

A Coffee with Alessio



The Fourth Sunday of Advent – Year B

Lectionary:

First Reading: 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-12, 16

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 88:2-5. 27. 29, R. cf. v.2

Second Reading: Romans 16:25-27

Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

We are back to violet this weekend, after the brief appearance of rose last weekend. I am writing this column in the midst of the end of year activities going on at school and here at the Centre for Liturgy. Before I continue writing (or typing actually), there are a number of school staff members who read this column, and so today's column is dedicated in gratitude to you for your commitment throughout the past year, your witness to Christ in your communities and in thankfulness for your encouragement and support.

Every year, I keep thinking I'll be better at being on top of all the end of year things, but somehow things don't quite work out that way. There is a variety of reasons for that, some things beyond my control and I suppose when things arise that one didn't expect, other activities have to be shelved temporarily and returned to later. Why am I mentioning of this to you? Well, for two reasons. Firstly, being a teacher, school becomes part of our DNA. Some school staff are better at switching off than others, but the fact remains that if you are working in a school it is going to require commitment outside of the classroom hours. Secondly, I think the busyness of the end of the school year has a lot to do with the Gospel Reading this Sunday. This Sunday we will hear the story of the Annunciation and the ensuing dialogue between the Angel Gabriel and Mary. Mary is a model for us all as we approach the end of the year, but particularly for teachers where there are a number of tasks that must be completed before year's end. Mary had complete patience and trust in God. We

must be the same. Particularly in these days when it is hot and the heat is draining we must stay focused on Christ. Although Mary said "Yes" to God, she was not given a handbook on what she was saying "Yes" to. She would have her daily struggles, her anxieties as well as her joys. She wasn't told at the Annunciation that her Son would die a most cruel death on a Cross. Forty days after Jesus was born at His Presentation in the Temple, Simeon did tell Mary "a sword would pierce her heart". Although Mary pondered on the words of Simeon, I'm not sure if she knew exactly what was going to happen.

The same is true for us. At our Baptism, our parents and Godparents said "Yes" to Christ on our behalf. At Confirmation, we made that promise and commitment and at the Easter Vigil or Mass of Easter Sunday when we renew our Baptismal promises we again affirm our commitment to Christ. So just like Mary didn't always know what her "Yes" meant, we too do not know everything that is going to happen to us. What we do know is that if we are open to God's grace working in and through us, He will lead us to where we are meant to be. Being a Church musician also requires a great deal of trust in people. I have had the privilege to work with some wonderful musicians who through their gift of music have been a blessing to me and the community. I have had others who come and go as they please and don't realise they are letting others down. Those of us who are left behind must continue to reaffirm our "Yes" to God and the commitment we make to be a living witness to Him in our world.

School finishes for staff today and I am looking forward to the dessert at the end of year lunch. We have said our goodbyes to staff leaving and said our temporary goodbyes to those people returning next year. Whenever we say goodbye there is sadness. Goodbyes are part of our growth though. Mary said goodbye to the lifestyle she knew when she "Yes" to what the Angel Gabriel asked her to do on God's behalf. To any school staff member who reads this column – well done on making it to the end. Thank you for all the wonderful work you do. My prayer for you is the Aaronic Blessing:

"May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May the Lord let his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
May the Lord uncover his face to you and bring you peace."

Music wise this weekend three hymns come to mind: "The Angel Gabriel", "Immaculate Mary, we praise God in You" and "Holy Virgin, By God's Decree". These three hymns focus on the Annunciation story from a different perspective.

In case you missed last week's column and you would like to pray the Christmas Novena I have copied the link here: <https://www.praymorenovenas.com/christmas-novena>

I hope the liturgy this weekend uplifts you and as we listen to the Scripture Readings let us recommit our "Yes" to following God's Way in our lives. A slice of carrot cake this weekend with a flat white, is a simple dessert to allow us to take up our desserts in full swing when Christmas comes.

My farewell column for the year will be published on Monday next week. It will be a reflection on the year combined with a reflection on the Christmas story. Till then enjoy your coffee and cake!

Alessio Loiacono
Music Field Officer

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