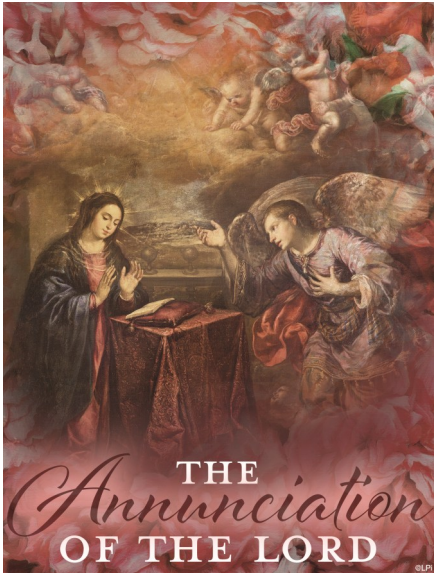


FROM FR. JASON



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We just celebrated, a few days ago, the Memorial of a great Irish saint, St. Patrick, who discovered God in the most impossible situation of life - while he was held captive. Then we celebrated the Solemnity of St. Joseph, a chosen instrument of God, who became the father of Jesus. While faced with an impossible situation, his wife being pregnant but not by him, Joseph trusted God the Father. This week we will celebrate the Solemnity of the Annunciation. This event proves the sanctity of life in the womb and that every life truly begins at conception. Therefore, March 25th of each year is dedicated to the unborn child. God started His work of salvation from the womb of Mary as an unborn child, sanctifying the womb of every mother.

With Mary's response, "May it be done to me according to your word," when faced with God's Will through a visit by an angel, God became Man, He came into the world and physically united Himself with mankind, and the moment of our salvation commenced. But do we realize that all this depended on the freedom, generosity, and obedience of one human being? Because of this, we can unmistakably comprehend why Our Lady, the Blessed Virgin Mary, occupies a sublime place in the History of Salvation and is venerated in the Catholic Church over and above any other saint.

Pope Benedict writes: "In one of his Advent homilies, St. Bernard of Clairvaux offers a stirring presentation of the drama of this moment. After the error of our first parents, the whole world was shrouded in darkness, under the domain of death. **Now God seeks to enter the world anew. He knocks at Mary's door. He needs human freedom. The only way He can redeem man, who was created free, is by means of a free "YES" to His Will. In creating freedom, He made Himself in a certain sense dependent upon man. His power is tied to the unenforceable "YES" of a human being.** So St. Bernard portrays heaven and earth as if it were holding its breath at this moment of the question addressed to Mary. Will she say yes? She hesitates...will her humility hold her back? Just this once - Bernard tells her - do not be humble but daring! Give us your "yes!"...**It is the moment of free, humble yet magnanimous obedience in which the loftiest choice of human freedom is made.**"

As Lent pushes forward and we get closer to Easter Sunday, I hope you have received many graces and have been able to grow closer to the Lord through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. We still have four weeks to take advantage of this holy time. I found this list of suggestions for things we can 'give' and 'give up,' asking the Lord's help of course, that are different from the usual things that might come to mind.

Suggested things to GIVE and GIVE UP during Lent

Give thanks	Give up complaining
Give compliments	Give up harsh judgments
Give forgiveness	Give up revenge
Give encouragement	Give up negativism
Give hope	Give up despair
Give attention to virtue	Give up sin
Give time to prayer	Give up wasting your time
Give respect	Give up prejudice
Give help	Give up selfishness
Give time to God	Give up what keeps you from God

Peace,