

“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled?” Then the angel left her. Luke 1: 38

She was just a young girl. She lived in a town that was not well regarded by others in the region. Her life was not very much different than other girls her age. She was to be married to Joseph, the local carpenter. It would be expected that the family would arrange their daughter’s marriage as most families did. There was nothing out of the ordinary that would make her life stand out from others in the town of Nazareth. All things were going according to the way they had been and would for years after. Maybe if we had lived during those times on a journey Nazareth would have been a stop-over or passed by. It would have never been a destination of choice.

Mary’s own daily routine was probably as predictable and ordinary as the rest of the girls her age. So it becomes all the more amazing, even bordering on the fantastic that to this very young girl with a very ordinary life that an angel, sent from the Lord named Gabriel appears to her.

Yet as the encounter begins in Luke’s gospel it becomes the transformational moment in human history. First of all God is entering into the human story. Secondly this ordinary young girl by the name of Mary responds with an insight and sense of faith that devout women twice her age didn’t have. When one reads her response it doesn’t give the hint of unbelief. The angel Gabriel senses that and gives her even more proof of God’s action in this. What follows is the most simplest and powerful words of the New Testament:

“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.”

The Greek word for “servant” here is the one that denotes “bondslave”, a lifelong servant in a household, no rights and on the low end of the totem pole. Without fanfare, without any protestation, Mary will be the bearer of God’s son.

Now if that had been me, I probably would have asked many questions, and maybe even put some conditions to it.

But not Mary. Her simple faithfulness was a “world changer”. Mary’s faith throws down the gauntlet to us.

Mary’s acceptance did not make her life easier. In fact it made it more hazardous and complicated. But we never hear of Mary having second thoughts, or regretting her ascent to God’s call.

God is interested in us, and God wants to use us too. Maybe not in the profound way God used Mary, but believe it or not, we are His children, and God does have a calling, and a task for us to do.

When we are aware of such a time in our life, let us be as courageous as a teenage girl named Mary and go forward with God.

Pr. John Van Haneghan.