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Texts: Luke 1:26-34; 38  
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## The Gospel of Yes

I know what you're thinking. It's not even Halloween yet and she's pulling out the Christmas Scripture and we're singing about the angel Gabriel?

I can't help it. Given the world as it is at this moment, spinning in its violence and chaos, it feels like the right time to look for angels again and open to the mysteriously impossible becoming possible.

If we have the eyes and the heart to see it.

That is the core of the spiritual life, is it not?

To be open to what love can do...even as we hold the fragile world and terror in the Middle East in our aching hearts.

Our challenge is to pay attention. To attend to the glimmers of light and unexpected gifts at the same time that we feel compassion and the need to stand with those who are suffering. Not turning away in numbness is, it seems to me, also a sacred act.

Recently, I read about the extraordinary experience that astronauts have articulated upon their return home from space. What's been termed the "Overview Effect". The overview effect is the state of awe that transforms one's perceptions, mind and heart.

Edgar Mitchell, one of the astronauts on Apollo 14, described his emotions and experience of the Overview Effect while walking on the moon. He called it 'interconnected euphoria'. "Something happens to you out there", Mitchell wrote "you develop an almost instant global, people-oriented view of the planet which gives rise to an intense dissatisfaction with the state of the world, and a compulsion to do something about it. 'From out there on the moon, international politics look so petty. You want to grab a politician by the scruff of the neck and drag him a quarter of a million miles out and say, "Look at that, you \_\_\_\_\_."'

William Anders, one of the first three people to have left Earth's orbit and travel to the moon also experienced a similar insight/profundity.. 'We came all this way to explore the moon, and the most important thing is that we discovered the Earth.'

These epiphanies don't just belong to space explorers. There are other ways to stand in awe and see transcendentally the world as indivisible and without the boundaries and divisions that plague us.

The gospels invite us to consider our interconnectedness beyond all borders teaching us to draw the circle wider still.

And be open to the possibilities along the unexpected path and what can happen when we say "Yes" to love.

I know it isn't Advent yet but I was drawn this week to the familiar story of when the Angel Gabriel visits Mary and tells her she's to be with child. Mary walks around wondering "*How can this be?*" (Luke 1:34)

And then a little later as the reality sets in that she is pregnant and that she is saying YES to whatever the journey will become, Mary responds to her angelic visitor, "*Here I am... "Let it be."*" (1:38) Three words, *Let it Be...* accepting this new chapter of uncertainty with courage.

Have you ever been summoned to do something, say yes to something unlike anything you've ever done before? And you find yourself somewhat awed by how quickly your heart says yes and your life changes rather suddenly as a result? You also might see your life and your relationships in a whole new light...with an Overview Effect. What I might call the "Awe Effect".

I'm speaking from experience.

A few weeks ago, My husband Paul and I found ourselves climbing aboard a flight to Nashville, Tennessee. Once we located our seats we buckled in, sat back and realized life would never be the same for us again. *Liftoff.*

We'd been presented with a situation we felt profoundly called to do something about, a charge we felt we could only say YES to. So, in a matter of 6 weeks, we have become the legal guardians of a 12 year old girl named Anna and invited her to be part of our family. *This family.*

Initially, we walked around for a few days saying to ourselves, "*we're going to do this aren't we? How can this be???*" *We're saying "Yes" to this aren't we?"* A child needs a safe and loving home and we have one And on top of that, we have the village to help us! There were many yeses from everyone involved. We packed our bags...and, *Liftoff.*

There's a long backstory here, one that spans about 2 decades. Our extended families were and still are deeply intertwined ever since Anna's mother and older siblings arrived from Congo.

Fast forward, and Paul and I are now going to school meetings and looking for a pediatrician. Anna, a name that means grace, is now the light and the greatest challenge of our lives as we navigate for the first time the roles of parenting. Not having ever been parents before, we're on a ride that feels akin to climbing aboard a spaceship and hurtling into a new universe. I've heard that's the definition of Middle School, after all!

We've moved from surprise and wonder to the posture of trust and Let it be...trusting that we have what it takes- we all have what it takes-and will humbly get the help we need when we don't.

The gift that is unfurling feels like a walk on the moon on some days.

I wonder, When have you been greeted by an unexpected visitor bearing life changing news? What are the big yeses in your life? As the poet e. e. Cummings wrote, "yes is a world & in this world of yes live (skillfully curled) all worlds"

As you reflect on your own spiritual path, how have you been shaped or seasoned by those experiences and relationships you've committed to?

How do we trust that grace will be at work regardless of the actual outcome? That you and I will be given the wisdom to be true along the way?

On some days, I'm undone by the enormity of what we've had the audacity to say yes to. On others, the blessings of this teenager are such an unexpected joy I can't quite remember life before her.

"Let it be" is not a passive stance but a prayer of trust and imagination,  
A bold and brave act of paying attention to the very active unfolding of the Spirit.

*Let us be...*

My prayer is that as parent guardians we'll have what it takes to "let it be" that this beloved child of God given to us for a little while might grow in freedom into whatever and whoever she chooses to be.

Considering the Overview Effect, my prayer too is that as a community we'll keep saying yes to showing up for one another

That we'll discern where we are called to be as people of faith committed to a just peace and a loving world for all children.

Believing that we'll have the courage and compassion to do so.

To listen and support the brave voices within and among us.

To foster deepening kinship with our neighbors and partners here and around the world.

When facing the enormity of the world's problems one day, Dorothy Day in one of her journals wrote, *"If I did not believe, if I did not make what is called an act of faith..., if I did not have faith that the works of mercy do lighten the sum total of suffering in the world, so that those who are suffering on both sides of this ghastly struggle somehow mysteriously find their pain lifted and some balm of consolation poured on their wounds, if I did not believe these things, the problem of evil would indeed be overwhelming."*

(Laura sings the first line of the song, Let it Be by Paul McCartney) *"When I find myself in times of trouble, Mother Mary comes to me Speaking words of wisdom, let it be."*

Guitarist, Lisa Aranci sings the rest of the song,

"And in my hour of darkness she is standing right in front of me

Speaking words of wisdom, let it be

Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be

Whisper words of wisdom, let it be

And when the broken hearted people living in the world agree

There will be an answer, let it be

For though they may be parted, there is still a chance that they will see

There will be an answer, let it be

Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be

There will be an answer, let it be Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be

Whisper words of wisdom, let it be Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be

Whisper words of wisdom, let it be, be

And when the night is cloudy there is still a light that shines on me  
Shinin' until tomorrow, let it be  
I wake up to the sound of music, Mother Mary comes to me  
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be  
And let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be  
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be  
And let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be  
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6T5C-jzSH0> Paul McCartney, Live.