



## *HOMILY FOR THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION – YEAR B*

today's first reading. In the Gospel we hear the angel from on high announce "to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph" very similar words, "the child will be called holy, the Son of God!" However, this angel's words are no mere prophecy, they are reality!

Today we celebrate the Annunciation to Mary of the Incarnation of God. That is to say that God has visited his people and has done so by way of taking unto Himself our very own flesh. The Letter to the Hebrews puts it this way, "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me."

God has sought fit to declare that His Creation is so precious to Him that He would join Himself to it and would join it to Himself. He didn't say, "When you have escaped that wretched body of yours, I will make you into a beautiful spiritual being like me," but rather "I will take on and glorify through My Spirit a bodily existence like you!" What an incredible announcement! To this day there are certainly none in this world who can totally grasp the fullness of the significance of God taking on a body like ours. To the extent we are able, we are called to embrace the Incarnation of God in order to make a gracious response through our bodies. This is exactly how our Blessed Mother Mary taught us to respond when after she embraced God's will to unite Him to her body she exclaimed, "May it be done to me according to Your word." We too, like Mary, are asked by God not just to abide with Him in truth, but also to let Him abide with us in our very bodies, a temple for His very Presence.

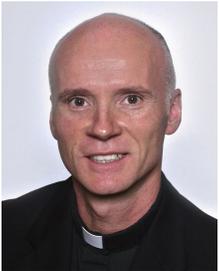
Pope St. John Paul II in his *Theology of the Body* announces, "The body, in fact, and only the body, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and divine. It has been created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the mystery hidden from eternity in God, and thus be a sign of it." (TOB 19:4) These words of a contemporary prophet are, in a sense, declaring the same bold announcement that our three readings have today. It was in the Body of Christ that creatures first saw God through the eyes of their bodies!

But it doesn't stop there. Pope St. John Paul II was not just talking about the Body of Christ in the actual sense of the God-man who walked this Earth 2000 years ago, but more specifically he was talking about the Body of Christ being made visible in our bodies. This of course, is actualized in the very expression that our bodies speak in their natural sexual sign of being not made for themselves but visibly recognizable as being made for communion with others in a self-giving way. Thus God in his Trinitarian reality is expressed right at the point of the sight of the human body. But, this is not where Pope St. John Paul II wants us to stop. He was specifically interested in human actions and how they can reveal God's nature through the language of our bodies.

In taking on our flesh and sharing Himself with us through that flesh (specifically through the Sacraments) God wills to make Himself visible through all of our bodily actions, or as Pope St. John Paul II might say, our body language spoken in truth. He calls this the "language of the body" and says that like Isaiah and the angel, we are all prophets of God made flesh when we speak the language of truth in our bodies. Therefore, every time a husband and wife give of themselves and receive the other in fullness of their being they are making visible the God of Creation in their love. Similarly, when a priest lays down his life for his sheep in exhausting himself for the sake of their needs, they (the sheep) are seeing the love of God made incarnate. After all, the priest says, "take this all of you and eat of it, for this is my body given up for you." Yes, it IS the Real Presence of Jesus in the Most Holy Eucharist, but also it is the priest's body sacrificially offered in his gift of celibacy, united to Christ's, that is offered for the Church, as well.

All human actions that are done through the body ***in the love of Christ***, by those adopted into his Body at their baptism, are making God visible to his creation. I recently baptized the child of two very close friends. As a vocation director I don't get to baptize that often anymore. As I introduced the newest member of the family of God I realized I was making the same announcement as the prophet and the angel! In effect, through this baptized child, "God has become incarnate again and is with us by adopting little Luke Joseph into his Body." And this is no mere prophecy, it is reality!

The greatest act that Luke will ever do in this world will be the simplest to take the posture of Mary and humbly allow God to **reign in his body**. Christ has claimed you and me at our baptism by the sign of the Cross made on our foreheads by the priest/ deacon, parents and godparents at our baptism. A sign repeated on our forehead with ashes on Ash Wednesday. God is made incarnate whenever we allow him to reign in our bodies. It is simple because it is not so much our work, but rather is God's "for nothing will be impossible for God!" This will be God's glory on Earth and will make "visible what is invisible: the spiritual and divine." Have a blessed Lenten season.



*Ordained in 2007, **Fr. John Linden** enjoyed three years as a parochial vicar at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Ann Arbor before becoming the Chair of the Formation Department for the Diocese of Lansing as well as the Director of Seminarians. Fr. John travels throughout the diocese giving presentations on topics including vocations and vocational discernment as well as Theology of the Body and its connection to both marriage and consecrated life.*