

# Gabriel's Annunciation

By: Jan Richardson

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.

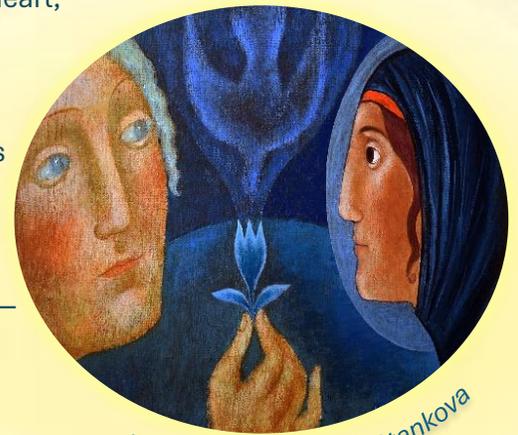
Yet when the time came,  
when I had stammered  
the invitation  
(history would not record  
the sweat on my brow,  
the pounding of my heart;  
would not note  
that I said

*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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