

Will You Say “Yes” to New Life?

written by Angela Anno

If something’s really important, you repeat it. That must be the reason that the Annunciation story comes up at least twice each Advent season. It’s not just a reminder that Mary was open to the unknown new life being asked of her, but, I believe, that God is inviting each one of us to say “Yes” as well.

“I have new life for you.” God says. “Do you want it? Are you willing, like Mary, to walk into an unknown future and bring my life to others?”

In our holier moments we’d like to say, “Of course, God—anything you want.” In reality we often do more than a little bit of negotiation with God. We’re in good company—Moses haggled with God: “Who shall I say sent me?” Jeremiah protested that he was too young, and later that God had tricked him. Jonah tried to run in the opposite direction. Even Mary asked how that could be since she knew not man. Each one of them eventually said “Yes,” some more rapidly than others. Moses became the leader of the Israelites. Jeremiah became a great prophet calling people to repentance and changed lives. Nineveh returned to God through Jonah’s preaching. And God became human in Jesus through Mary’s “Yes.”

It’s always a struggle of what we will have to let go of to trust ourselves to God’s plan. Admit it, we like it when we’re in control. It’s scary and uncomfortable to let someone else be in charge. God doesn’t force us. God waits on our “Yes.” God cannot work in and through us without our agreement. God aches to birth new life us and God knows how wonderful it can be. Sometimes I think God weeps when we resist.

Old fears and hurts often are like boulders in the soil of our souls. But if we say even a tentative “Yes,” God’s love warms the ground of our hearts, God’s gentleness moistens the hard clay of our spirits and the seed of God’s new life slowly takes root. As a mother lovingly cares for her child and a farmer faithfully works the land, God calls forth first the stem, then the leaves, and finally the bloom of new life. And not surprisingly, it is often nothing at all what we expected. At first we might recoil: “This isn’t what I signed on for,” but slowly we realize that while it may not be what we wanted, it is exactly what we needed.

God’s life in us is not stagnant. We are constantly being asked to stretch beyond our comfort zone, to grow and move ahead. Each day God says, “I have new life for you. Do you want it?”

Jesus became human because of Mary’s “Yes.” What is God asking each one of us to birth to bring about the kingdom right now? In this season of focusing on God’s presence with and within us and the wonder of new life can we be willing to say “Yes” to God no matter where it leads?

Let us be bold and say, “Come, Lord Jesus, come and be born in our hearts,” and welcome whatever God desires to birth in our lives.