

# The Word Became Flesh

## An Annunciation Novena Reflecting on the Dignity of Human Life

March 17 to March 25

### **DAY ONE:** *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you." (Jer. 1:5)*

**Reflection:** Our minds cannot comprehend how special each soul is to God. We do not understand the dignity that is ours when His Goodness chose each one of us to live, to think, to know, to see, to love. We did not happen to be—we were chosen by God to exist. Before time began God chose each one of us and this choice was deliberate...His providence placed us in a time and state of life that would bring out our greatest potential. He gave each of us special talents, gifts and natural virtues all geared towards a deeper knowledge of Himself. Even those whose circumstances prevent them

from knowing Him directly, possess a deep conviction of His existence and providence. He placed into each of us an inner radar system that warns of danger and assures us intuitively of His care, so we will never be far from Him and will not be deprived of the knowledge of His existence. The Hand that formed each of us left Its imprint upon our minds and souls for He made us to His own image. The soul He breathed into this work of His Hands—our body—was imprinted with some of His love—His creative power—His strength. We reflect His eternity, for once His Will called us out of nothingness, we became immortal—our soul will never die.\*

**\*End each day's reflection with the following prayer:**

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### **Redeemer in the Womb**

**Lord Jesus Christ, You took our human nature upon Yourself.  
You shared our life and death, our childhood and adulthood.  
You also shared our time in the womb.**

**While still God, while worshiped and adored by the angels,  
While Almighty in filling every part of the universe,  
You dwelt for nine months in the womb of Mary.**

**You were our Redeemer in the womb, our God who was a preborn child.  
Lord Jesus, we ask You to bless and protect the children  
who today are in their mothers' womb.**

**Save them from the danger of abortion.  
Give their mothers the grace to sacrifice themselves,  
in body and soul, for their children.**

**Help all people to recognize in the preborn child a brother, a sister,  
saved by You, our Redeemer in the womb. --Priests for Life**

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### **DAY TWO:** *"Yahweh called me before I was born, from my mother's womb he pronounced my name." (Is. 49:1)*

**Reflection:** We read in the Gospel of St. John that when Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalen she thought He was the gardener. Her mind was not ready for the Resurrection and then she heard her name—"Mary!" Was it the tone of voice that made her recognize Jesus, or was it because the God-man pronounced it? Did it perhaps have the resounding quality of an echo as it reached her ears? That name was pronounced by God before she was born—before time began. At its sound a creature awoke, first out of nothingness, then out of sin and now out of sorrow. The first time it was pronounced, her birth was decreed—the second time she came to be—the third time it called her to rebirth, and now, after the Resurrection, it

called her to recognize her God in Spirit, in herself, in her neighbor and in faith. When man pronounces a name it is mostly a call to serve, but when God pronounces it, it bestows life, power, grace and joy. When Jesus said, "Lazarus come forth" a dead man arose; when He changed the name of Simon to Peter he gave a specific mission and power to a man. When He thundered, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me," a man was struck blind, transformed and called by the name Paul. How wonderful and how fortunate we are as God constantly calls our name and bestows upon us the grace to change and respond to His love. \*

**DAY THREE:** *"You drew me out of the womb, you entrusted me to my mother's breasts; placed on your lap from birth, from my mother's womb you have been my God." (Ps. 22:9-10)*

**Reflection:** The psalmist realizes that it was the Lord God who held him in His lap as his natural mother fed and cared for him. He saw God upholding his body, giving him strength and all the necessary bodily functions to grow. We must never lose sight of this reality. Never for a moment has God ceased caring, providing for and loving us. Even at those times when others seemed to have charge of our

growth and care—it was done so on the lap of God—the loving care of a compassionate Father, who never ceased to look after us. He did so in such silence that we were not aware of His concern. It was as if His power might frighten us or His strength crush us, that He handled our formation and growth with such tenderness and silence. It is unfortunate that we have mistaken silence for absence and tenderness for neglect. \*

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**DAY FOUR:** *"You know me through and through, from having watched my bones take shape when I was being formed in secret, knitted together in the limbo of the womb." (Ps. 139:15)*

**Reflection:** Only God knows us as we are. When the Psalmist said God knows us through and through, he meant every aspect of our creation, life, talents, temperament and characteristics. He knew the crosses that would come our way and how each one would help to change, mold and form our soul to His Image. Like all fathers, He looked forward to the day He would see Himself clearly mirrored in us. He anticipated our choosing Him above all things and saw what marvelous

glory those choices would give us. He saw the holiness we might obtain, the humility of heart that would be like a shield around us. He saw the tears His love would gently wipe away and the times He would lean down to take hold of our hand as we fell from grace. He saw our bad choices and grieved over our pain and then sought ways to bring good out of everything. Yes, He knew us then, through and through as He knows us now and—still He loves us. \*

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**DAY FIVE:** *"My days were listed and determined even before the first of them occurred." (Ps. 139:16)*

**Reflection:** ...How often do we think of God's love for us before one day of our existence came into being? With what love and care He brought us forth and determined the length of our days! We did not just happen to be. We have a mission to fulfill, a place in His Kingdom to occupy, a duty to perform and a work to accomplish. We are important to God and an integral part of salvation history. Each human being exerts an influence, changes people for good or bad, builds or

destroys, uses or creates opportunities. We can truthfully say each human being changes the world for good or bad and the world is not the same because each one of us has lived in it. No matter how insignificant our role, how lowly our position, how unknown our contribution, each one of us leaves a mark somewhere, in some way upon this world. No wonder He chooses us with great care and determines our course with infinite love. What a gift is life! \*

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**DAY SIX:** *"Your body, you know, is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you since you received Him from God. You are not your own property; you have been bought and paid for. That is why you should use your body for the glory of God." (1 Cor. 6:19)*

**Reflection:** ...Our dignity as human beings was degraded by pride and rebellion in the beginning by our first parents Adam and Eve and then by our own wrong choices. God's love for us devised a way to raise us above our degradation...and set us apart as beings He could rightfully call "sons." He sent His own Son to take our flesh upon Himself—live and die as one of us and then rise from the dead so we would be delivered from our slavery to sin. What a price was paid for one so fragile in nature, so vacillating in will, so prone to evil. The Great King looks for a peasant to raise up to the dignity of a

Prince. Each one of us is a kind of Cinderella, who is beckoned by the King to live a new life. The choice is ours, but the prize is His—He has already a right to everything we are, everything we possess. He has only good to give us. Why do we so often prefer what harms us? Is the right to choose good and evil more precious to us than peace, happiness and joy? Would we rather be miserable and misuse our freedom to choose rather than be humble and admit God Knows what is best for us? What price He paid to save us and what price we pay when we do our own will? No, we do not have a right to

do as we please with our life or anyone else's. Our life belongs to God and that God is powerful enough to maintain it, good enough to sustain it and provident enough to care for all its needs.

Our body, St. Paul says, houses the Spirit of the Lord. It is a Temple. To desecrate it by sin or to take away its life giving spirit, is to commit an injustice to God, man and oneself—to God because He created it and it belongs to Him, to our neighbor because he needs to see God radiate in our lives and to ourselves because we were created to be sons of God and heirs to His Kingdom. We forget that everything God created is good. The Book of

Genesis assures us of this for after each day's account it says God "saw that it was good." If this is true of inanimate and animal creation, how much more is it true of human beings—made to the image and likeness of God. Whatever is not good in our lives is our own doing most of the time, but even in circumstances such as these, God brings good out of it for us. The only evil in the world is sin, for sin destroys and kills, but God's grace raises up dead souls and makes them new by repentance, confession and absolution. Once more God can say, "It is good—it is very good." \*

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**DAY SEVEN:** *"Listen to me....you who have been carried since birth, whom I have carried since the time you were born. In your old age I shall still be the same, when your hair is gray I shall still support you." (Is. 46:3) "You will be like a son of the Most High, whose love for you will surpass your mother's." (Eccl. 4:11) Like a son comforted by his mother will I comfort you. (Is. 66:13) "I, I am your consoler. How can you be afraid of mortal man, of son of man, whose fate is the fate of grass?" (Is. 51:12)*

**Reflection:** Yes, we do not appreciate the gift of life. We have lost the reality of God's care and love for us from Conception to death. We look at nature as if this unintelligent work of God's hand decided our fate—the fate of intelligent beings. We look to the world for directions of thought and action. We look at our neighbor and try to measure up to his concepts and ideals. We look everywhere and any-where for guidance and help, but we do not go to the Source of our life, the Cause of our being, the Dispenser of our intelligence and the Life of our spirit.

Some look upon birth as an accident, life as a necessary evil and death as resignation to the inevitable. The prospect can become so clouded by selfishness, statistics and pride that a womb giving life is turned into a tomb of death. There are others whose concepts of life become so narrow, their future so hopeless and their

present so unbearable, that the only solution to their problem is the extinction of that life completely. And then there are many who live in a kind of nether world—the darkness of inferiority—of uselessness, of despair without a thought of God, love or what is to come. They live within a circle of their own thoughts, selfish desires and self-hatred. If only all those living in these painful, frustrating attitudes would realize how much they are loved by God, how they have a place in His plans, how He watches over them, cares for them and desires they be with Him in His Kingdom. Surely the realization of being created, supported, loved and cared for from conception, through life and in death would secure freedom to the unborn, give courage to the destitute and confidence to the hopeless. God has our entire lives in the palm of His loving Hands—we can rest secure about our past, present and future for He loves us. \*

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**DAY EIGHT:** *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you," the angel answered Mary, "and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow." "I am the handmaid of the Lord...let what you have said be done to me." (Luke 1:35,38)*

**Reflection:** What marvels and mysteries God wraps up in short paragraphs. The whole world waited, studied, discerned, fasted and prayed for the coming of the Holy One. The account of His Incarnation is short, but filled with food for thought. God sent an angel to ask Mary to consent to being the Mother of the Redeemer. He respects the powerful gift He has given us. He would not perform this wonder of wonders without her consent. The angel told her not to fear—her virginity would be secure—it was the Holy Spirit, enveloping this beautiful Temple of the Lord, who would say, "Let the Word be made Flesh." The same Voice that hovered over the void and said, "let there be light," would bring forth the

Eternal Word and place It in the cradle of Mary's womb. The moment her will concurred with the Father's Will, the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us.

There are many opinions today as to when a seed becomes a person—a human being—a nature with powers to decide and to accomplish. When is a soul implanted into the body of a developing human being? Some say when the heart begins to beat, others when brain waves begin to function. What does Scripture say? What visible proof do we possess to solve this mystery? We know that "Jesus was like us in all things but sin." We must see if the Incarnate Word in the womb of the Immaculate Temple of God—Mary—was fruitful,

powerful—alive—a Divine Person—God—man. Scripture tells us the angel Gabriel had informed Mary that her cousin Elizabeth had conceived a son in her old age. Immediately after the announcement of her own Motherhood, "Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah." We are speaking here of a five mile journey—a journey made by a woman who had just said her "Amen" to God. There was no doubt in her mind that she immediately possessed and carried in her womb the Son of God.

So evident was the Divine Presence within her—so powerful and strong that tiny seed, that as soon as she greeted her cousin Elizabeth, the child Elizabeth carried experienced the power of the Word made Flesh. Elizabeth and her six month old child felt the Presence of the One who called them forth from nothingness. The God-man, who had been placed just one day before in the darkness of Mary's Immaculate womb, gave the light of holiness and sanctifying grace to His living but unborn Precursor. Mother and child felt a Presence and their souls felt drawn, humbled and joyful. "Elizabeth gave a loud cry and said, "Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why

should I be honored with a visit from the mother of my Lord?" It was certainly a mystery to Elizabeth. The Incarnate Son of God began redeeming mankind and spreading the Good News as soon as He was made Flesh.

At the time of the Incarnation, Elizabeth was in her sixth month and Luke informs us that Mary stayed with her for three months—until the birth and circumcision of John the Baptist. There is no question that Mary began that visit immediately after the Word was made Flesh....If there were in Mary merely the beginning of a body without a human soul united to Divinity there would have been no reaction on the part of Elizabeth and her unborn son —no exclamation of surprise at the honor of being visited and cared for by God's own Mother. Motherhood surely begins when there is a whole being within a woman, a being with a body and a soul united together to form a human person. Elizabeth attested to the reality of this truth by calling Mary the Mother of her Lord. She saw two mysteries in one intuitive glance—the Incarnation of the Messiah and the reality of a fully human person at conception.

When God says, "Let there be life" dare we say "It shall not be"? \*

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## **DAY NINE:** *“God so loved the world that He gave his only Son” (John 3:16)*

**Reflection:** “Man is called to a fullness of life which far exceeds the dimension of his earthly existence because it consists in sharing the very life of God. The loftiness of this supernatural vocation reveals the greatness and the inestimable value of human life even in its temporal phase...The church knows that this Gospel of life, which she has received from her Lord, has a profound and persuasive echo in the hear of every person—believer and non-believer alike—because it marvelously fulfills all the heart’s expectations while infinitely surpassing them. Even in the midst of difficulties and uncertainties, every person sincerely open to truth and goodness can, by the light of reason and the hidden action of grace, come to recognize in the natural law written in the heart (cf. Rom. 2:14-15) the sacred

value of human life from its very beginning until its end, and can affirm the right of every human being to have this primary good respected to the highest degree. Upon the recognition of this right, every human community and the political community itself are founded.

“In a special way, believers in Christ must defend and promote this right, aware as they are of the wonderful truth recalled by the Second Vatican Council: ‘By his incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every human being.’ This saving event reveals to humanity not only the boundless love of God who ‘so love the world that he gave his only Son’ (Jn. 3:16), but also the incomparable value of every human person.” \*

[Reflections one through eight come from *“The Gift of Life: He Chose Me to Be”*, by Mother Angelica. Used with permission of EWTN. Reflection nine comes from *Evangelium Vitae*, #2 ]

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