The French painter Henri Matisse once said, "Creativity takes courage." Although he was reflecting on the creative process of an artist, it is no less true in all human activity—whether in relationships, work, or (and perhaps more significantly) mere expression of oneself. The inverse of this saying—courage takes creativity—is also true, though it is less observed in life. Anyone who decides to take a challenge upon himself/herself, especially when the challenge presents little to no information ("Paint me a picture"; "Outdo yourself"), will have to figure out a way how to express and at the same time validate his/her decision of rising to the challenge.

The Gospel today presents us with the angel's annunciation to the young girl Mary. As if pregnancy and birth weren't dangerous enough, Mary is asked to allow God to dwell in her by becoming her Son, a human child without an explainable human father. Although the divine message here conveys that "with God nothing is impossible," Mary must still have been overwhelmed by the great responsibility and risk that her "Amen" would bring upon her. But then again, YHWH yireh—God will provide.

Trust in God's providence, however, is not the same as a begging reliance. By the end of that fateful day, Mary was already setting out to the town of her co-pregnant kinswoman to see for herself the sign that the angel has said: not that Mary did not believe, but that this was another divine message, a small but sure comfort to the challenge to her person. From the moment she agreed to God's plan of salvation, Mary chose to follow the rules regarding new mothers as dictated by the Law of her religion and the customs of her society. With the loving help of Joseph, her faithful spouse, the virgin became a mother nine months later. Mary raised her only child with God's and her husband's guidance, and the young Jesus became a faithful and responsible son and Jew. While it cannot be denied that Jesus gradually used his own will during his life as an obedient and discerning boy, we can naturally surmise that Mary's parenting was a true mark of her creativity. Anyone who says that a woman is not creative has surely forgotten his/her own mother.

Mary's relationship with the divine Word places her as an example for us not only as a mother par excellence but as a model believer. We usually take up our faith as either a social duty or as a vending machine or as an agony aunt's column. If God truly matters to us, what he wills must be an overriding concern in our decisions, big or small. It is not only us who get to do the talking and the providing—we also have to do our share of praying, saying yes, and producing good works as fruit of our faith. This is the creative part of faith—not just being artsy-fartsy in our expression of our relationship with the divine, but electing (in Latin creare, from which we get the English verb 'create'), choosing to do what is right, no matter how starkly black-and-white our decision is.

Christianity owes a lot to Mary: from Mary we get the foremost example of a disciple, which is the art of conforming oneself to Christ Jesus. Our faith is not just a science (logia), filled with ideas to memorize and accept; it is also an art (technē), a personal communication to the divine, molded by who we are and what we assent to or not. As we contemplate God's providence today, let us resolve to see him eye to eye in his desire that we may be one with him, and learn to let our Lord permeate our thoughts, words, and deeds. Amen.
Entrance Antiphon
[Cf. Is 11:1, 40:5; Lk 3:6]  
(Recite when there is no entrance song)
A branch shall sprout from the root of Jesse, and the glory of the Lord will fill the whole earth, and all flesh will see the salvation of God.

Greeting
(The sign of the cross is made here)
P — The Lord be with you.  
All — And with your spirit.

Introduction
(The priest may address the assembly with these or similar words)
P — Today we celebrate what used to be known as the “Golden Mass” (Missa Aurea) which in Advent commemorates the Annunciation and the actual start of the earthly life of Jesus, God-made-man. Let us pray in this Eucharist that our devotion to Mary may proceed from true faith, by which we are led to know the excellence of the Mother of God and are moved to filial love toward her and to the imitation of her virtues.

Penitential Act
P — Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries.  
(Pause)
P — Have mercy on us, O Lord.  
All — For we have sinned against you.

P — Show us, O Lord, your mercy.  
All — And grant us your salvation.

P — May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.  
All — Amen.

P — Lord, have mercy.  
All — Lord, have mercy.

P — Christ, have mercy.  
All — Christ, have mercy.

P — Lord, have mercy.  
All — Lord, have mercy.

Gloria
All — Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father. Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Collect
P — Let us pray.  
(Pause)
O God, by consenting to the message of an angel the Immaculate Virgin became the dwelling of your eternal Word and was filled with the light of the Holy Spirit. Give us the grace to follow her example and devote ourselves humbly to your will. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.  
All — Amen.

First Reading  [Is 7:10-14]  
(Sit)
Isaiah tells Ahaz that as a sign of God’s concern for his people, a son will be born who will be called Emmanuel. This prophecy is perfectly fulfilled in Jesus who is “God with us” in the truest sense of the word.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah
THE LORD spoke to Ahaz: Ask for a sign from the LORD, your God; let it be deep as the nether world, or high as the sky! But Ahaz answered, “I will not ask! I will not tempt the LORD!” Then Isaiah said: Listen, O house of David! Is it not enough for you to weary men, must you also weary my God? Therefore the LORD himself will give you this sign: the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel.  
— The word of the Lord.  
All — Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm  [Ps 24]
R — Let the LORD enter; he is the king of glory.  

sr. m.c.a. parco, fsp

The LORD enters; he is

1. The LORD’s are the earth and its fullness; the world and those who dwell in it. For he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.  
2. Who can ascend the mountain of the LORD? or who may stand in his holy place? He whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean, who desires not what is vain.  
3. He shall receive a blessing from the LORD, a reward from God his savior. Such is the race that seeks for him, that seeks the face of the God of Jacob.  

Alleluia  (Stand)
All — Alleluia, alleluia. O Key of David, opening the gates of God’s eternal Kingdom: come and free the prisoners of darkness! Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel  [Lk 1:26-38]
P — A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke  
All — Glory to you, O Lord.

IN THE SIXTH MONTH, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the
virgin’s name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, “Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you.” But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his Kingdom there will be no end.”

But Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?” And the angel said to her in reply, “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 called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God.”

Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

— The Gospel of the Lord.
All — Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily (Sit)

Prayer of the Faithful
(Stand)

P — Let us pray to the Father that we may be able to follow the example of Mary, who is humble, full of faith, and always ready to do the Lord’s will. Full of confidence, we pray:

R — Lord, make us your faithful servants.
C — That the Holy Father, the bishops, priests, and deacons guide and assist the faithful in giving witness to their faith in Christ by their exemplary lives and inspiring words. We pray: (R)

P — Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
All — It is right and just.
P — It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord.
For all the oracles of the prophets foretold him, the Virgin Mother longed for him with love beyond all telling, John the Baptist sang of his coming and proclaimed his presence when he came.
It is by his gift that already we rejoice at the mystery of his Nativity, so that he may find us watchful in prayer and exultant in his praise.
And so, with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominions, and with all the hosts of Powers of heaven, we sing the hymn of your glory, as without end we acclaim:
All — Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.
(Kneel)

Acclamation
(Stand)

All — We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection, until you come again.

THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord’s Prayer
All — Our Father...
P — Deliver us, Lord...
All — For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever.

Invitation to Peace
Invitation to Communion
(Kneel)

P — Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.
All — Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.
Communion Antiphon (Lk 1:31)

The Angel said to Mary: Behold, you will conceive and bear a son and you shall name him Jesus.

Prayer after Communion (Stand)

P — Let us pray. (Pause)

Lord God, defend with your divine power those whom you nourish with heavenly gifts, so that, blessed by this sacrament, we may rejoice in the peace which you alone can give.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All — Amen.

THE CONCLUDING RITES

P — The Lord be with you.

All — And with your spirit.

Solemn Blessing

P — Bow down for the blessing. (Pause)

May the almighty and merciful God, by whose grace you have placed your faith in the First. Coming of His Only Begotten Son and yearn for his coming again, sanctify you by the radiance of Christ’s Advent and enrich you with his blessing.

All — Amen.

P — As you run the race of this present life, may he make you firm in faith, joyful in hope, and active in charity.

All — Amen.

P — So that, rejoicing now with devotion at the Redeemer’s coming in the flesh, you may be endowed with the rich reward of eternal life when he comes again in majesty.

All — Amen.

P — And may the blessing of the almighty God, the Father, and the Son, (†) and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever.

All — Amen.

Dismissal

P — Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.

All — Thanks be to God.