

What Gifts Are You Bringing The King?

Gold, Frankensence, and a...Hummer? What Gifts Are You Bringing the King?

I recall hearing the joyful news some 12 years ago, that Presvytera Andrea was going to give birth to a child. Our lives changed and we signed up for a Lamaze class on childbirth. We learned about labor and how to time contractions. I was the coach and as a team we were going to have this baby. As the time neared, a problem occurred; our baby was breech. The doctor tried turning him in the womb to no avail. Our first child was a scheduled c-section to be born on Monday, August 17th in the operating room. No breathing techniques or the timing of contractions was necessary. The birth, as we had envisioned, was nothing of that sort. The point is that in many ways, Christmas expectations do not always coincide with reality.

The Lord shattered Mary's expectations. She was dedicated from the young age of three as a virgin of the Temple. Surely, when she was told that the elderly Joseph was to become her betrothed, it had to create in her much bewilderment. She leaves the Temple, goes with Joseph, and before they come together, the Archangel Gabriel appears.

Archangel Gabriel manifests himself to Mary. Luke the Evangelist records the conversation and Mary's initial reaction...she becomes greatly troubled. Mary was first told that God was looking favorably upon her. "Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you! (Luke 1:28)." She must have thought, why then did He not leave her in the Temple as a dedicated virgin? The angel tells her that she will conceive a Son by the Holy Spirit and His name had already been chosen - Jesus. "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus (Luke 1:31)." Matthew, in his gospel, records Joseph's reaction as he resolves to quietly divorce his betrothed (Matt. 1:19).

Next, the angel informs her that the conceived boy is to be the King of an everlasting Kingdom. "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 father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end (Luke 1:32)." Then, she is told that this King was to be born of the Holy Spirit. "And 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 called holy, the Son of God (Luke 1:35)." Finally, Mary gives an immediate and convicted response. "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her (Luke 1:38)." In a matter of perhaps a minute or two her entire life was turned upside down and then right side up.

Our expectations in life are always subject to the Will of God. One thing for certain about the Virgin Mary is that she lived a life of acceptance and obedience. Accepting God's will in the face of contradictions is always a testimony to faithfulness. The soul of the pure, free from all pride, is ready to become whatever God wills for it. Living by her

example, many doors and opportunities open that are beyond imagination. It was Archangel Gabriel who said, "For with God nothing will be impossible (Luke 1:37)." God is never limited by our faithlessness; He simply finds those who are followers and works through them. We are the ones who lose when our expectations are not in accordance with God's will.

As our homes become transformed with lights, decorations and the sounds of Christmas hymns, will all of this remind us of the inner transformation that Christ brings to us? As Christ is born, all creation reacts by making an offering. The earth gives the cave, the kings, their gifts; and humanity offers Mary as the new Temple of God. Living in the world, the motto is, "the more one works - the more one takes." Christmas then becomes a time to receive, rather than to give. The Lord, saw the act of offering as the condition for a blessed life. "In all things I have shown you that by so toiling one must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35)." This is not a plea for your money. It is a plea for your life to be given entirely to Christ, Who is born so that we may have Life with Him.

In Christ's Love,
+ Fr. Andrew