A.M.D.G. 3rd Sunday in Advent – A Text: Luke 1:26-38

 December 11th, 2016

 耶稣降临节的第三个主日

**Luke 1:26-38** In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, ‘Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.’ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.’ Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’ The angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.’ Then Mary said, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.’ Then the angel departed from her.

路加福音 1:26-38- 天使預言耶穌降生

**26**到了第六個月，天使加百列奉神差遣，往加利利的拿撒勒城去， **27**到了一個童貞女那裡，她已經和大衛家一個名叫約瑟的人訂了婚，童貞女的名字是馬利亞。**28**天使進去，對她說：“恭喜！蒙大恩的女子，主與你同在！” **29**她卻因這話驚慌起來，反覆思想這樣祝賀是甚麼意思。 **30**天使說：“馬利亞，不要怕！因你已從神那裡蒙了恩。 **31**你將懷孕生子，要給他起名叫耶穌。 **32**他將要被尊為大，稱為至高者的兒子，主神要把他祖大衛的王位賜給他， **33**他要作王統治雅各家，直到永遠，他的國沒有窮盡。” **34**馬利亞對天使說：“我還沒有出嫁（“我還沒有出嫁”原文作“我不認識男人”），怎能有這事呢？” **35**天使回答：“聖靈要臨到你，至高者的能力要覆庇你，因此那將要出生的聖者，必稱為神的兒子。 **36**你看，你親戚以利沙伯，被稱為不生育的，在老年也懷了男胎，現在已是第六個月了， **37**因為在神沒有一件事是不可能的。” **38**馬利亞說：“我是主的婢女，願照你的話成就在我身上！”天使就離開她去了。

**Theotokos – God-Bearers上帝之母**

Our reading today from Luke’s Gospel – known as the ‘Annunciation’ – is one of the most beloved scenes in the whole Christian story – an intimate moment between Mary and the angel Gabriel in which everything begins with a young girl’s ‘yes’ to God’s wild plan. Luke tells the story in 12 short verses. And art through the centuries has depicted her as demure and unresisting - her obedience easy. Neither the gospel nor the way she has been presented through time says anything about what the Annunciation must have cost her.

-2-

我们今天读的路加福音 -- 被称为 “天使报喜” -- 是整个基督徒的故事中最可爱的场景之一 -- 马利亚和天使加百利之间的亲密的时刻。一位年轻的姑娘对上帝的非同寻常的计划说 “是” ，从而拉开了整个故事的序幕。路加福音用了12个小节描写了这段故事，几个世纪以来在艺术方面描写了马利亚的端庄娴静和顺从 -- 她的从容顺服。 在四福音和艺术作品中都没有提到玛利亚因"天使报喜讯" 而要付出的的代价。

But as I ponder her story again - nothing about Mary feels straightforward or easy. Despite my familiarity with her story, the mother of Jesus strikes me as a woman shrouded in mystery, a woman whose "yes" raises as many questions as it answers.

正如我在思考她的故事的时候，-- 没有感觉到马利亚的直率或简单。 尽管我熟悉她的故事，这位耶稣的母亲，因其有一种神秘的色彩而打动着我。这位回答‘是’的女子所带来的众多的问题和也带来了众多的答案。

Part of the problem is that we've buried her under so many layers of theology, piety, and politics - she's nearly impossible to excavate. Catholics pray to her. Protestants tend to ignore her on principle. The Eastern Church knows her as "Theotokos," theGod-bearer. Some call her a victim of divine coercion. And for some, she represents a troubling model of pious femininity — ever sinless, ever virgin, ever mother. For still others, she is child prophet extraordinare — a young girl who fearlessly announces the arrival of God's kingdom to earth.

问题是在神学、虔诚信仰和政治诸多方面，我们把马利亚掩盖在这些不同的层面上了 -- 她几乎不可能从其中被挖掘出来。比如：新教教徒更愿意在原则上忽略马利亚这个人物。而东方基督教会把玛利亚称之为“基督的母亲”“上帝之母”。有些称她为神圣胁迫的受害者。 而对有些人而言，她代表着一种典型的令人担忧的虔诚女性 -- 永远不会有罪过、永远的处女、永远的母亲。 而对其他的人，她又是杰出的小先知-- 年轻女孩无所畏惧地宣布上帝的国度将降临在世界上。

Would the real Mary please stand up? I wish she would, because I have so many questions to ask her: When did you tell your parents you were pregnant? Did you tell Joseph yourself, or did the gossip mongers of Nazareth take care of that for you? Did anyone in the village believe your story? After Gabriel departed, did you doubt his visitation?  Question your sanity? Fear for your life?

真正的马利亚愿意站出来? 我想她会的，因为我有太多的问题要问她: 你是什么时候告诉你的父母你有身孕了? 你是自己亲自告诉约瑟，还是拿撒勒人传闲话? 在村里的人相信你的故事吗? 天使加百利离开的时候，你怀疑过他的拜访吗？你问过你自己（当时）是否头脑清楚？害怕你未来的生活吗?

The story of the Annunciation is one of the most familiar ones in the New Testament.  "*In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the House of David. The virgin's name was Mary."*

-3-

“天使报喜”的故事，其中新约圣经中最熟悉的一段： “到了第六個月，天使加百列奉神差遣，往加利利的拿撒勒城去， 到了一個童貞女那裡，她已經和大衛家一個名叫約瑟的人訂了婚，童貞女的名字是馬利亞。”

From this mind-boggling introduction, an even more mind‐boggling and rapid‐fire narrative follows.  The angel greets Mary, calling her God's "*favored one*." He describes the divine plan for a miraculous conception. Mary expresses doubt, Gabriel explains God's plan in greater detail, Mary consents, and the angel departs.

从这个难以置信的故事开头， 到更多的难以置信一连串迅速发生的故事。天使恭喜马利亚并称她为‘蒙大恩的女子’。天使描述了奇迹般受孕的神圣计划。马利亚有些疑问，天使加百利更详细地解释了上帝的计划，马利亚同意，然后天使离开。

At least half of what's maddening about this story is its brevity. We know that Mary was "*much perplexed*" by Gabriel's words, and that she "*pondered*" his greeting. We know from her question - *"How can this be, since I am a virgin?"* - that she recognized the bizarre nature of the angel's announcement. And we know from her last words to the angel that she agreed to God's plan.But the Gospel writer leaves a great deal out. This Advent, my attention is particularly drawn to three gaps in the Annunciation narrative.

故事中有一半以上难以置信的是它的简单。 我们知道，马利亚在听到天使的话后‘有很多的困惑’。 她在 ‘思考’ 他的恭喜。 我们从马利亚的问题可以了解到 -- “这怎么可能， 因为我是一名处女?”她承认天使的报喜有着离奇的性质。 我们从她的最后一句话中了解到她同意上帝的计划。但福音的作者在此留下了很大的空白。 在迎接耶稣降临的日子里，我们在“天使报喜”的故事中更关注一下这三处的空白。

The first is the gap between Gabriel's title for Mary - *"favored one*" - and the task he assigns her. Tradition tells us that Mary was probably thirteen or fourteen years old when the angel appeared to her. We know that in first‐century Jewish culture, a girl who became pregnant out of wedlock faced grave danger. At the very least, she became an object of widespread scorn. At the worst — as in contemporary cultures which practice honor killings — she risked being stoned to death by the very villagers who raised her. To say "yes" in this instance was to give herself over to scandal and severe ostracism. It was to put everything — her reputation, her marriage, her very life — on the line.

第一处是天使加百利称马利亚为‘蒙大恩的女子’-- 这是天使给她分派的任务。传统习俗告诉我们， 马利亚很可能在 13 或 14 岁时天使出现在她面前。 我们知道在第一世纪的犹太文化中，女童婚外怀孕面临着严重的危险。 至少，她成了人们普遍鄙视的对象。 最糟糕的是，在现代文明中也会被实施的荣誉谋杀 -- 她会冒着被村民用石头打死的危险。 在故事中马利亚说 ‘是’ 就要把自己交给这一丑事中，并严重的被社会排斥。所有的--她的声誉、她的婚姻、她的生命都要冒着极大的风险。

-4-

And *this*is the special honor God bestows on his "favored one"? This gap in the Annunciation story warns me that God's "favor" is not the simple thing – the straight-forward blessing I'd like to believe it is. Mary's favored status led her straight from scandal to danger to the trauma of her son's crucifixion. God's call required her to be profoundly countercultural - to trust an inner vision that flew in the face of everything her community expected of her. And even later - as the years passed, and her son's enemies multiplied, Mary's "yes" demanded a degree of courage that would make any mother tremble. Let's not deceive ourselves: it is no small thing to be favored of God!

这就是上帝赐给她的特殊荣誉‘蒙大恩的女子’吗？ 在此，提醒我‘天使报喜’的故事中的‘蒙大恩’绝对不是简单 -- 我喜欢相信的那种直接的祝福。马利亚蒙恩的祝福让她承受的是从丑事到危险，最后面对耶稣受难而带给她的痛苦。上帝召唤她要她坚定地反叛主流文化 -- 在她面对周围对她所期望的一切事情的时候，让她相信她内心的憧憬。甚至在后来，随着年月，他的儿子的敌人成倍增多的时候，马利亚的‘是’需要有一定程度的勇气，这会让任何母亲都担忧。让我们不要误导我们自已：上帝的蒙恩都不是小事情！

*The second gap in the story lies beween Mary's question: "How can this be?*” - and her consent: "*Let it be with me according to your word*". In a beautiful poem inspired by Botticelli's painting, "The Cestello Annunciation," poet Andrew Hudgins lingers in this very space, giving it a weight and richness I'd never considered before:

故事的第二处空白是马利亚的问题：“这怎么可能？”-- 和她的同意。“願照你的話成就在我身上！” Botticelli的画 -- ‘Cestello的天使报喜’ 激发了诗人Andrew Hudgins的灵感写了这首美丽的诗。 在诗中的每一处都萦绕着这一美丽的瞬间。



-5-

*The angel has already said, Be not afraid.
He's said, The power of the Most High will darken you.*

*Her eyes are downcast and half closed.
And there's a long pause — a pause here of forever —
as the angel crowds her. She backs away,
her left side pressed against the picture frame.*

*天使已经说了，不要怕。*

*他已经说了，至高的力量让你心情沉重。*

*她的眼睛向下半闭着。*

*有一段长时间的寂寞 -好似永远 -*

*天使催问她。她退缩了，*

*她的左边紧紧贴在画框架的边上。*

*He kneels.  He's come in all unearthly innocence
to tell her of glory —*

*not knowing, not remembering
how terrible it is.*

*And Botticelli gives her eternity to turn,*

*look out the doorway,*

*whereon a far hill floats a castle,*

*and halfway acrossthe river toward it*

*juts a bridge, not completed —*

*他跪着。他超自然的清白*

*告诉她的荣耀 -*

*不知道，不记得，*

*如此可怕。*

*Botticelli（画家）给了她永恒的改变*

*看看门外，*

*远处高山上浮动着城堡，*

*中途穿过河流直到城堡*

*一个桥伸入河中，并不完全 -*

*and neither is the touch, angel to virgin,
both her hands held up, both elegant, one raised
as if to say stop, while the other hand, the right one,
reaches toward his;*

*天使没有触摸处女，*

*她伸出的双手那么优美，一个手抬起*

*好像在说停止，另一个手，右手，*

*伸出要接触他;*

*Her whole body pulls away.
Only her head, already haloed, bows,
acquiescing.*

*她的身体要走开。*

*只有她的头，已经有光环，鞠躬，*

*默许。*

*-6-*

*And though she will, she's not yet said,
Behold, I am the handmaiden of the Lord,
as Botticelli, in his great pity,*

*lets her refuse, accept, refuse, and think again.*

*尽管她愿意，但是还没有说，*

*看那，我是神的侍女，*

*Botticelli（画家），用他很大的同情，*

*让她拒绝，接受，拒绝，和再考虑。*

The danger in idealizing Mary's consent is that it distorts her humanity, and keeps her story at arm's length from ours. As I ponder this story again, I cannot believe that she agreed to the angel’s plan without hesitation. I think she cannot have helped but struggle – and that her eventual "yes" is cautious and ambivalent. I hope Hudgins' "eternity" ***did*** pass between Mary's calling and her consent. I hope the angel indeed waited compassionately for her answer, honoring all that was at stake in her freedom to accept or refuse him.

把马利亚的同意理想化实际上是歪曲了她的人性，这样使她的故事和我们之间产生了距离。在我再次思考这个故事的时候，我不相信她在同意天使的计划的时候没有一点儿犹豫。 除了自己做艰难抉择的时候，她得到不其它的帮助。她最终回答 ‘是’ 也是非常谨慎和矛盾的。 我希望 Hudgins的 ‘永恒’ **的确**经过了上帝对马利亚的呼唤和她的同意之间的过程。 我希望天使的确很同情地等待着她的回答， 并且在这个紧要关头，他尊重马利亚的自由选择 - 同意他和拒绝他。

The third gap ends this week's reading: *"Then the angel departed from her."* This is a "gap" in my life with God that I both recognize and dread. It's the moment when the prayer ends, the vision recedes, the certainty wavers. It's the moment *after* the "yes," - the moment when the mountaintop experience fades into memory, and life in the valley begins.

第三处的空白是今天读的经文最后一句: “天使就離開她去了。”在我的生活中也有这样的空白，我也承认和很害怕。当祷告结束的时刻，我心中的憧憬退去之后，接着会肯定带来动摇。在说完‘是’的那一刻，当山顶经历变得淡忘的时候，幽谷的生活又开始了。

How different Mary's experience might have been if Gabriel had stuck around to erase her doubts and silence her critics. But no, he departed, leaving the ongoing work of discernment and discipleship – and the immediate fallout - to Mary alone. Her ‘yes’ was only the beginning.

如果天使加百利消除了马利亚的疑惑，并让她的批评者闭口不语，那马利亚经历会是怎样的不同呢？

但是，没有。天使离开了马利亚。把鉴别和服侍的工作 - 和马上产生的余波- 全部留给了马利亚。她的回答‘是’实际上仅仅是全部事情的开始。

-7-

A popular Christmas song addressed to Mary asks what she knew when she consented to Gabriel's request: *"Mary, did you know that your baby boy would one day walk on water?  Mary, did you know that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters?"*

一个流行的圣诞歌是写个马利亚的，询问她当她同意天使加百利的请求时: “玛利亚， 你可知道，你的小男婴有一天将在水上行走吗? 马利亚，你可知道，你的小男婴将救赎我们的儿子和女儿吗?”

We have no way of knowing what Mary knew. My guess is that like us - she knew just enough to get started. My guess is that the work of being ‘Theotokos’ - bearing God into the world - involved ceaseless discovery, incredible joy, plenty of heartbreak and ongoing consent - just as it does today when we, too, agree to be ‘Theotokos – God bearers – opening ourselves so that God’s dreams, God’s plans, God’s love can grow inside us and be birthed to the world.

我们无法知道马利亚是否知道。 我的猜测像我们这样的--在开始她知道些。 我的猜测是做为“上帝之母”- 把上帝带到这个世界，进入不断发现、无与伦比的快乐、很多的悲伤和不断进行的许诺 - 就像在今天，当我们也同意做“上帝之母，开放自己，使得神的梦想、神的计划、神的爱能在我们体内增长，并让这些诞生在这个世界。

Meister Eckhart, writing in the 13th century, said: *“We are all meant to be mothers of God. What good is it to me if this eternal birth of the divine Son takes place unceasingly – but does not take place within myself? And, what good is it to me if Mary is full of grace if I am not also full of grace? What good is it to me for the Creator to give birth to His son, if I do not also give birth to him in my time and my culture? This, then, is the fullness of time: when the Son of God is begotten in me.”*

Meister Eckhart 在 13 世纪时写到: ”我们都意味着是神的母亲。如果这个永恒的神圣之子的诞生不停地发生，但是并没有在我自己身上出现，对我来讲好处是什么呢？ 如果马利亚充满恩典，而我没有，对我来讲好处是什么呢？如果创造者诞生了他的儿子，而在我的时代和我的民族中没有诞生他，那对我有什么好处呢？ 那么，这是适当的时间：当上帝之子（基督）在我们体内孕育。

It is important to hear Mary’s story again and again each year – because it reminds us to be attentive to God’s messengers – however and wherever they may be found in our days. It reminds us that God is continually inviting us to say ‘yes’ to whatever it is that God wishes to give birth in us. It is joining with Mary in being a theotokos – a God-bearer for our world – and following her in the joyful, difficult and blessed task of shining the light of God into the shadowed corners of the world.

每年反复地听到玛利亚的故事是多么重要 - 因为它提醒我们要特别注意上帝的使者 -- 无论在何时何地他们都能找到我们。它提醒我们，上帝不断地邀请我们说 ‘是’，无论上帝让我们孕育什么。和马利亚一起做一个‘上帝之母’-- 为我们的世界，并让她在喜悦中，困难中，上帝的光辉在祝福的任务中照耀到世界的各个阴暗角落。