

Birkenhead, Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2023

## Annunciation of Our Lady

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

“Mary could not humble herself more than she did in the incarnation of the Word. On the other hand, God would not exalt her more than he has exalted her

“Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalteth”

These are the words of Our Lord, and cannot fail. Therefore, God having determined to make himself man, in order to redeem lost man, and thus manifest to the world his infinite goodness, being about to choose on earth his mother, sought among women the holiest and most humble. Among them all he saw one, the youthful virgin Mary, who, as she was the most perfect in all virtues, so was she the most simple, and humble as a dove in her own esteem. “There are young maidens without number; one is my dove, my perfect one.” Let this one, then, said God, be my chosen mother.”<sup>1</sup>

These words from St Alphonsus Liguori are offered to our meditation this morning, as we contemplate this heavenly meeting of St Gabriel the Archangel, and the Mother of Our Saviour. He clearly says that amongst all virtues which are decorating the soul of Our Lady, humility is the one which truly pleased God and made Him choose her for His Mother on earth.

No doubt that Our Lady was aware of all the prophecies spoken by the prophets before her time. She knew that the Messiah was to come. She was hoping to meet Him, as any members of the chosen people. She knew that the Messiah would choose a mother amongst the chosen people. Some holy doctors even said that she was probably meditating upon the words of Isaiah “Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel”<sup>2</sup> when the Archangel messenger of God, entered with reverence to announce her the great news.

But practicing herself the words that Our Lord placed in her mouth as a canticle of thanksgiving, she remained humble, unnoticed, hiding and meditating these graces, “pondering them in her heart.”<sup>3</sup>

“He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> St Alphonsus Liguori, The Glories of Mary, Discourse IV on the Annunciation of Mary

<sup>2</sup> Is., VII, 14.

<sup>3</sup> Luke, II, 19.

<sup>4</sup> Luke, I, 52.

I cannot describe in better words than the author of the Imitation of Christ how we should act if such graces were given to us. These same words can be said about Our Lady of course, as she perfectly opened the way of prayer, mortification, and humility, before us:

“It is better and safer for you to conceal the grace of devotion, not to be elated by it, not to speak or think much of it, and instead to humble yourself and fear lest it is being given to one unworthy of it. Do not cling too closely to this affection, for it may quickly be changed to its opposite. When you are in grace, think how miserable and needy you are without it. Your progress in spiritual life does not consist in having the grace of consolation, but in enduring its withdrawal with humility, resignation, and patience, so that you neither become listless in prayer nor neglect your other duties in the least; but on the contrary do what you can do as well as you know how, and do not neglect yourself completely because of your dryness or anxiety of mind.”<sup>5</sup>

As pride brought sin and sadness in the world, through the original sin, as woman was involved in that action which ruined the original creation, God wanted that humility and silence be first within the woman he would choose the mystery of Incarnation upon earth to start with. Our Lady, whom we are celebrating today is the model to imitate if we wish to truly follow Christ.

As Easter is approaching, as we are about to contemplate again our Saviour dying on the Cross for the love of us, let's learn from His divine mother how humility and obedience will acquire for us the grace of Salvation. She was the first to benefit of the grace of the Redemption, and she was near Her Son while he was offering his sacrifice. Surely, she is the best creature to be taken as an example of life.

The fruit of this first mystery of the Rosary we're celebrating today is that same virtue our Lady received and practiced at such high degree. Let's walk alongside her. Place your little hand into her holy hand, to be dragged and taken with her on the path of Calvary, on the path of heaven.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas A. Kempis, Imitation of Christ, III, 7, Grace Must Be Hidden Under the Mantle of Humility.