

Reflection Saturday 4th Week Lent - The Annunciation 2023

Universalis poses the following question: **What if Mary had said No?**

Could she have said No?

You might say that she couldn't, she was far too holy — but you would be guilty of demeaning and dangerous sentimentality. It is demeaning because it turns Our Lady from a free human being into a sanctified automaton. The whole glory of the Annunciation is that Mary, the second Eve, could have said No to God **but she said Yes instead**. This is what we celebrate and for which praise her.

If we believe this most important decision in the history of the world was inevitable or couldn't have been otherwise, then it would have been effortless. This supposes that whatever we do or do not do, God will make it right!

So, Mary could have said No to Gabriel the consequences of which are too many to list

Even if the world sometimes makes us feel like cogs in a machine, each of us is unique and each of us is here for a purpose. Because our purpose is not like Mary's, it doesn't mean that it is not important. When we fail in our vocation, or put off fulfilling some part of it, we try justifying ourselves by saying that someone else will do it better, that God will provide or that it doesn't really matter. Yet, however small our part, the story of the Annunciation makes clear that no one else can do my part but me.

If Mary had said No, unredeemed generations would toil under the burden of sin. If she said Yes, she herself would suffer, and so would her Son; but both would be glorified. Millions of people not yet born would have Heaven open to them; but millions of others would suffer oppression and death in her son's name.

God wanted Mary's full and informed consent as the representative of the entire human race. When faced with important decisions in our lives, we can easily find our minds clouded by the possible consequences or by partial knowledge of them. How can we ever move, when there is so much good and evil whichever way we go? The Annunciation shows that God's grace will give us the strength to move, even if the fate of the whole world is hanging in the balance.

One more truth the Annunciation teaches is that when the Father really wants something done, he comes to one of his poor, weak creatures and asks.

And, day by day, he keeps on asking us.