

**Gabriel's Annunciation**  
**Selected by Debie Thomas. Posted 10 December 2023.**  
**Jan Richardson**

Gabriel's Annunciation

For a moment  
I hesitated  
on the threshold.  
For the space  
of a breath  
I paused,  
unwilling to disturb  
her last ordinary moment,  
knowing that the next step  
would cleave her life:  
that this day  
would slice her story  
in two,  
dividing all the days before  
from all the ones  
to come.

The artists would later  
depict the scene:  
Mary dazzled  
by the archangel,  
her head bowed  
in humble assent,  
awed by the messenger  
who condescended  
to leave paradise  
to bestow such an honor  
upon a woman, and mortal.

Yet I tell you  
it was I who was dazzled,  
I who found myself agape  
when I came upon her—  
reading, at the loom, in the kitchen,  
I cannot now recall;  
only that the woman before me—  
blessed and full of grace  
long before I called her so—  
shimmered with how completely  
she inhabited herself,  
inhabited the space around her,  
inhabited the moment  
that hung between us.

I wanted to save her  
from what I had been sent  
to say.

Yet when the time came,  
when I had stammered  
the invitation  
(history would not record  
the sweat on my brow,  
the pounding of my heart;  
would not note  
that I said  
Do not be afraid  
to myself as much as  
to her)  
it was she  
who saved me—  
her first deliverance—  
her Let it be  
not just declaration  
to the Divine  
but a word of solace,  
of soothing,  
of benediction

for the angel  
in the doorway  
who would hesitate  
one last time—  
just for the space  
of a breath  
torn from his chest—  
before wrenching himself away  
from her radiant consent,  
her beautiful and  
awful yes.

Jan Richardson is an artist, writer, ordained minister in the United Methodist Church, retreat leader, and director of The Wellspring Studio, LLC. Her books include *The Cure for Sorrow*, *Night Visions*, *In the Sanctuary of Women*, and *Sparrow: A Book of Life and Death and Life*. See [janrichardson.com](http://janrichardson.com).

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