

The Annunciation of the Lord to the Blessed Virgin

Mary 25 March
Holy Day

The story of the Annunciation is told by Saint Luke, who used it to introduce some major themes in his version of the Gospel.

The angel Gabriel visited Mary, greeting her as the one who was favoured by God to be the mother of Jesus, "the Son of the Most High." It was not Mary's virtues or merit that won her this favour: it was simply that God "remembered to be gracious" and bestowed such a gift of power on Mary so that the whole human race might know the still greater gift of salvation. Thus empowered, Mary was able to respond, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." By the grace of God which filled her, she was able to practise a graciousness of her own towards God; for it gave her a unique freedom to make God's will the very thing that she herself willed.

In this gracious response to God's gift, Mary may be seen as a forerunner of Christ himself. For her consent to God's saving purpose foreshadowed her son's consent to the fulfillment of that purpose, even at the cost of his own life. To the Annunciation Mary responded, "Be it unto me according to your word." In a similar way, on the eve of his passion, Jesus prayed to God, "Not my will but yours be done." The feast of the Annunciation, which celebrates the conception of Jesus, comes to full term on Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter, when we celebrate the birth of the new creation in his paschal victory.

All of God's grace is imparted to our lives so that we might share in this one mystery, not all at once, but through the changes and chances of our daily living. The life of grace often leaves us puzzling, as the message of the angel puzzled Mary; and Scripture suggests that Mary herself did not understand the mystery she had borne until her son was raised from the dead. Her whole life was a discipline in grace for the revelation of glory; and so it may be for all who by baptism and the eucharist bear Christ in their own lives.

See *Readings*, page 492.

Sentence

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory. *John 1.14*

Collect

Pour your grace into our hearts, O Lord, that we who have known the incarnation of your Son Jesus Christ, announced by an angel to the Virgin Mary, may by his cross and passion be brought to the glory of his resurrection; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Readings

Isaiah 7.10-14 Psalm 40.5-10 or Psalm 45
Refrain I love to do your will, O my God.
Hebrews 10.4-10 Luke 1.26-38

Prayer over the Gifts

Almighty God,
so fill us with your grace,
that we in all things may accept your holy will
and with the Virgin Mary, full of grace,
rejoice in your salvation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Preface of the Incarnation

Prayer after Communion

Almighty God,
your word proclaims our salvation;
your table gives us life.
Grant us the humble obedience we see in Mary,
that we too may respond as willing servants.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.