

December 17, 2017 The Woman Clothed In Silence Homily: While in the Holy Land, a Christian pilgrim is likely to visit the Basilica of the Annunciation in the biblical City of Nazareth. According to reputable scholars, this magnificent church was built over the traditional site where the Angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she was to become the Mother of the Lord. In this holy place, there is a memorable inscription in Latin under the altar. Truly a 'poem in stone', it is based on the prologue of St. John's gospel (chapter one). Tellingly, one word is added. "Hic Verbum caro factum est". Translation: "*Here* the Word of God was made flesh". For the tourist it is a time for contemplation and reflection. One must not hurry past the very spot where God condescended "to pitch his tent" and dwell among his people.

At the moment Mary uttered her fiat... "Let it be done to me according to thy Word"...the Eternal Word began to exist as a human being in time. At a pivotal moment in history, Mary offered herself, her body and soul, to God as a dwelling place.

In the popular Catholic prayer, "Ave Maria", we say, "Holy Mary". Her holiness derives from the fact that the Most Holy God decided to dwell in her womb honestly, has there ever been a more sublime honor conferred on a human being than the one accorded to Mary?

Her words have great substance because they carry the immense weight of silence. In our exceedingly noisy age, we would do well to remember that the event of the incarnation of the Eternal Word occurred in silence. No fanfare! No witnesses! No earthquake! Mary is "The Woman clothed in silence". Her silence enables her to hear the message of the angel without fear of distraction. Her thought and prayers were directed to heaven.

Mary tells us why churches such as the basilica of the Annunciation exist. They exist so that room may be made within us for the Word of God, so that within us and through us, the Word of God may also be flesh today.

The gospel reading for today, Luke's account of the annunciation, is rightly called one of the joyful mysteries of our Catholic faith. As we draw close to Christmas, let us pause for a moment to consider Mary's place in salvation history. Only then will we begin to understand why so many churches claim her as their patroness.

Amen!