

- This past Wednesday the Church celebrated one of her most important feast days: The Solemnity of the Annunciation. It's the day that we recall the Archangel Gabriel visiting the Virgin Mary to announce that God had chosen her to be the mother of the Messiah.
- Despite the fact that we call this event the Annunciation, it's what this announcement leads to that is most important. For when the Blessed Virgin Mary consents to God's will to be Christ's mother, it is then that the Incarnation takes place in her womb.
- He who is invisible became visible; He who is infinite and existed before time began stepped into the limits of time of space; He who is all-powerful became a tiny and helpless baby. Without any diminishment of His divinity, Jesus took on the poverty of our humanity.
- As our 2<sup>nd</sup> reading today so eloquently proclaims: "Christ Jesus, though He was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, He emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness..."
- This Incarnation of our Lord – God's taking on of our human flesh and human nature – is the grandest act of humility ever conceived. And not only was it an act of incomparable humility. It was an act of incomparable love.
- For Christ did not become man simply to experience our humanity. He became man to redeem fallen humanity, to open for us the gates of Heaven so that we might be eternally joined to Him in the glory of Heaven.
- And that's precisely what we see in our Lord's Passion. This is what we are commemorating today and throughout Holy Week. This week we honor the *why* of our Lord's incarnation.
- Incapable of suffering as God, our Lord chose to become a man capable of suffering. God became man so that He could suffer and die for our sins.
- As Isaiah puts it: He gave His back to those who beat Him, His cheeks to those who plucked His beard; His face He did not shield from buffets and spitting.
- "Found human in appearance, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."
- And in this act both horrible for the cruelty inflicted upon Christ, and sublime in the humility by which He accepted it, we are given our chance for salvation.
- Of all the deaths this world has ever witnessed, Jesus' death on a cross is the most extraordinary. This is so not because of the unjust brutality in which it was carried out, but rather because of the love with which Jesus accepted and allowed it.
- In dying as He did, Jesus shows us what true love is. Though completely innocent and without sin, Jesus willingly sacrificed Himself, suffering the most cruel and unjust of deaths.
- In so doing, Jesus reveals to us that true love is, by nature, both sacrificial and long-suffering. True love gives all of itself. And honestly, a love of this type demands a response. To remain unmoved in the face of such love is to deny a part of our humanity!
- Brothers and sisters, God became man in the mystery of the Incarnation so that He could suffer and die to redeem us from our sins.
- This week, as we ponder Christ's love for us poured out in His passion, may we realize that Christianity is not a religion that can be practiced well by half-measures. Our Christian faith demands that we give Christ our all – just as He has given all of Himself for us.
- May we each be given the grace this Holy Week to love our Lord with all our hearts, all our souls, all our minds, and all our strength – for His glory, and for our own salvation!