

The Woman Who Said Yes to God

Advent: Year B, Week 4

The unusually expressive painting of Botticelli's *Annunciation* invites an ocular meditation on how Mary is transformed spiritually by Christ's incarnation.

Mary's twisting posture is central to Botticelli's aesthetic blueprint and visual theology. With angel Gabriel's announcement, Mary responds with both awe and angst-- simultaneously vulnerable and gracious. Her free and fluid movement suggests the metamorphosis that is unfolding within her as she is being blessed by God.



As Gabriel's hand is raised in benediction, Mary reaches out to accept the divine offering creating a spiritually charged space between the two hands. Could this be a depiction of the incarnation as an act of the invisible God entering into our world?

Choice and freedom are central to the Annunciation story. Mary's consent was needed. God waited. Mary was free to accept or refuse.

As you meditate on Botticelli's *Annunciation* this Fourth Sunday in Advent, how will you answer the request to birth God?

SCRIPTURE

Luke 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a young woman named Mary; she was engaged to a man named Joseph, of the house of David.

Upon arriving, the angel said to Mary, "Rejoice, highly favored one! God is with you! Blessed are you among women." Mary was greatly troubled by these words and wondered what the angel's greeting meant.

Then the angel went on to say to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary. You have found favor with God. You will conceive and bear a son, and give him the name Jesus. His dignity will be great, and will be called the Only Begotten of God. God will give Jesus the judgement seat of David, his ancestor, to rule over the house of Jacob forever, and his reign will have no end."

Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have never been with a man?"

The angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you - hence the child to be born will be called the Holy One of God. Know too that Elizabeth, your relative, has conceived a child in her old age; she who was thought to be barren is now in her sixth month. Nothing is impossible with God."

Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word."

With that, the angel departed from her.

For all the readings for the Fourth Sunday of Advent click [here](#).

FOR REFLECTION

1. Mary's indispensable role in Christian history is as a woman who is at the heart of salvation's story, reflected in her title "God-bearer" ([Theotokos](#)). In the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55), Mary proclaims a radical message of social justice where the lowly are lifted up and the powerful are brought down. Mary initiates Jesus' ministry at the Wedding of Cana (John 2:1-12) and remains with Jesus till the very end: his death and burial (John 19:25). She is also present at [Pentecost](#), the birth of the church. As an LGBTQ person or ally, how do these Marian images of power, leadership, courage and passion impress you? In a world where women are often exiled, even from the LGBTQ community, how does the image of Mary empower you?
2. Mary's, "*How can this be, since I have never been with a man?*" illustrates the definition of theology as "*faith seeking understanding*." Mary asks the angel Gabriel how she might come to understand what it is she believes. Her active love for God seeks a deeper knowledge of God. As an LGBTQ person or ally, what parts of your faith seek understanding? What would you like to understand better about your faith and the church community? Where does your conscience take you when you converse privately with God?

3. With the strong emphasis on birth and the celebration of family during the seasons of Advent and Christmas, how can the global LGBTQ family feel connected to the spirit of the season when many in the community may not have access to marriage, love, companionship, and family?
4. From her flight into Egypt, to protect her unborn son from the edict of Herod (Matthew 2:13), to her presence at the foot of the Cross (John 19:25), Mary has always situated herself next to the historical Jesus. How can we expand and develop this mother/son narrative, so that it may become the bedrock of a foundation wherein families, and especially parents, are united with their LGBTQ children, are there to support them and commit themselves to speak up as advocates for their children?
5. Why do apparitions of Mary (Our Lady of Guadalupe, Fatima, Lourdes, and others) have such cultural staying power? How would you visualize a Marian apparition for the LGBTQ/ally community?

PRAYER



Hail Mary, full of Grace, our God is with you
Blessed are you among women
and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God
pray for us, your children, now and the hour of our death, Amen