



Sunflower Seeds

Celebrating Everyday Spirituality



[HOME](#) [ABOUT](#) [BOOK STORE](#) [EVENTS](#) [CONTACT](#)



Mary's Annunciation

by MELANNIE SVOBODA SND on MAY 20, 2019.

Since the month of May is traditionally dedicated to Mary, I thought I would say a few words about from the story of the Annunciation: Luke 1:26-38. I will focus on three aspects of this story that have implications for our own lives.

First, *the story take places in a real time and in a real place.* It takes place during the reign of Caesar Augustus in a town in Galilee called Nazareth. Our own story today takes place in a real time and a real place. Mary's world, though far back in time and far away in place, was not altogether different from our own. It was a world of uncertainty, hard times, divisions, political corruption, unequal distribution of wealth, militarism, violence, and gross injustices of all kinds. It was also a world of joy,



supportive families, good friendships, charity, and strong faith. Mary, like us, was limited by time and space. She could do only so much with her one precious gift of life. She didn't know the future either, but she trusted "the unknown future to a known God."

Secondly, the Annunciation tells us that, when the angel appeared to Mary, Mary was *much perplexed* by the angel's words. Other translations say she was *puzzled* or even *greatly disturbed*. Why? Mary didn't know

what was happening. She wasn't given a script for her life. There was no heavenly director tell her: "Now, Mary, you kneel over there, and when Gabe comes in, look surprised." No, Mary had to "ad lib" the role she was playing in God's plan—just as we

About Sister Melannie Svoboda, SND

Sister of Notre Dame, teacher, student, author, speaker, listener, friend, poet, farm girl.



[Learn more](#)

About Sunflower Seeds

Each Monday I'll post a short reflection, a simple musing on some aspect of spirituality— the everyday kind of spirituality that



includes things like walking in the park, slicing an onion for the casserole, caring for a child, studying for an exam, reading a line from scripture, laughing at a joke, or mourning a significant loss.

Along the way I welcome your questions, comments and insights too. After all, we're all in this life—this spiritual life—together!

[Learn more](#)

Subscribe to Sunflower Seeds

Subscribe to Sunflower Seeds today to receive notification of new blog posts.

[Subscribe to Sunflower Seeds via RSS](#)

“ad lib” our role in God’s plan too! Furthermore, like Mary, we have times in our lives when we’re greatly disturbed, when life doesn’t make sense. Can we, like Mary, trust that even the apparent absurdities in life are somehow being held in the hands of a loving God?

And thirdly, the story of the Annunciation tells us: *Mary pondered*. She reflected on the words the angel spoke to her. The etymology of the word “ponder” is interesting. It is related to the word “pendulum.” A pendulum is something that swings back and forth. The word ponder means, then, to go back and forth and back and forth before choosing or deciding. The word implies that Mary carefully weighed things. She didn’t jump to conclusions. She thought about things and could patiently live with a certain amount of uncertainty in her life. What about us? Do we take time to reflect on the choices life sets before us?

Over 60 years ago, the British writer Caryl Houselander, said this of Mary: “We shall not be asked to do more than the Mother of God... What we shall be asked to give is our flesh and blood, our daily life... To surrender all that we are, as we are, to the Spirit of Love in order that our lives may bear Christ into the world.”

Let us pray to Mary:

Mary, keep me rooted in the real world,

for it is in the real world that God is bringing about the work of Salvation.

When I am experiencing disturbances and perplexity,

give me patience and strength.

Help me, like you, to ponder the choices life sets before me...

Help me, like you, to entrust the unknown future to a known God...

And may I surrender all that I am to the Spirit of Love

that my life may bear Christ into my time, my place, and our world. Amen.

Are there any words or phrases that stand out for you in today’s reflection?

[✉ Subscribe to Sunflower Seeds by Email](#)

Recent Posts

[Praying the Rosary](#)

[Tapping into the Wisdom Within](#)

[Winning the Lottery](#)

[The Power of Handwritten Notes](#)

[“Short Nights of the Shadow Catcher”](#)

About the Sisters of Notre Dame, Chardon, Ohio

The Sisters of Notre Dame of Chardon, Ohio, belong to an international congregation of more than two thousand apostolic women religious. We are one in mind and one in heart for the transformation of the world in Christ.



[Learn More](#)

SND Blogs

[Catholic Faith Corner](#)

[Catholic Web Solutions](#)

[Grace to Paint](#)

[In the Hands of the Potter](#)

[Living Justly](#)

[Prayer Poems](#)

[SND Express Blog](#)

[What’s Happening](#)

Search

To search, type and hit enter

Today's video is "Hail Mary, Gentle Woman" sung by the Daughters of St. Paul.



Do you have any thoughts on Mary or today's reflection? If so, please share some of your ideas below.

Share this:



Tagged as: [Mary and the Annunciation](#), [Mary at the Annunciation](#), [what we cal learn from Mary's Annunciation](#)

{ 19 comments... read them below or [add one](#) }

Kathleen Magiera May 20, 2019 at 5:07 am



Thanks Sr. Melannie for reminding me that May is the month of Mary.

I like the idea of Mary pondering. I too am pondering about what to do next in my life so the idea of a pendulum is useful. It is heartwarming to think that Mary pondered too. There is no script in life just gracious uncertainty.

God bless!

Kathleen

REPLY

Ed Johnson May 20, 2019 at 5:48 am



Sister Melannie,

Thank you for the reflection on Mary. I recommend to all Henry Ossawa Tanner's 1898 painting "The Annunciation." It is a beautiful expression of Mary's response to this moment in her life. We keep a print of this painting in our home as a constant reminder of the simple, gentle, and yet profound nature of this woman. There is much for us to pray about and ponder from Mary's example.

Ed J.

REPLY

John E Hopkins May 20, 2019 at 5:53 am



Just checked it out, Ed. Loved it! Thanks!

REPLY

Melannie Svoboda SND May 20, 2019 at 4:20 pm



Ed, Tanner's Annunciation is one of my favorite paintings too! Mary looks so young, so fragile, so fearful... It's beautiful! Thank you for directing us to check it out. Melannie

REPLY

John E Hopkins May 20, 2019 at 5:49 am



Thank you for this beautiful reflection on Mary, Sr. Melannie. And thank you for quoting Caryll Houselander, in my mind one of the most underrated Catholic writers of the 20th century. May she one day be called Saint Caryll!

PS: Love Kathleen's line, "There is no script in life just gracious uncertainty."

REPLY

Thomas DeFreitas May 20, 2019 at 6:24 am



Sr Melannie and everyone, hello!

I'll add my voice to John's in praising Caryl Houselander, a writer of rare and unacknowledged genius, indeed, a poet of high calibre!

Yes, God does have a way of gloriously derailing our plans, sometimes! (As I found out this week. I was taken to the emergency room Tuesday morning after having been violently ill Monday night. I was told late Tuesday evening that I'd be needing surgery the next day, a laparoscopic cholecystectomy. In layman's terms, they had to pop out the ol' gall bladder; it was inflamed and full of stones.)

God does speak to us, in our time, with our limitations, in every unpredicted and unpredictable circumstances. My clinicians, from PCAs to nurses to doctors, were all top-notch. I'm so grateful for those who learn medical science, especially anesthesiologists!

And I'm grateful to for the pause in my routine, for the necessary shifting of gears from bustle and hubbub to slower and steadier. There's a wee bit of pain, of course. I'm hoping it makes me more understanding and compassionate toward those in worse pain.

I've gone far afield from the annunciation, perhaps! But all prayers and good thoughts, aves and paternosters, mi shebeirachs and anything else that will fortify a convalescent fifty-year-old in the aftermath of his first major internal surgery, would be sincerely welcomed and deeply appreciated.

Thanks for listening, all. Peace and light.

REPLY

John E Hopkins May 20, 2019 at 2:48 pm

A paternoster for you, Tom!



REPLY

Thomas DeFreitas May 20, 2019 at 8:21 pm

Thanks so much, kind sir!



REPLY

Melannie Svoboda SND May 20, 2019 at 4:22 pm

John, I'm sure many of us will keep your recovery in our prayer...
Melannie



REPLY

Thomas DeFreitas May 20, 2019 at 8:22 pm
Thanks so much, Sister! Peace and light. ~ TD



REPLY

Michelle Rabb May 21, 2019 at 10:29 am
Tom, my prayers for your quick recovery. Isn't it wonderful to know that God loves us enough to slow us down? Sometimes our pain is a good reminder of our blessings. The Lord bless and keep you. M.



REPLY

Kathy Donnermeyer May 20, 2019 at 8:01 am



Thanks again, Sr. Melannie, for the reflection, and the song today.

I've been caring for my parents, both in their upper 80's, and not in the best of health. Hospice nurses are coming in every few days to help with Dad's comfort, but it is an uncertain time for all of us. Very overwhelming for Mom, my sisters and I do the best we can to stay hopeful through all.

While I'm preparing for Dad's passing, I also think back to my Father-in-law, who has been gone for over 25 years now. Hail Mary, Gentle Woman, was one of his favorite songs, I think of him whenever I hear it. My in-laws and my own parents have strong faith, and I'm relying on that to help us all in the coming months as we go where we are led, and like Mary, ponder all, but say YES to God.

REPLY

Melannie Svoboda SND May 20, 2019 at 4:26 pm



Kathy,
I think caring for our elderly parents is one of the hardest things we do in life. As you said, there is so much uncertainty associated with it. But they cared for you as you took your first steps on your earthly journey. Now it's your turn to watch over them as they take their final steps on their journey toward eternity...
I will pray for you. Melannie

REPLY

Meg May 20, 2019 at 8:04 am 

Thank you, Sister, for reminding me to be patient with uncertainty, and trust God. I recall Rainer Maria Rilke's advice to "be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart... Love [live] the questions..."

REPLY

Robert Perreault May 20, 2019 at 10:14 am 

Thank you for the song "Gentle Woman". It is one of my favorites that never fails to give me goosebumps.

REPLY

Linda May 20, 2019 at 3:26 pm 

"Mary, you kneel over there, and when Gabe comes in, look surprised!"
Haha! Love that line!

REPLY

Carol May 20, 2019 at 6:13 pm 

I have been having a difficult time dealing with all the violent teen deaths in our state this past month and found comfort in your words "can we trust that even the apparent absurdities in life are being held in the hands of a loving God? Thank you and I will continue to pray and trust in the hope of a divine plan.

REPLY

Jean Canatsey May 22, 2019 at 2:40 pm 

Loved the blog and the music. I "ponder" most of my decisions but often my pendulum doesn't know when to stop swinging and I second guess myself. However, I can't help but reflect on the times that I have acted without making a conscious decision and then had to live with the consequences. Lord, help me to be more like Mary.

REPLY

Sr. Mary Beena SND May 27, 2019 at 8:02 pm



Thank you so much dear Sister Melanie for this beautiful reflection, especially I liked the pendulum comparison as I feel often the need is to ponder in my own life about what is being asked of us. I enjoyed the Love music too. God bless.

REPLY

Leave a Comment

Name *

E-mail *

Website

Submit

SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME WITNESS DAILY TO
GOD'S GOODNESS AND PROVIDENT CARE.

Join us!
Contact our Vocation
Director today.



Copyright © 2012 The Sisters of Notre Dame, Chardon, Ohio | Created by [Groupmind Media](#)