

ADVENT: DESIRING – WAITING – WELCOMING

Biblical Icon: THE ANNUNCIATION (Lk 1:26-38)

We have just begun Advent, which returns each year not as a simple recurrence of the liturgical calendar but as a gift to be received with all our heart. It is the time when the Lord places a blank page before us and with gentleness, invites us to weave our story with His once again. He calls us to begin anew: to rekindle desire, to pause in waiting and to open ourselves with trust to welcoming Him. It is as if He's whispering to us: *"Do not look at the scribbles of last year. I do not judge you for them. Take My hand: let us write something new together"*.

In this retreat, we want to let ourselves be touched by this simple yet profound invitation: to return to desiring, to waiting and to welcoming. It is the path that prepares us for Christmas and even more, to live as women who make space for God every day. This reflection is inspired by the conference of Fr. Luigi M. Epicoco (16.11.2024) and expanded with the writings of our Mother Foundress.

1. DESIRING

a) Mary's Desire – A Heart Ready to Receive

The angel Gabriel enters Mary's home and finds her with an open heart. Mary is not doing anything extraordinary: she is simply available. The Gospel does not explicitly speak of her desire, yet everything about her makes it clear: a silent, essential desire directed toward God. True desire makes no noise, but it orients the heart. Like children learning to write, we encounter limits and inadequacies, but these are not failures. They are the places where God looks at us with tenderness and encourages us: *"Try again. Do not be afraid."* This is precisely what Advent is: the time when God rekindles desire. Without desire, there is no journey, no spiritual life, no encounter.

b) The Desire of Our Mother Foundress – Desire as a Beginning

"We must give ourselves to this joy, to this longing, to this ardent desire and to the sure confidence that the Saviour will also come to us." (Instruction on Advent, 10.12.1911). For Mother Foundress, desire is a spark that ignites. It is not optional: it is the beginning of everything. To desire God already means to move toward Him. The "longing for God" is not sadness, but the living memory of a love that comes before us, the certainty that we are made for Him.

"Jesus must be all our love, our passion, our longing, our desire, and our goal!" (Greeting to the community of Rome, 1.1.1914). Desire becomes totality. To desire God is already to belong to Him. When Jesus becomes "everything," everything else finds its proper place.

2. WAITING

a) Mary's Waiting – Allowing Oneself to be Filled by a Promise

The Angel does not offer Mary a detailed plan but a promise: *"You will conceive a son."* It is this promise that makes waiting mature. Mary receives the mystery with a sincere question: *"How will this come about?"* She does not demand explanations; she remains open. The Bible is full of people who learn to wait: Abraham, Moses, Hannah, the prophets, up to Mary and Joseph. Waiting frees us from hurry and from demands; it heals us from discouragement and hardness of heart. Only those who know how to wait can truly hope. Advent invites us to say: *"Lord, I do not know how You will come but I am waiting for You."*

b) The Waiting of our Mother Foundress – Waiting as Trust

- “*He will come, surely He will come; we only need to have trust.*” (Instruction on Advent, 10.XII.1911). The certainty that the Lord will come is the heart of waiting. The only condition is trust. Waiting becomes inner peace: God will come, always, in the way He chooses.
- “*Let us go together to our good Jesus, with great trust and with great joy. He is waiting for us with His graces...*” (Letter to the community of Maria Sorg, 1902). It is surprising: not only we wait for God, but God waits for us. He waits for our “yes,” our openness, our trust. Waiting thus becomes a meeting *on the way*.

3. WELCOMING

a) Mary’s Welcome – The “Here I Am” That Changes History

- Mary *responds* with the most radiant word of Advent: “*Here I am.*” Not because she understood everything, but because she trusts. To welcome God means taking care of what is fragile in life: a small hope, a simple act of goodness, a forgiveness that is just beginning to grow. It is precisely in fragility that God draws near. Christmas reminds us that God does not come with power, but as a child placed into our hands. He is a real presence, asking for space, attention and an open heart.

b) The Welcome of the Mother Foundress – Fulfillment as Encounter

- “*The greatest grace... was the coming of the Saviour...*” (Conference to the community of Rome, *First Sunday of Advent* 1913). Our Mother Foundress reminds us that fulfillment is God’s fidelity to history. Christmas is a fact: God enters what is real.
- “*Let us receive with great love our most lovable Saviour... He rests in our heart...*” (Letter to the community of Maria Sorg, 21.12.1906). The fulfilment of the promise becomes intimacy: God not only comes, but finds His home in our hearts. Welcoming the Lord is a daily “yes,” a concrete act that transforms every day.

Let us enter this Advent with a heart renewed and full of trust. Let us allow desire to be rekindled, waiting to become trust, and welcoming to become encounter. Then Christmas will be able to be born within us. This is the simple and profound path of Mary, of the Mother Foundress, and of each one of us. The Lord always comes, and He comes *for us, for me*: He asks only for an open heart, even if fragile, but willing to be loved.

Our Mother Foundress teaches us that Advent is a movement of the heart: desire sets us in gesture, waiting purifies us, encounter transforms us. In this way, we will not only await Christmas but become ourselves a place where God can be born each day. Even in tiredness and inner poverty, the desire we carry within is already a prayer. Advent begins right here: in this simple and sincere whisper of our heart: “Come, Lord Jesus! Come also to me! I desire You! I wait for You! I welcome You!”

FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

- What desire do I carry in my heart this Advent? What desire have I allowed to fade?
- How do I live waiting in my spiritual life: with hurry, anxiety, trust or patience?
- Are there situations or people I find difficult to welcome? How can I open my heart to them, as God opens His to me?
- What concrete gesture of welcome can I offer today to a sister or to the community?