



St. Ignatius of Loyola Church
Pre-K-5 Family-Based Program

December 20th - Fourth Sunday of Advent

Reflection Point: In the Annunciation, Mary's extraordinary example shows us how to trust God and understand that Jesus will be born like us, an ordinary human being.

Reading: Luke 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent from God
to a town of Galilee called Nazareth,
to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph,
of the house of David,
and the virgin's name was Mary.
And coming to her, he said,
"Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you."
But she was greatly troubled at what was said
and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.
Then the angel said to her,
"Do not be afraid, Mary,
for you have found favor with God.

"Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear
a son,
and you shall name him Jesus.
He will be great and will be called Son of the Most
High,
and the Lord God will give him the throne of
David his father,
and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever,
and of his kingdom there will be no end."
But Mary said to the angel,
"How can this be,
since I have no relations with a man?"
And the angel said to her in reply,
"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.
And behold, Elizabeth, your relative,
has also conceived a son in her old age,
and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren;
for nothing will be impossible for God."
Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.
May it be done to me according to your word."
Then the angel departed from her.

Reflecting Together:

1. What extraordinary thing was Mary asked to do in this Gospel by the Angel Gabriel? What was her reaction?
2. What does this Gospel tell us prepared Mary for her most amazing job?

Going Deeper:

1. What can Mary's example show us teach us about our faith?
2. In all of our decisions, we try to follow Mary's example in making choices that reflect our faith and trust in God. What are some ways we might be called upon to say yes to God in our lives?

Finding God in Our Week

One of the challenges of faith is to recognize God's plan for us and to remain open to God's will and God's actions in our world. Filled with God's grace, Mary models for us the kind of faith that is needed to cooperate in God's plan of salvation. Like Mary, we are given the awesome opportunity to cooperate in God's saving plan. On this final Sunday of Advent, our Gospel invites us to consider how our preparations for Christmas have made us more aware of God's grace working in our lives.

At Home

Gather together your family and talk about what you have been doing as a family to prepare for Christmas. How have these preparations helped you to better celebrate the central mystery of Christmas, the Incarnation? Our Gospel today talks about how Mary was prepared for her role in Christ's birth. Read today's Gospel, Luke 1:26-38. Consider the question: What enabled Mary to say yes to God? Which of your Advent activities have made you more aware of God's grace in your life? Conclude in prayer together that God's grace will enable your family to be more faithful and obedient to God. Pray together the [Magnificat](#).

An Example of Lived Faith: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton



Elizabeth Ann Seton (1774–1821) was born to parents who belonged to powerful non-Catholic families in the then British colony of New York. Her mother was the daughter of the rector of an Episcopal church, and her father was a renowned physician and professor of anatomy.

Because her mother died when she was only three, Elizabeth's father assumed the responsibility of rearing her. He stressed education, sending Elizabeth to private school in New York as well as teaching her at home. Elizabeth's goal as she matured was to devote herself to nursing the sick, particularly those who were poor. At age 20 she married a wealthy young shipping merchant, and the couple raised a family of five children.

Elizabeth's good deeds earned her the name Protestant Sister of Charity, as she visited and cared for many who were poor and sick in New York City. Her transformation toward Catholicism began to take shape when she and her husband traveled to Italy in hopes of finding a cure for tuberculosis, with which he had become stricken. He soon died, and she returned with the children to the United States, became a Catholic, and formed a community of sisters whose mission was to open schools and teach children in orphanages. Mother Seton, as she became known, was declared a saint by Pope Paul VI on September 14, 1975. Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton's feast day is January 4. She is known for her perseverance in faith despite many losses in her life. She, like Mary, can be an example to us of how to trust in God and answer God's unique call for our own lives!