

In Annuntiatione

*Καίρε, κεκαριτομενε. Hail, full of grace.*

In the Name of the Father, ✠ and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

Very dear faithful, oh the wonders of modern technology, that allow you to assist that this Mass even in these difficult times. On this day, we commemorate an even greater event that should be the object of our wonderment. *Kaire, kekaritomene*. Hail, full of grace. With these words, the Angel Gabriel greeted Our Lady, Saint Luke tells us in today's Gospel proposed for our meditation for today's Feast of the Annunciation. *Kaire kekaritomene*. Hail, full of grace. In today's homily, let us take a look at this word *kekaritomene* in order to understand it more clearly in its implications for us Christians, and then let us wonder at the doctrine of the Incarnation.

The author of Holy Scripture is God Himself. For this reason, it is inerrant. As the author of the Gospel, Saint Luke was the instrument of God. This does not mean that he was used by God with no consideration to his intellect and will. A lifeless pen is directed by the author to form letters, words, and sentences. The author himself makes the editorial decisions to form those words, to arrange his ideas, and thoughts so that he can present a coherent text to his audience.

God who created all human beings, would not then proceed to negate the free will that He Himself gave them. Even though it was God who is the author of the entire Bible, He would not have forced Saint Luke to write anything. The author of today's Gospel, we know was a physician and a historian. He would have been free to make all the editorial decisions necessary for his targeted audience – the Greeks who lived in what we call today the Middle East.

Therefore, we can be sure that Saint Luke did not choose the word *kekaritomene* lightly. Moreover, with his erudition he would have had a precise idea to convey. The only other time this word *kekaritomene* is used is in relation to Saint Stephen in the Acts of the Apostles. As Our Lady was full of Grace, so was Saint Stephen. Moreover, in using the word *kekaritomene* Saint Luke wanted to tell us something very precise by the tense and the voice that he chose. Without going into precise philological details, Saint Luke was pointing out to us that the Angel Gabriel used this word to indicate that Our Lady was made perfectly holy, and therefore, prepared to be the Mother of God by His transforming grace. This word cannot be translated as highly favoured one, as many translators do. The grace of God transformed Our Lady so that not only was she

chosen from created humanity to be the Mother of God, she was also divinised by His grace to be prepared to receive God Himself in her womb. She was made capable of bearing God in her womb. This is why the Messenger of God could go on to explain to her that the Holy Spirit would come over her, and the Power of the Most High would overshadow her so that she would conceive the Second Person of the Trinity in her womb. Here again, Saint Luke used the same words as with the Ark in the Old Testament to point out that Our Lady would become the Ark of the New Covenant.

Dear faithful, even today, God gives us His grace in our souls when we ask it of Him. What is grace? What does it do for us? The catechism tells us that grace is a participation in the Divine Life of God Himself. It is a stable formal quality of the soul that transforms the soul itself thereby bringing it closer to God in its acts. It is because of the help of grace in our souls, that we can make acts of faith, hope and charity. It is because of grace in our souls that we can defer to the supernatural when acting with the natural virtues of prudence, justice, temperance or fortitude. While all these virtues perfect one or the other faculty or appetite of the soul, whether the intellect, the will, the concupiscible or the irascible, grace transforms the whole soul lifting it up to a higher plane of activity. For this reason, Saint Paul could tell us that it is only if we have the Spirit of God in our souls that we can call God: Abba, Father.

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Incarnation of God, because at this visit of the Angel, Our Lady accepted God's Will by replying *fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*. Let it be done to me according to thy word. She accepted to be the Mother of the Saviour. The Incarnation of God among man is the beginning of the fulfilment of the promise that He made to us when He had to cast out Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. In many ways, by the humility and perfection in grace of Our Lady, God could enter proud and sinful humanity. As grace transforms the soul of man, God transformed humanity by the Incarnation, which was made possible by the *Fiat* of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

God's entry into humanity allows us to see that what He created is not evil. No matter, how sinful we are God's Mercy is always available to us. In the history of humanity, the Incarnation has made the fundamental difference between Christianity and all other religions, and by extension, between Christendom and all other cultures. The paradoxical doctrine of the Incarnation, so radical and incompatible with other cultures of the Mediterranean made all the

difference and allowed Christians to choose to sever themselves from those pagan cultures and form a new and distinct society based on this belief. It is neither monotheism nor creation that made the difference, but the doctrine of the Incarnation. This concept forced a radical break in the perception and understanding of the universe. It is the doctrine of the Incarnation that was the source of that sap that circulated through all of society, bearing with it the theological principles that determined the religious, anthropological, and moral principles of Christendom. All through the first millennium, and the Middle Ages, the Incarnation was the catalyst that changed the way man thought about every facet of cultural importance: the meaning of history; human life as sacred; the Sacrifice of Christ as the pattern of human love which changed the way man thought about masculinity, and womanhood; the relationship of the individual with society; the limits of authority within those established by natural law; the urge to progress relentlessly as opposed to stagnation; and lastly, but not the least, the doctrine of Christ as the Creator-Logos allowed man to use his faculty of reason to understand the universe – the basis of modern science.

Dear faithful, the Incarnation of Our Lord that we celebrate today is the foundation of Christendom. In coordination with the dogma of the Trinity, man understood that God is Love, and in Christian societies man understood that Love had to govern man's action and society's order. The Baby of Bethlehem allowed every baby an infinite value because for His sake, the Incarnation occurred. The Passion of God upon the Cross, gave each and every one of us the opportunity to recognise the redemptive value of our own sufferings, and cooperate with Our Saviour's pain in the salvation of mankind. From the Resurrection, we have the potential to raise ourselves into eternal glory not only in soul but also in body, opposing at one and the same time oriental spiritualism and pagan hedonism. The Incarnation of Our Lord is therefore a moment of great joy.

For this reason, when the Angel Gabriel greeted Our Lady, He use the words, *kaire kekaritomene*, which translated literally means, Rejoice! O full of grace. Both words have the same root in Greek from which we get the words *kara* joy, and *karis*, grace. Being full of grace is synonymous with being joyful. This is the great gift that God wished to give us when He sent us His Only Begotten Son to save us from our sins. After the Blessed Virgin Mary, He wants to make us too full of grace, so that we can share in His joy, being with Him in the life to come. Knowing how much we need Him, He left us His sacramental presence that we are still able to

adore in many of our churches in this trying and difficult Lent. Because of His presence among us, we do not need to despair no matter how difficult things get. His Mercy will always find a way to take care of us.

The feast of the Annunciation is a day of great joy. It is the day that we commemorate the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, because Our Lady said yes to the Archangel Gabriel. In exactly nine months, we will celebrate the birth of Our Lord. Therefore, let us not despair of the Mercy of God. Let us multiply our spiritual communions every day knowing that we have such a Good God who loved us when He created us, and loves us enough to perfect us, and will always love us to be with us at the end. As Saint Athanasius tells God became man so man could become god. United with Him, we can receive His grace. Only when we are perfected by grace can we be with Him in Heaven.

*Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts; that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection, through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.*

In the Name of the Father, ✠ and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.