desire is for each and every one of His children to share His eternal joy and glory. It is for this reason that God created each and every one of us and predestined each person to become a child of God through Jesus Christ (cf. Ephesians 1:5). God made a great, personal sacrifice when He decided to send Jesus to redeem the world. It is a redemption through the sweat, tears and blood of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ Who for the joy of bringing redemption to His Father's Kingdom endured willingly a sea of humiliation, torments, pains and rejection. In heaven, when we have perfect knowledge of God, our love for Him will also become perfect, and we will love God as He loves us.

God delights to be with us. *Behold, the virgin shall be with Child and bear a Son, and they shall name Him Emmanuel," which means "God is with us." (Matthew 1:23).* To be truly with us, God has to make a great sacrifice. He has to become one of us. He has to assume the lowliness of human flesh. He has to step down from the majesty and splendor of His throne in heaven. In His eyes, He has to become like nothing. *(Jesus) Who, though He was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, He emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance (Philippians 2:6-7).* In coming to us to dwell in our midst, God did not come as a conquering king or a prominent person but as a servant of all to offer His life for all. *Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28).* After Jesus ascended into heaven, God's presence continues to be with us. The Holy Spirit has been given to us as a pledge, a first instalment of our glorious inheritance (cf. Ephesians 1:14, 2 Corinthians 1:22). The Holy Eucharist in which Christ is fully present has been given to us. The Church, Mass and holy Sacraments have been bestowed upon us. Jesus promises to be present when 2 or 3 are gathered in prayer (cf. Matthew 18:20). It is the promise of Jesus that He will be with us till the end of time (cf. Matthew 28:20). Yes, God is totally engrossed with us!

God is not afraid to identify with us. It is God's will that Jesus was borne incarnate into a simple human family. God let His Son, Jesus be borne, live, grow up amidst simple, poor people. God did not shun sinners though He detests sins greatly. Jesus frequently called Himself "Son of Man" (cf. Matthew 8:20, Matthew 11:19, John 9:35). Jesus was not ashamed to be one of us but emphasized His humanity in identifying Himself as "Son of Man". Jesus, the Author of all Graces, was not afraid to be mistaken as a sinner when He asked St John the Baptist to baptize Him in River Jordan. *For whoever does the will of My heavenly Father is My brother, and sister, and mother" (Matthew 12:50).* During Jesus' time on earth, He did not seek the company of the religious elite or other prominent people in society, but kept company with the poor and lowly.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, I rejoice again and again because You are my God, my All. Seeking You in this world is the greatest undertaking and mission of my life. It is worth more than any pain, sacrifice and self-denial that I have to endure in this seeking. Finding You is acquiring the priceless pearl that only wise people seek from this world. For the moment I found You, I found my true self, my true destiny, my true joy, the true meaning of my very existence. Falling in love with You is the greatest transforming event and love experience of my life. You alone are unique, no one can ever replace You. I love You in all, through all and above all. Through Mary, Mother of Salvation, I give You my body, heart, mind and soul so that You are free to do with me whatever You wish for the glory of our Heavenly Father. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.