

A Gift for Ordinary Time

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By Lucia A. Silecchia

Every year, when I flip my calendar to December, thoughts of Christmas overwhelm me with anticipation of the joys to come and the great gift of Christ's Nativity.

Yet, when I open that same calendar to the month of March, my initial thought has never been, "*The Solemnity of the Annunciation is on March 25th!*" There are no cards or gifts, and merely a handful of hymns dedicated to this occasion. It is not celebrated as a Holy Day of Obligation, nor is it marked with much festivity outside the celebration of regularly scheduled weekday Masses.

Perhaps this is because this solemnity often falls in the heart of Lent's penitential season. Perhaps, too often, it falls in the shadows between the sorrow of the passion and the glory of the Resurrection.

Lately, though, I have asked myself why I do not give the Solemnity of the Annunciation its due – and resolve that it will be different this year.

March 25th was chosen for this celebration precisely because it falls exactly nine months prior to the birth of Christ. If I truly believe all that the Church teaches about the sacred dignity of life in the womb, then I should celebrate the Annunciation with the same reverence, joy and gratitude that I celebrate the Nativity.

I rejoice in December when the angels sung in Bethlehem, giving glory to the newborn King. I should also rejoice in March when an angel announced in Nazareth, "*Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you.... You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus.*" ([Lk 1:26-38](#))

I am amazed that Christ humbled Himself to be the tiny infant we welcome at Christmas. I should also be amazed that, nine months before that, He humbled Himself to enter the world far smaller and hidden away.

It is easy to celebrate what the eye can see. Hence, we celebrate our own birthdays and those of our loved ones and we count our years from that day forward. Yet, we know that all of us had remarkable hidden lives for months before that day we were delivered into the world. So, too, did Christ.

There is no Advent calendar counting down the days to the Annunciation. There are no grand celebrations and family gatherings ahead to mark this day. But, perhaps, absent the distractions of Christmas, the Solemnity of the Annunciation is a particularly sacred time to contemplate the true wonder of God's incarnation. Perhaps, in the midst of the Lenten

season, this is an occasion to contemplate not only the wonder *that* Christ came to earth – but *why* He did. Perhaps in honor of Mary of Nazareth and her great “Yes”, this occasion can inspire our parishes and families to offer spiritual and material support for all those women who carry the sacred gift of life within them.

I hope that the Solemnity of the Annunciation holds many blessings for all who take time to contemplate that instant when Christ began His human life, starting His journey at the very beginning. I hope that parishes named for this solemnity enjoy their Feast Day in a special way. I hope that greater reverence for life in the womb fills our hearts as we mark this great day. And, for myself, I hope for fuller appreciation for the great gift of divine love that brought Christ to earth, to share in our ordinary time.

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