

The Angelus



The Annunciation: Fra Angelico (C15), Convent of San Marco, Florence

V. The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.

R. And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with Thee;

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen

V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

R. Be it done unto me according to thy word.

Hail Mary, etc.

V. And the Word was made Flesh.

R. And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary, etc.

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray

We beseech thee, O Lord, pour thy grace into our hearts, that as we have known the incarnation of thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by his cross and passion we may be brought unto the glory of his resurrection. Through the same Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

The Angelus prayer (so-called because its first word is the Latin for “the Angel”) is a way of reflecting on the miracle of the Incarnation, and therefore very familiar to all Walsingham pilgrims.

Traditionally recited three times a day, it is often accompanied by the ringing of a bell 3 times at each Versicle and Response and then 9 times during the closing prayer.

The pattern of the prayer teaches its own lesson. Everything starts with God; it is God who takes the initiative. But God invites Mary's response, and because she responded, God's plan was brought to fruition. That is a wonderful way of thinking about our own lives, both as a whole and each and every day, every moment even: God is always inviting our cooperation and when we respond, great things can happen.

It is important of course to thank God for the once-and-for-all things he did in taking flesh through Mary, but is no less important to allow him to act in and through us for the sake of the world in our own day. In the concluding prayer of the Angelus we acknowledge that this can only happen through grace, which enables us to appreciate the cost to God of bringing us to the glory of the resurrection. The ultimate goal of the Annunciation was not the birth of Jesus but our own coming to share the resurrection glory of Jesus - which involves of course our trying to reflect that glory while we are still on earth.