

# + ANNUNCIATION

(Transferred)

April 8, 2024

Homily of the Right Reverend Dom Philip Anderson, Abbot of Clear Creek Abbey

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,  
My very dear sons,

Today, as it sometimes happens, we celebrate the solemnity of the Annunciation, under the glorious light of the Resurrection of Christ. How the brightness of the Risen Lord enhances today's celebration! It seems that we find here a perfect blending of the two great facets of the Christian faith, Incarnation and Redemption. What was announced to Mary of Nazareth, concerning the child to be conceived in her virginal womb, finds in the empty Tomb of Easter and the glorified Body of Christ its full accomplishment.

At the dawn of History, when the world began, God uttered His multiple "*fiat*", "*Let there be*" : "Let there be light...; Let there be a firmament...; Let the waters that are under heaven be gathered together..." (Gen. 1: 3-9). When the fullness of time was come, the Blessed Virgin Mary uttered her own *fiat*, "*Let it be*": "Let it be done to me according to thy word," was her reply to the Annunciation made by the Holy Archangel (Lk. 1:38).

The Lord Christ, Jesus too spoke these words, *fiat*, "*Let it be*" : "My Father, if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, [let] thy will be done" (Mt. 26:42). Finally, in the greatest of all prayers, the Our Father, we too say our *fiat*: "*fiat voluntas tua sicut in coelo et in terra*, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt. 6:10).

*Let it be* in these essential moments of sacred history is thus an affirmation of what really must be, of what really counts, of what *is* in the end. In speaking these words, the actors of the history of salvation affirm what God wants for His own glory and for the eternal happiness of His spiritual creatures. God is He who Is in the strongest sense of the word. "I Am Who Am", he said to Moses from the burning bush (Exod. 3:14). The Annunciation announces what is to *be*, according to the mind of God. The Pasch, the triumph of Easter brings to fruition the fullness of what must be in the world, the fullness of being both human and divine.

Strangely enough much of what is affirmed in secular society is just the contrary of true being. It is all about appearances, about what is "for show", about "make-believe", about "marketing", about deception and *virtual reality* that is anything but real. There are men who appear to be great thinkers and philosophers but who deal in false images of reality, or, even worse, are peddlers of illusion and of spiritual death. How many they lead astray in our day! These are the new Pharisees, the new Sophists; these are the false gurus of the culture of death.

In bright contrast, Our Lord simply affirms that He really *is*. He affirms this, for example in the Gospel according to St. John, "When you shall have lifted up the Son of man [on the Cross], then shall you know that I am He..." [in the Greek, literally, "I am"] (8:28). Again, on the evening of the Resurrection, upon entering the Upper Room through the closed doors, Jesus says to the Apostles and Disciples gathered there: "Peace be to you; it is I" [literally, again, "I am"] (Lk. 24: 36). Biblical scholars argue about the exact

interpretation of these passages, but most admit that this expression, “I am,” on the lips of Christ refers in some way to the Divine Name of God, “I am.”

It is all so simply, really. In these first days of spring we have the joy of seeing the world come back to life. It is amazing to see the tiny wildflowers, often less than an inch high, that seem to pop up over night, like diminutive cathedrals of color. Their beauty, their true and natural being—so surprising—surpasses any image that we could ever acquire by electronic means. But we are too often blind to see the natural wonder, being dazzled by the artificial beauty of the sellers of simulacres. Post-modern man is just too much in a hurry to bend over and look at a wildflower in spring.

The deepest problem, though, is not modernity or post-modernity, but sin. That is why it is useless to try to fix things by merely returning to nature. We are beings endowed with a capacity for the infinite, and it takes a supernatural remedy to cure fallen man. We cannot simply get back to the Garden of Eden. At this point, in our dilemma, we must make our way to that higher garden of Paradise. The Blessed Virgin’s garden in Nazareth was the first step. The garden of Gethsemane marked the second. The Risen Lord, walking in the garden around the Empty Tomb, was the most decisive moment along the way.

To contemplate the Annunciation during Eastertide is to contemplate a light within a light, a joyful brightness within a glorious one. “For with thee is the fountain of life,” says the Psalmist, “and in thy light we shall see light” (Psalm 35:10). Truly God is both the “fountain of *life*” and the fountain of *light*. In such a perspective whatever may have seemed arduous or dramatic in the situation of the Virgin of Nazareth, who asked “How can this be?”, “*Quomodo fiet?*” is now seen as part of a larger plan. The Holy Spirit is the best of exegetes. He shows us little by little the ways of Divine Wisdom, as we compare one biblical scene with another. The mysteries interconnect and complete one another. A light within a light.

It will suffice if we find our own place in the light within a light. In other words the history of salvation is an almost complete script, but there is a place for us too, a role for us to play. Like the smallest wildflower we can be part of the scene of God’s wonders, part of the garden. By imitating Our Lady of the Annunciation in her humble “fiat”, we will find ourselves someday enveloped in the light irradiating from the Risen Lord, who sits on His eternal throne of glory in Heaven. Like Mary, we will rejoice in Heaven after the trials of life on earth, participating in the great *fiat* of eternity, the perfect springtime of the Saints, after the long winter of sin and evil. There we will hear the echo of the words of the Bridegroom in the Cantic of Canticles:

For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.  
(2:11-12)

*Regina Coeli, laetare, Alleluia. Amen.*