

IV SUNDAY OF ADVENT– 20th December 2020

ECCO CONCEPIRAI UN FIGLIO E LO DARAI ALLA LUCE- Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM

Luke 1,26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name 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 father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

And the angel answered 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 called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."

And the angel departed from her.

The angel Gabriel, whose name means " *God's strength* ", failed in his mission. He had been sent to Judea, the region that takes its name from Judah, first of the twelve tribes; he had been sent to Jerusalem, the holy city; to the temple, the most holy place and had been sent to bring an announcement to a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the first ten important priestly classes. A priest who was married to the flower of the religious aristocracy of Israel, Elizabeth, who was the niece of Aaron, the brother of Moses. He must announce to this priest, who was chosen for the most important and solemn moment of his life, that a barren woman would have a child.

And it is precisely in the book of Genesis 18,14 that, when there is this announcement to Abraham and Sarah, the Lord says " *Is anything too hard for the Lord?* " So Zacharias must have known but he does not believe nor trust in it so remains mute; because when you do not listen to the word of the Lord there is nothing more to do. Well, now poor Gabriel has an uphill mission, a mission impossible to announce to a girl that she will have God's son, which is blasphemy. In the gospel, when Jesus admits that he is the Son of God what does the high priest do? " *Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy."* (Matthew 26,65)

Well, let's read what the evangelist writes for us in the first chapter of Luke's gospel verse 26: " *In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee...* " already things are looking bad: in Galilee? Galilee was this turbulent region in the north of the country,

inhabited by villains, peasants and violent people. At the time of Jesus, saying "galileo" did not mean coming from that region, it indicated a warlike individual. It was the land of the revolutionaries; remembering the famous revolt of Judas the Galilean, who had turned against the Romans, and had ended up in a bloodbath. This region has no name; it was the prophet Isaiah who indicated it with contempt in the chapter 8 of his book as "the district of the Gentiles", that is, of the pagans. "District" in Hebrew is ghelil (phonetic), hence the term Galilee.

“..to a city of Galilee named Nazareth,...”also here things do not go well – “..named Nazareth,...” Who has ever heard of it? It has never been mentioned anywhere in the bible; not only is it an unknown city, but it also enjoys a bad reputation. There is one of the disciples, Nathanael, who receives a great compliment from Jesus, "*Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no falsehood*", well Nathanael says "*Can something good come from Nazareth?*". It was the den of revolutionaries, the terrorists of the time and of the zealots, those who out of zeal turned against the Romans. So we see that the road is all uphill and there is a surprise also because who is it for? To a girl called Mary;? Mary is a name that appears only once in the bible and then no longer appears because it evokes the curse of God. It was a name that brought bad luck. Who was this Mary? She was the sister of Moses, an ambitious and intriguing woman who, taking advantage of the decline in popularity of her brother had married an Ethiopian, who tried to take Moses' place. Well, God punished her with the most terrible punishment which was that of leprosy.

Well, the angel turns to this girl and she accepts. Then Elizabeth will say of Mary "*Blessed she who believed in the words of the Lord*". Mary said yes, she believed that there was a plan of God in her existence, so she listened to this plan, she trusted and above all then acted accordingly. She had understood what St. Paul will then write in the first letter to the Corinthians that the Lord chooses what is ignoble, what is despised in the world to bring out his strength. She, in this lowest region, in this infamous country in the lowest condition, that of a woman believes in it, believes that God has a plan for her because, and ends the Gospel with this beautiful expression "*For nothing will be impossible with God.*" God always carries out his plan, it is up to us to welcome it and collaborate with it.