

# Listening for God on the feast of the Annunciation

It was a quiet day in Galilee when the archangel Gabriel arrived at Mary's home. Imagine what it must have been like in that moment.

There's something so beautiful about the Annunciation, especially in the paintings that try to capture that brief exchange that changed history. But we know it must also have been frightening because Mary was "greatly troubled."

The archangel tells this young woman who is betrothed to Joseph that she will be the mother of the Son of God.

Mary could say, "No, thank you."

Instead she asks one question, listens to the answer, and says, "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." (Luke 1:38)

What a wonderful yes—a yes of acceptance, a yes of obedience, a yes of complete surrender to the will of God. Mary's words seem to be completely selfless, open to everything that lies ahead.

It's a sudden, wondrous exchange.

It's a "yes" that changes everything.

It's the beginning of the greatest story of our faith, God becoming man, the Word becoming flesh.

Mary's "yes" comes as a challenge to us during Lent—not just because saying yes to God can be difficult. In some ways, the greater challenge might be to consider whether we would hear God's voice—or His archangel's—while focused on the events of busy, noisy, daily life.

Being able to find quiet solitude to listen for God's voice in our lives may seem, at times, more of a miracle than a visit from an angel. But that is part of what Lent asks

for us—setting some of the other distractions aside to make room for God to connect with us in a special way.

Maybe He has something big to ask of us that will change the course of our lives.

Maybe He just wants us to sit with Him and know how deeply we are loved.

Whatever it is, we won't know until we sit in the stillness and let Him in, as the Blessed Mother did on that extraordinary day so many years ago.

*The painting, which hangs in the Jesuit residence at Loyola University Maryland, is Virgin Annunciate by Fra Angelico, c. 1453. I took this photo last week thinking it must be Mary, but not realizing it was the Annunciation until I shared it with my sister, Treasa, who has a degree in art history and recognized it.*