

## The Feast of the Annunciation

Luke 1:24-38

And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men. And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her. (KJV)

The Third Sunday of Great Lent

Veneration of the Holy Cross

Mark 8:34-38, 9:1

And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power. (KJV)

We gather today in God's Holy Church to celebrate the Major Feast of the Annunciation. We come to church for the benefit of our souls and to seek the Kingdom of God.

At Holy Baptism we committed our lives to the Lord Jesus Christ. We choose to follow the narrow path to God's Heavenly Kingdom. During our journey we have departed from the path on too many occasions.

Repentance enables us to return to the narrow path and restores our unity with Jesus Christ. We find joy in the life in Jesus Christ that exceeds all joy. Jesus Christ offers us peace in the heart, mind and soul.

The Feast of the Annunciation celebrates the announcement to Mary, a virgin, that she would give birth to Jesus. The birth would be possible through the action of the Holy Spirit. The Gospel is clear all things are possible with God.

Mary received God's message from the angel Gabriel with complete obedience. She established the enduring example for believers through the centuries. Mary agreed to honor the word of God.

The Lord Jesus Christ taking on human flesh for our salvation changed the world forever. Jesus' humble birth, His miracles and teachings continue to amaze believers and inspire them.

Jesus' willingness to go to the Cross, to die, be buried and rise from the Tomb exceeds the capacity of the human mind. Jesus offers unconquerable hope for eternal life by His defeat of death.

Each believer has died with Christ and has risen with Christ at Holy Baptism. Each believer has been baptized under the Sign of the Cross. The Sign of the Cross is the Sign of Victory.

Today, during the Third Sunday of Great Lent, the Cross is prominently in the middle of the Church as a source of strength for believers journeying to Pascha. Believers embracing the Cross demonstrate their love for Jesus Christ.

Christ's love for each believer was verified and manifested when He voluntarily ascended the Cross. Christ bore the shame of being tortured and crucified. He revealed He was stronger than death.

The Cross provides strength for believers embracing Christ's love and loving Christ completely. Martyrs of every century prove the value of the Cross and the love of the crucified and risen Christ.

The remaining days of Great Lent are opportunities for believers to live fully in Jesus Christ. Believers are encouraged to demonstrate their love for Christ and their love for their neighbors.

Believers are expected to continue to fast, increase daily prayers and give alms cheerfully during the days leading to Holy Week and Pascha. God's Church freely offers the necessary nourishment for the journey to Pascha.

Mary was chosen from among all women of all the centuries to give birth to Jesus. She has carried this singular honor without blemish through the centuries. She intercedes in behalf of believers before the Lord.

May the joy of the announcement of Jesus' birth fill our hearts, May the honor given to Mary be held dear in our hearts and minds. May the Cross in the middle of the church benefit our souls as we continue the journey to Holy Week and Pascha.

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Feast of the Annunciation. The Third Sunday of Great Lent. Veneration of the Holy Cross. March 25/April 7, 2024. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.  
Father Rodney Torbic