



## The Parish Churches of S Philip and S Augustine and S Matthew with S Mary the Virgin Newcastle

### Homily for Lady Day (25<sup>th</sup> March) 2026

In the past, I have suggested that the events as described in the Passion Narratives do not fit easily into a week and that it is possible that the framework of an early Liturgical practice has compressed the time-line. It might be that we can gain some insights from the account of the Annunciation by entertaining that some sort of streamlining of the time-line has influenced the account in Saint Luke's Gospel, albeit not for Liturgical reasons.

If we imagine for a moment a period between, on the one hand, the visit of the Angel announcing her pregnancy and, on the other hand, Mary's *Fiat Mihi* - be it unto me - we can begin to reflect on what would have been going through her mind as she pondered the knowledge vouchsafed to her.

I am not suggesting that she asked for time to decide whether or not to go ahead; but that it took time to get used to the idea. It would have been quite natural for her thoughts to race through all the implications of the news: telling Joseph, risking her relationship with him, life as an unmarried mother in an era when society at large was unsympathetic - unforgiving, indeed - to those who found themselves in such a predicament.

In such a context, we might construe her *Fiat Mihi* not so much in terms of obedience and submission to the divine Will, but of equanimity - find peace with the predicament in which she found herself.

People rarely talk about equanimity in terms of it being a Christian virtue; and yet, surely, being at peace with the circumstances to which God has called us is a key element in our discipleship: without it, we shall not be able to make the most of the opportunities presented to us, yielding, rather, to frustration and resentment that things are not other than they are.

Equanimity is hardly the disposition of choice in the modern era. We are continually told that choice is infinite and that we can achieve whatever we want if we want it enough and work hard enough. For most people none of this is true. Our choices are not only constrained by our circumstances or what others are prepared to offer; and for any given success in life there are many more people who have the capacity to succeed than avenues in down which they can; and those who have reached whatever pinnacle they prize tend to guard it jealously.

Part of the problem, of course, is that society values some accomplishments and circumstances more than others. Wealth is a perennial winner, but others are more ephemeral. Once upon a time, military prowess was the acme of human achievement; nowadays a flourishing Tinsel-town career seems to be preferred option for many.

The truth of the matter, however, as Saint Paul observed two thousand years ago, is that human societies are complex phenomena, which rely on there being a wide range of activities to sustain them. The CEO's of FTSE 100 companies can only be grand, because of the workforce at the summit of which they sit. They may, so to speak, conduct the orchestra, but without the musicians, there would just be someone waving her or his arms around.

Reinhold Neibuhr is usually credited with teaching Christians to pray that we accept the things we cannot change. God's Will is something that we cannot change; and when we realise that God has allotted to us a particular path in life - even when we acquiesce in the temptation to suppose we would have been better occupied doing something else - it behoves us to seek after equanimity and so find the opportunities to flourish in the role He has chosen for us, despite the challenges we encounter along its path.