

President's Newsletter, November 2008

Dear Members:

The SGI Council will have its Interim Meeting next week in Miami Beach, Florida. The discussion will be how our activity in the last 8 months fits with the 3 areas of focus during my tenure which was announced last March in San Diego:

- 1- To increase the visibility of the SGI;
- 2- To continue the evolution of the SGI in becoming an International Society;
- 3- To challenge everyone to become more involved in the SGI.



*Master of Retable of Reyes Catholics (15th Century) ca 1475-1500,
Fine Art Museum, San Francisco, CA, USA*

In Christian literature, the "Annunciation" refers to the appearance of the Archangel Gabriel (an angel being a messenger of God) in Nazareth to the Virgin Mary and "announcing" to her that she would bear a child, thus becoming the mother of God (Gospel of Luke). Being an unmarried virgin, Mary asks how it would be possible that she conceive this child of God. While the canonical Gospels offer no biological explanation, they do explain that Mary will conceive the divine "word" (logos in Greek) of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. The angel Gabriel proclaims to Mary, "The Lord is with you," to which she replies, "I am the handmaid of the Lord".

In the work depicted here by the Master of Retable, God (upper left) delivers the Child Jesus (holding a cross) through the intervention of the Holy Spirit (the white dove). The sunny landscape and the flowers on the window sill suggest a springtime setting, which coincides with the historical celebration of this event on March 25th, so dated because of the date of Christmas (nine months following).

As early as the 12th century, artists began representing the Annunciation, and in particular showing the Divine Word 'fertilizing' Mary. In other versions from this period the 'fertilization' occurs by a tube extending from the God's mouth to the Virgin's ear. This artistic rendering is in reference to a play on words. The English word "obedience" comes from the Latin word "obedire," which in turn is derived from the phrase "ob audire," meaning "from/upon hearing." Thus, "obedience" is first and foremost an action done in response to something that has been heard. Because she listened to (was obedient to) the Angel Gabriel, Mary responded with her "yes," and in so doing conceives Jesus in her womb. Saint Augustine also emphasized the importance of the obedience of Mary, making a comparison to what Eva had done in the Garden of Eden, i.e. her disobedience by her refusal to listen to God's command. From the medical perspective, we can offer an interesting comment: that "listening" is the way through which life either enters or goes out in that hearing is the last sense which disappears after the death.

Following this theme of "annunciation," and with the great effort and the contribution of a large group of members, the SGI is happy to "announce" the following:

- A) The SGI website is undergoing to numerous changes beginning with the homepage and going throughout some new headings (funding opportunities, jobs, what's new);
- B) The contacts with other sister societies are in progress, some collaborative initiatives have been established (see the Glasgow Program) and some others have been proposed for the future;
- C) A group of "Women in Reproductive Sciences" has been established;
- D) The Journal "Reproductive Sciences" is becoming very attractive, with a high submission rate of good quality paper;
- E) The Forum is a new formula for expert meetings which may increase the SGI visibility. The first test has been done in Siena (Italy) last July;

- F) The 3rd SGI International Summit will be held in Japan next November, 2009;
- G) The 56th Annual Meeting in Glasgow has an excellent Scientific Program including an outstanding list of invited speakers (largely International), and has received a record number of abstract submissions. The preliminary program has been received by all members.

The SGI is growing in membership and visibility, and at the same time is maintaining the leadership in Basic and Clinical Research in Obstetrics and Gynecology throughout the world.

By using some words from Mr. Obama's victory speech (congratulations and good luck to him and for the USA) we can say "Our union can be perfected. What we have already achieved gives us hope for what we can and must achieve tomorrow". Thanks to everyone for your collaboration!!

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Felice Petraglia', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Felice Petraglia
SGI President, 2008-2009