Lord Jesus Christ,
I want to grow in heartfelt knowledge, love, and imitation of you.
The Annunciation

_The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary._

And coming to her, he said, _Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you._

_Luke 1: 26-28_

We have heard the story so many times over the years, it sometimes fails to astonish us. The Annunciation. An angel appearing to Mary to ask if she will become the mother of the Christ.

For centuries, artists have
pictured Mary at this moment in a variety of devout settings, surrounded by angels, covered in red velvet or standing amid tapestries and silver candles.

These paintings can have a lot of power, and we can study the symbolism and love the artist lavished on them for a long time, being drawn even deeper into the mystery. But sometimes we might feel that these beautiful paintings don't let Mary be real. We might imagine her as barefoot, cooking her own food and having a distinctive personality.

Although some of us may have once arrogantly dismissed her as _irrelevant_ to our faith, we might find that we now rely on her for prayers and as a place to mull over the challenges of family and marriage. Using our imaginations, we might meditate on her, picturing her as a young woman of deep faith, long steeped in the Jewish tradition waiting for the Messiah. She must have read the Isaiah passages many times and prayed over them as her heart filled with gratitude and great dreams.

_O Lord, you are our father;_  
_we are the clay and you the potter;_  
_we are all the work of your hands._ _Isaiah 64:7_

Her simple life probably included dreams of marriage, raising a family, teaching children the Jewish laws and traditions. But perhaps it was
bigger than that. We might imagine that Mary's heart had grown in her humility and generosity to God. Now she would be asked for the ultimate sacrifice. It invites us to wonder what kind of woman Mary was.

We can envision her dark hair and eyes, her love of people. We can picture a charismatic figure, one who had, at any given moment, a kitchen filled with people, enjoying her well-known hospitality. Her stove was always going, good smells filling the air. With our imaginations, we might see Mary as an entertainer with a wonderful, billowing laugh centered in her joy of life. And a story-teller. Mary's tales were famous around town, and in later years, her son would make great use of the talent he learned from his mother.

One morning the young woman was alone in her kitchen at mid-morning. A pot of soup bubbled on the fire as she prayed over the ancient words of the scriptures. Then, as she so often did, she poured out her heart to God, asking to be of service, to be open to anything he might ask.

_Therefore the Lord himself will give you this sign:
the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel._  Isaiah 7:14

She longed for the Messiah as all Jewish people did. It was deep in her tradition, in the prayers
and scriptures. She prayed as she stirred her soup.

She wasn't frightened, but suddenly she was aware of a young man standing in her kitchen. She turned and looked toward him, never taking her hand off the spoon that stirred her soup. His presence was oddly comfortable until he dropped to one knee. _Hail, favored one. The Lord is with you._

Favored one? She was unsure and a small fear crept into her heart. What was this?

_Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.
Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son,
and you shall name him Jesus._ _Luke 1:30_
Her first reaction was unexpected. _Oh, please no,_ she whispers. What _was_ this invitation? She wanted only a simple life, to marry Joseph, go to the Temple each year, live in the town she knew so well. Fear clung to her and knotted her stomach. _I can't do this. I don't know how. I'm not worthy. I know I said I would do anything, but God must have me confused with someone else. Someone more worthy._

She stood in shock while the young man waited for her answer. The empty kitchen was silent, except for the constant simmer of the soup. She closed her eyes. Fear. Wasn't that always what sent her to God? She breathed deeply and prayed. _Open my heart. Let me be your servant. Lead me where you desire. You will be with me._
Then, she knew. She turned back to the young man and nodded. *I will do just as I have been asked*, she said.

And deep in our own souls, we pray with the same heart, asking for the fears to be eased, asking to feel God walking with us in this daily path of life, not certain that we can handle everything that is coming.

*Mary, show us how. Teach us to trust in God as you have. Let us do what sometimes seems unthinkable in this world: to be humble and to accept without always understanding why or how.*
PRAYING WITH IGNATIUS-SAINT IGNATIUS HIGH SCHOOL

HOME PRAYER SELECTIONS

Week 4

PREPARE: Choose a place, Posture, Prayer Time, Prayer Passage, and become mindful of the Presence of God.

GRACE SOUGHT: Lord Jesus Christ, I want to grow in heartfelt knowledge, love, and imitation of you.

Pray:

Who is Jesus Christ for Me? (Handout)

Luke 1:26-56 Annunciation/Visitation

Luke 2:1-20 Nativity


What did Jesus do from age 14-30?

Matthew 3:13-17 Baptism

Matthew 4:1-11 Temptations

Review of Prayer:

1. What did you like? What resonated with you?
2. What didn’t you like? Where did you feel resistance?
3. Did you experience and spiritual insight? Delight?

1. What was revealed of God?
2. What was revealed of yourself?
3. What is being revealed of your relationship with God?
Who is Jesus?

Who is Jesus for you? Who is he really? How do you think about Him? How have you experienced Him?

- Not what He could be or should be.
- Not even what others say He is like.
- Not even who the bible or Church say He is.

But who is He- for you-at this moment in your life? (i.e., How do you feel about Jesus in your heart? Or do you? Or is He just an idealized hero for you – somewhat unapproachable.)

Now describe how Jesus looks, acts, walks, eats?

- How would you describe His personality? Does He laugh, smile?
- If you could use three words that best describe Jesus for you, what would they be? And why?

Do you want to know this man more intimately, with greater intensity?

- Do you yearn for a closer relationship with Him, a deeper life of prayer?
- Would you want to vacation with Him? Why or why not?

How HUMAN is Jesus for you? Or is He an “as if” Messiah? He acted “as if” He had those feelings but He was playing the role of man-God.

- Or did He really feel sorrow or cry tears of distress or pain?
- Did He ever really feel discouraged or desolate?
- Was He ever disappointed in others?
- Did He ever question His life and how worthwhile it was?
- Did He ever ask: Is there another way?

Was Jesus lonely? Did He ever feel the need of friends to confide in, to trust, to share with them and to support Him? Or was all He needed His one-on-one relationship with the Father?

Do you need Jesus in your life now? As a friend? As a Saviour? And how can He save you this year? And from what or whom? Be specific and concrete.

**THIS MAN JESUS IS WAITING FOR YOU IN THIS RETREAT!**