The Annunciation of Our Lord to the Blessed Virgin Mary streamed live on Facebook, and then made available as a recording to the Parish of Tidenham, 25 March 2020, during the coronavirus pandemic.

Isaiah 7:10-14
Hebrews 10:4-10
Luke 1:26-38

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux writes in one of his sermons of a scene he imagines, which is that the angel has just delivered this extraordinary message, this proposition to Mary, which we have just heard in our gospel reading, and he imagines what might be happening in the pause before Mary says "here I am, the servant of the Lord, let it be with me according to your word."

What is happening in that pause? He imagines the Angels holding their breath, he imagines Adam, Abraham, David, all the patriarchs holding their breath, waiting to hear whether Mary will say "yes". He paints this picture of the whole of creation, of heaven and earth waiting to see whether salvation is about to begin.

This is of course all conjecture, and yet it is no less profound for that. When Mary answers "yes" to God, a word is spoken, and the Word becomes incarnate. A word with a lower case 'w' is spoken, Mary's word, 'yes'. And the Word, with a capital 'w', the Christ, the incarnate second person of the Trinity leaps down from heaven, becomes incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and our salvation is kindled.

Saint Bernard puts it like this: "answer quickly, then, Virgin. Answer the angel and the Lord he represents. Give your word and receive the Word; speak the word that passes and embrace the Word who abides forever… The one for whom the nations yearn is knocking at the door."

On this ‘lockdown Annunciation day’, when the boundaries of most of our worlds probably feel pretty tight, pretty solid, and unpleasantly restrictive, rejoice that when God comes to us, the only response that is required is a 'yes', that no matter how hemmed in or encroached upon or trapped we may feel, graciousness, is spoken to us by the Angels who we know are there to roll away the heaviest stones and let the sunshine into the darkness of our worlds, our homes, and our hearts.

May Mary's 'yes' ring throughout the church today, and take us by surprise again.

Amen.