

Have we ever thought about today’s familiar account of the Annunciation from the perspective of the Archangel Gabriel? I recently read this reflection by Jan Richardson and thought it worthy of sharing with you.

“When Mary says *let it be* to the archangel, it is an act of radical surrender. She offers her *yes* not with the meek passivity that history has so often ascribed to her; this kind of surrender is born not of weakness but of a daring strength within her and a stunning grace that shows up to sustain her. Mary’s surrender is deliberate, the choice of a woman ready to give herself to the sacred with such abandon that she agrees, with intention, to give up every last plan she had for her life.

Mary’s audacious *yes* propels her onto a dark way. She sets out on a path almost completely devoid of signposts or trails left by others; she chooses a road utterly unlike any she had ever imagined for herself. What must it have been like to walk a way she could hardly perceive, while carrying within herself—in her heart and womb and bones—a light unlike any the world had ever seen?

What must it have been like for the archangel who witnessed Mary’s *yes*? (Perhaps Archangel Gabriel’s thoughts may have gone something like this.)

‘For a moment I hesitated on the threshold. For the space of a breath I paused, unwilling to disturb her last ordinary moment, knowing that the next step would cleave her life: that this day would slice her story in two, dividing all the days before from all the ones to come.

The artists would later depict the scene: Mary dazzled by the archangel, her head bowed in humble assent, awed by the messenger who condescended to leave paradise to bestow such an honor upon a woman, and a mortal.

Yet I tell you it was I who was dazzled, I who found myself agape when I came upon her—reading, at the loom, in the kitchen, I cannot now recall; only that the woman before

me – blessed and full of grace long before I called her so—shimmered with how completely she inhabited herself, inhabited the space around her, inhabited the moment that hung between us.

I wanted to save her from what I had been sent to say.

Yet when the time came, when I had stammered the invitation (history would not record the sweat on my brow, the pounding of my heart; would not note that I said *Do not be afraid* to myself as much as to her) it was she who saved me—her first deliverance—her *Let it be* not just a declaration to the Divine but a word of solace, of soothing, of benediction for the angel in the doorway who would hesitate one last time—just for the space of a breath torn from his chest—before wrenching himself away from her radiant consent her beautiful and awful *yes*.

*(Jan Richardson)*

Fr. Jim Secora