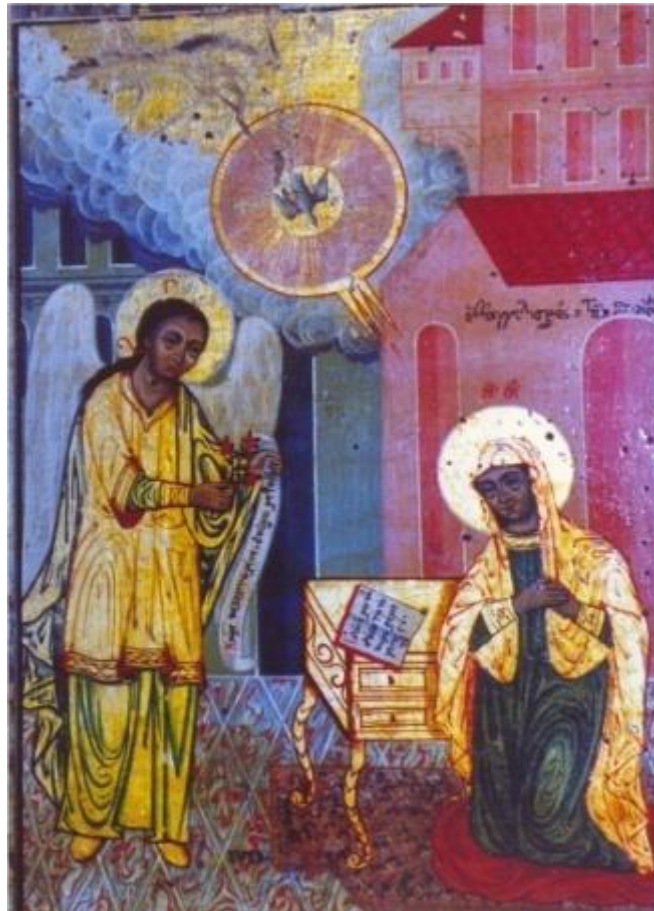


The Mission: Mary's obedience brings Jesus into the world



The Annunciation (Evangelismos). Orthodox style icon by anonymous, 1825, Church Museum of the Bishopry of Thessaloniki https://repository.kallipos.gr/bitstream/11419/3927/1/05_chapter_3.pdf

One of the pivotal moments in the story of St Winefride is her decision to follow God's will for her and dedicate herself to holy chastity, -which costs her her life. In Luke's account of the Annunciation we hear another account of a woman called by God to dedicate her life to God's service. Mary is asked by God to become the mother of Jesus, also possibly putting her life at risk if Joseph decides to denounce her.

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 forever, 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.

Some questions to think about:

- In the Annunciation, Mary, who is betrothed to Joseph and expects to get married, is asked to conceive and bear Jesus. How hard do you suppose it was for Mary and for Winefride, as women seeking to serve God, to follow God’s will against the expectations and pressures of their societies?
- Mary was visited by an angel of God. Winefride was guided by St Beuno. How do you think people today hear God’s call and invitation to them?
- Although Scripture refers to Jesus’s brothers and sisters, Christian tradition refers to Mary as a virgin perpetually dedicated and faithful to God. What do you think this tradition, and the story of St Winefride, tells us about the beauty and purpose of a single life in a society which pressures people to have sexual relationships as a matter of course?
- The angel explains to Mary how Jesus is to come into the world and she agrees; Caradoc tries to force violence on Winefride and then kills her. What does this tell us about human minds and bodies and how God relates to our physical, mental and spiritual selves?
- Mary’s ‘yes’ to God brought Jesus into the world. St Winefride’s faithfulness to God led to a tradition of pilgrimage, healing and peace. How can we use these examples to witness to people today about how listening to God and acting in accordance to God’s will can radically challenge and change the world? What other examples of saying ‘yes’ to God can you think of?
- What does the photo (below) make you think about if we imagine a calling from God in the life of young people today? What could God be saying to the person in the photo?

Nenad Stojkovic/flickr

