

Last week, I pointed out that our God is both a God of promise and a God who keeps His promise.

Our first reading is, at its core, a promise, and an **extraordinary** promise at that.

In a time when power changed hands quickly and borders shifted like sand, in a world that was mostly divided by tribal and family loyalties, God made a covenant with David that his royal bloodline would last forever.

Now there is a lot in biblical and human history happened that would make the promise to have seemed forgotten. The kingdom of David became divided within about a hundred years of his death with the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah were ruled by a series of kings, most of them not very good at their jobs.

The Kingdoms were shattered by the Babylonians and the people of both Israel and Judah were taken into captivity and moved from their lands. The temple, built by King Solomon, David's heir, was destroyed.

God sent them prophets, in their exile and in their return to remind them that God has not forgotten, has not forsaken them and that He would fulfill his covenant.

We often think of Christmas as the fulfillment, but as wonderful as that is, as joyful as it is, it is the result of the fulfillment of the promise .... at the incarnation.

The very second that Mary gave her "fiat", her "yes" to God through the Angel Gabriel, God took on flesh. That is what incarnation means, that God become man. Not in equal portions, not 50/50, not even 100/100 but fully God and fully man.

It is such a pivotal point in our humanity that it is honored with a bow during the Creed, when speaking of Jesus and at the words, "and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man".

And so today's Gospel is about fulfillment, a fiat and freedom.

In the Annunciation, God respected Mary's freedom of body and of soul completely.

Her whole, free, and complete acceptance of God's will was a total act of both spiritual and physical freedom, the fundamental and most influential such act in all of human existence. From Mary's willing participation in the Incarnation, the meaning of true human freedom abounds.

The path to rejecting abortion, euthanasia and assisted suicide and accepting the Gospel of Life begins with the deepening acceptance of the Annunciation and the Incarnation.

I would not be the first to point out that Mary's "fiat," her "Let it be," mirrors the first "fiat," the first Word of creation, "Fiat lux—Let there be light" and is echoed in a third "fiat" spoken every day by millions of people, "Fiat voluntas tua—Thy will be done," from the Our Father.

Those who accept the Gospel and pray the Our Father implicitly speak a "fiat" that encompasses all of these associated meanings.

Those who would advance the cause of abortion and artificial contraception, claiming that it is the "freedom" of a woman, are, in reality, enabling the enslavement of women. They diminish their human dignity and perpetuate the lie that they are merely sexual objects. They deny that their bodies have the highest purpose and forget that God, speaking to all women through Mary, respects and treasures and honors them in a unique way.

They ultimately **reject** the profound meaning of Mary's "**—be it done ...be it created ....to me according to your word.**" The Word of God and all of creation are embodied— are incarnated—perfectly - in her free response.

It is a woman who is at the center of salvation history.

The incarnation, this great expression of the love of God, is only possible in the freedom, of the body, mind and soul of the woman.

There are two ways to see this dignity, and both are equally true.

Pope John Paul II wrote that (quote) “On the one hand, this dignity consists *in the supernatural union with God* in Jesus Christ, which determines the existence of every person both on earth and in eternity.

So from this point of view, the "woman" is the representative of the whole human race: she *represents the humanity* which belongs to all human beings, both men and women.

On the other hand, however, the specific event at Nazareth highlights a form of union with the living God which can *only belong to the "woman"*, Mary. The Virgin of Nazareth truly becomes the Mother of God.

*It is this reality that also determines the basis of reflection on the dignity and the vocation of women.* In anything we think, say or do concerning the dignity and the vocation of women, our thoughts, hearts and actions must not become detached from this fact. (end quote)

The Christian, by deepening understanding of the unity of the “fiat,” Human freedom and dignity comes to view life and the world in a completely different light: the same first Light and Word of Creation, the same Light that “overshadowed” Mary.

Freedom, fiat and fulfillment.

Let this great “yes” of our Lady, the beauty of the Incarnation and the gift of freedom in Christ be a beacon and a comfort to us as the joyous celebration of Christmas approaches.