

+Feast of the Annunciation  
Our Lady of Clear Creek

March 25, 2026

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 Ghost

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,  
My Very Dear Sons,

It seems that despite of—or perhaps because of—His Divine majesty and absolute transcendence over all created realities, in relationship precisely to that work of His we call Creation, God retains a sort of child-like attitude, which for lack of a better word we might call “playfulness”. “I was with Him,” says Divine Wisdom, “forming all things: and was delighted every day, playing before Him at all times; playing in the world: and my delights were to be with the children of men” (Prov. 8: 30-31). Despite the tragedy that marks, first the angelic world in Satan’s rebellion, and then this lower world, beginning with the sin of Adam and Eve, throughout the dramatic story we call the History, characterized by so many ups and downs, successes and failures, treasons and heroic deeds; the Lord of Heaven and Earth seems to be playing, and playing more precisely a kind of game of “hide and seek”. “Verily thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel the savior” (Isaiah 45:15).

It is at the Annunciation that a kind of ultimate stage of this game of ‘Hide and Seek’ takes place. For the very first time in the History of the world, the true face of God—a human face, but truly belonging to God—appears—or rather does not quite appear, that is to say that it is formed but remains hidden away in the womb of the Blessed Virgin of Nazareth. At last the face of God is with us as is God Himself, Emmanuel, but He is playing the last act of “peek-a-boo”. And this all has to do with the mystery of light and darkness we call Faith.

The revelation of the human face of the Second Divine Person remains hidden even from the Blessed Virgin, the *Virgo Fidelis*, during her nine months of “confinement”. She too continues her pilgrimage of faith in these ultimate months that lead to the fulfillment of the prophecies, with the birth of the Messiah, in the fullness of time. Of course, even after the birth in Bethlehem, the actors of the Mystery of Christmas remain under the economy of faith, as the view of the Word Incarnate granted to these fortunate men and women does not yet inaugurate the vision of eternity. Still, a moment of incomparable importance arrives with the emergence of this particular baby’s face. The Annunciation is the prelude to Christmas, and in this prelude the Faith reaches, perhaps, a unique degree of intensity.

When Mary questions the angel of the Annunciation about the practical means of this Divine Motherhood that is being proposed to her, she receives this rather enigmatic and supremely mysterious reply: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee* (Lk. 1:35). Without pretending fully to understand that which is meant to remain veiled in mystery, we may nevertheless attempt to penetrate somewhat the meaning here. Saint Gregory the Great, for his part, offers us some clues.

By the term *overshadowing*, he says, both natures of the Incarnate God are signified. For shadow is formed by light and matter. But the Lord by His Divine nature is light. Because then immaterial light was to be embodied in the Virgin's womb, it is well said unto her, "The Power of the Most-High shall *overshadow* thee", that is, the human body in thee shall receive an immaterial light of divinity.

Now if both natures of the Incarnate God are at work here, then surely the tiny human face of Jesus in His mother's womb is also under this luminous shadow. No earthly light yet reflects itself upon these human features, but there is already a kind of light that emanates from the sacred humanity of the Word newly Incarnate, and from His new Face. Surely there would be much to meditate on here. We have here a kind of less known aspect of the First Joyful Mystery.

Furthermore, using the theological tool of analogy, if the work of the Incarnation is said to be an *overshadowing*, and the physical reality that begins to stir in Our Lady's virginal womb represents a kind of *luminous shadow*, likewise, on another level, could we not employ the same term to Mary's own faith? In other words, could we not call Our Lady's faith a "luminous shadow"? It too, especially at this moment when, according to the Fathers, she conceives first by means of her spiritual assent, before conceiving in her body, would seem to fit St. Gregory's definition. Faith too is formed of light and matter, that is to say the light of Revelation and the matter of human nature, with its concepts and words. Faith too, not being the noontday brightness of eternity remains a sort of shadow, albeit a most luminous one. Not only does Mary have in her heart that theological brightness of grace that is granted to each person who believes with living Faith, but she also has now the additional luminosity of the Sacred Humanity of the Word Incarnate dwelling physically in her bosom. Thus, the Marian Faith resembles in a particular way the action appropriated to the Holy Ghost in the mystery of the Incarnation.

The "why" of the Annunciation is a little harder to circumscribe ("get our hands around it"), especially in its objective dimension. This is a vast and unfathomable sea. How does one know God's motives? We attribute this perspective especially to the Father. To explain the reason for the Incarnation would be to explain the Father's own motives—or rather motive, as it is certainly one as God is one. Another way to put it would be to say that God created the world out of pure goodness, out of love. When Man sinned, God—again out of His Divine goodness--decided to come to his aid in order to save him. Out of love again, God decided to effectuate the Redemption of Man by the ineffable means of the Incarnation.

As we move forward in this Passiontide toward the end of the Lenten season, we will do well to let the luminous shadow of the Annunciation carry us forward from the great mystery of the Incarnation into that of the Passion and Death of Our Lord, the great Work for which God came down to earth through the Birth in Bethlehem. Amen.