



Behold! Illuminations of the Virgin's Reactions to the Annunciation

Susanna W. Lombardi

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You are told that you will conceive a child, but not just any child-the Son of God! This happened to the Virgin Mary. The theme, the Annunciation, has been a favorite of artists through the centuries. The message itself is mysterious and miraculous and visually it is electrifying: a resplendent angel and a beautiful woman in a wide variety of settings. Equally intriguing to the author, however, are Mary's physical and emotional reactions to the angel Gabriel's proclamation. Universally, women, upon hearing they are pregnant, experience some or all of the Virgin's emotions. They too may find themselves anxious, fearful, reflective, resigned or joyous over the prospect of bringing a new life into the world. Herself a mother, grandmother and professional art historian, Susanna Lombardi demonstrates that the theme of the Annunciation in art explores the greatest mystery of all, the genesis of the life force. It is also one of the most beautiful to behold. "This exquisite collection of images of the Annunciation captures the different moments of Mary's personal experience as she reflects upon the angel's message. It suggests that our own experience is not unlike hers in receiving God's word. Behold! is an aesthetic and spiritual treasure; a theological tour de force." - Rev. John R. Morris, OP Associate Adjunct Professor, Theology and Religious Studies Dept. St. Mary's College of California

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