

*And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, O highly favoured one, the Lord is with you!' But she was greatly troubled at the saying and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God.' St Luke 1:28-30.*

When Gabriel greets Mary the first thing that he does is assure her of God's presence in her life. Perhaps he realises that she is experiencing something of the natural human anxiety of being confronted by a dramatic change she cannot fully comprehend. He calls her 'favoured' (or 'gifted one'). She is gifted because God's long preparation for the sending of his Christ has found a focus in her body and the Lord is with her. This greeting assures Mary that she is the recipient of God's loving care and that it is his love which is drawing her into playing a key part in his saving purpose for humanity.

'The Lord is with you'. The angel's role in the story of the Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary points us towards the vocation of each one of us. First of all, to realise that because of Mary's childbearing those words are addressed to each one of us. The Lord is with us and we need to receive that greeting with every fibre of our being, for nothing can part us from him. Secondly, having received that message in our hearts we are to share it with others. We can be the messengers who assure others that God is with them, present in their lives - a proclamation made by our words and actions. Think and pray for those who need to receive the good news today.