

Connections Between the Annunciation, Creation, and Good Friday

Every Marian feast on the Church's liturgical calendar has a direct link to Christ Jesus. For instance, the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary's Assumption recognizes that she was assumed body and soul into heaven directly through her divine son's power. But the Feast of the Annunciation heightens the Marian connections to the saving action of Christ, as those connections are undeniably clear and distinct in this feast.

Now when this blessed feast is celebrated, many people focus on the *fiat*, that yes, which our Blessed Mother gave to God. But Pope Francis in a homily a couple of years back reminds us of how truly earth-shaking this feast is:

“The passage from Luke's Gospel [Luke 1:26-38] that we have heard tells us about the decisive moment in history, the most revolutionary. It is a turbulent situation, everything changes, history turns upside down. It is difficult to preach about this passage. And when at Christmas or on the day of the Annunciation we profess the faith to say this mystery we kneel down. It is the moment that everything changes, everything, from the root.”

Indeed, history changed with this one moment. Not only did our Blessed Mother, the sole boast of our fallen human race, say yes to God at that instant, but our Lord Jesus was conceived in her womb. As we know scientifically that life begins at conception, we also celebrate on this day the Incarnation. It was here that God became man, and if you think about it, one could say in all fairness that our God was a tiny little zygote! He was tiny and vulnerable, He who created the entire universe, but condescended to enter into the same life cycle you and I have experienced out of His deep love for us and willingness to save us through His life, passion and death on the Cross.

So why do we celebrate the Feast of the Annunciation on March 25th? Not because of a backdating from Christmas, but due to the dating of Good Friday. And once there was a date set for Christ's conception, the early Church was then able to work forward to determine the date of Christmas, nine months later! Now whether or not Christ was actually born on December 25th or crucified on Good Friday is another matter entirely, but if this is the information that the early Christians were working on, then we can understand more clearly why the Church has celebrated for so long the feasts of St. Dismas (the “Good Thief”), the Annunciation, and our Lord's Nativity on these specific days.

The liturgical calendar is a beautiful thing, and it's amazing to see how the economy of salvation is so interconnected. During this year's feast of the Annunciation, let's call to mind more the connection between this day and Good Friday. Jesus' salvific mission began when he was conceived in the Virgin's womb, and then culminated at that moment on the Cross when he uttered, “It is consummated” (John 19:30).

Pope Benedict XVI, in his classic *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, will help us to understand the importance of the connection of the Cross to the Blessed Mother's *fiat*, and how it all points back to the creation of the world and our own new creation and rebirth through baptism in this age of the Church:

“Astonishingly, the starting point for dating the birth of Christ was March 25th. The decisive factor was the connection of creation and cross, of creation and Christ's conception. These dates brought the cosmos into the picture ...

“Jewish tradition gave the date of March 25th to Abraham's sacrifice. Now, as we shall see presently, this day was also regarded as the day of creation, the day when God's word decreed: ‘Let there be light.’ It was also considered, very early on, as the day of Christ's death and eventually as the day of his conception ... These cosmic images enabled Christians to see, in an unprecedented way, the world-embracing meaning of Christ and so to understand the grandeur of the hope inscribed in Christian faith. This is most illuminating. It seems clear to me that we have to recapture this cosmic vision if we want once again to understand and live Christianity in its full breadth.”

