The Annunciation of Mary
March 25, 2014

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.

Mary is full of grace. Grace or gratia in Latin means gift. Mary is full of or gifted with God's life. This means that Mary has also learned how to receive, accept, and be open to the gifts that God offers her, with the greatest gift being that of bearing the Son of God.

It has been said that what is true for Mary is also true for the Church. If Mary is the first disciple of Jesus and a model of what the Church is to be, then I suppose we can say that the words of the angel Gabriel are also spoken to the Church. When I say the Church, I don't mean the Church building, nor only the clergy and religious. In baptism, we are chosen by God and gifted with God's life, as was Mary. And like Mary, we receive the divine Spirit so that the Word of God may take flesh in our own lives. The entire people of God, the laity, clergy, and religious are full of grace.

In some of the Marist houses worldwide, there is the custom of praying the Angelus three times a day: in the morning, at noon, and dinner. It begins with:

V. The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.
R. And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.
Hail Mary, etc.
V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.
R. Be it done unto me according to thy word.
Hail Mary, etc.
V. And the Word was made flesh.
R. And dwelt among us.

Those who say this prayer are reminded three times daily of the angel's message to Mary and of Mary's consent. Elizabeth Ruth Obbard, in her book, *A Year with Mary*, observes that these three reminders come during our daily work because it was in the midst of the daily life of a virgin betrothed to Joseph that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

That was true for Mary. That is also true for the Church.