**Wednesday 25th March**

**Feast of the Annunciation**

**Collect:**

We beseech you, O Lord,

pour your grace into our hearts,

that as we have known the incarnation of your Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel,

so by his cross and passion we may be brought

to the glory of his resurrection;

through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,

who is alive and reigns with you,

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever.

 **Reading:**

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, ‘Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.’ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.’ Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’ The angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.’ Then Mary said, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.’ Then the angel departed from her.

*Luke 1:26-38*

*Mary’s Girlhood by Dante Gabriel Rosetti*

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 I.

This is that blessed Mary, pre-elect

God’s Virgin. Gone is a great while, and she

Dwelt young in Nazareth of Galilee.

Unto God’s will she brought devout respect,

Profound simplicity of intellect,

And supreme patience. From her mother’s knee

Faithful and hopeful; wise in charity;

Strong in grave peace; in pity circumspect.

So held she through her girlhood; as it were

An angel-watered lily, that near God

Grows and is quiet. Till one dawn at home

She woke in her white bed, and had no fear

At all, - yet wept till sunshine, and felt awed:

Because the fulness of time was come.

 II.

These are the symbols. On that cloth of red

I’ the centre is the Tripoint: perfect each,

Except the second of its points, to teach

That Christ is not yet born. The books - whose head

Is golden Charity, as Paul hath said –

Those virtues are wherein the soul is rich:

Therefore on them the lily standeth, which

Is innocence, being interpreted.

The seven-thorn’d briar and the palm seven-leaved

Are her great sorrow and her great reward.

Until the end by full, the Holy One

Abides without. She soon shall have achieved

Her perfect purity: yea, God the Lord

Shall soon vouchsafe His Son to be her Son