

WEEKLY MEDITATION

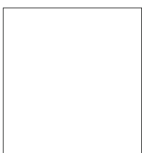
Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted. (Hebrews 2: 17 -18)

On the feast of the Annunciation, we remember and celebrate the response of the Virgin Mary to the message of the Archangel (Luke 1: 29 -38). She says "be it unto me according to thy word" - and we celebrate her acceptance of God's will for her as "the beginning of our salvation", the freely-given obedience upon which the Incarnation of Our Lord seems to hinge.

The Epistle reading for the feast is taken from Hebrews and concludes with the lines above. Here the Lord Jesus Christ is affirmed as our merciful and faithful high priest, the One whose offering or sacrifice serves to reconcile us with God. The point is that the Lord Jesus Christ is able to reconcile us to God because He knows and understands and has experienced Himself all that we have suffered and every temptation we have had to endure. We have in Him an advocate who knows us 'from within'. His humanity is a complete humanity, lacking nothing in human experience - save sin, but certainly including temptation. His advocacy is compassionate and merciful because of this. He is on our side.

On the Feast of the Annunciation, we give thanks to God for His providential care in empowering the Virgin Mary to say 'be it unto me according to Thy word' and we sing her praises as the one from whom the Lord Jesus Christ received His true and full humanity. Through her, He shares with us a common humanity, and this is our assurance that those who come to Him will experience a mercy and grace rooted in His co-suffering love.

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