

# THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE THEOTOKOS

## Family Lesson Plan-2

*Epistle: Hebrews 2:11-18 and St.*

*Gospel: Luke 1:24-38*

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*Rejoice, O Virgin, Theotokos! Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you!  
Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, for you have  
borne the Savior of our souls!*

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INTRODUCTION: On March 25<sup>th</sup> the Church celebrates and makes newly present the Great Feast called the Annunciation.

*Discuss:*

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "newly present"?

- When we make something newly present, we bring it into our lives as it is happening to us at this very time. It is not a feast that we celebrate historically - but the celebration of an event that we experience in the present here and now.
- The celebration of the feast renews our awareness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ's taking on a human form as He is conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Most Holy Theotokos.
- We call this event, the Incarnation.. It is an event that changes our lives. It gives us the option to live in light, in the Glory of God, or remain helpless in darkness and despair.
- The Incarnation begins with the Annunciation. This is the consummation to which all of salvation has been waiting for since the covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12). Gabriel says to Mary in the Canon.  
*"God promised to our forefather Abraham that in his seed all the gentiles would be blest, O pure Lady!! And through you,, today, the promise receives its fulfillment!"*
- We sing in the Troparion, " Today is the beginning of our salvation, the revelation of the Eternal Mystery! The Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin as Gabriel announces the coming of Grace.
- St. Athanasius calls this feast "the first in the list of feasts."

Start the preparation of the feast with a family discussion on the upcoming feast of the Annunciation

- *Begin with the word "annunciation"*

What does the annunciation mean?

- *The word sounds like and looks like the word "announce"*
- *Read the gospel for the feast together (Luke 1:26-38)*

What is the feast announcing?

*Discuss the following:*

- On this day the angel Gabriel announced the coming birth of Christ to the Virgin Mary.
- This is the day that the Lord Jesus Christ was conceived in the womb of His Blessed Mother
- It comes nine months before Christmas on March 25

The Icon Of the Annunciation

*Gaze at the icon for a few minutes: . . .*

Note: In the center of the icon, a scroll on a stand reminds us of the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah that a virgin shall bear a child. The Angel Gabriel points to Mary. His hand is centered over the scroll, as fulfillment of that prophecy.

Mary, holds a spool of woolen yarn. The woolen yarn represents the sheep that give their wool to clothe us, just as Mary will give her flesh and blood to clothe the Son of God in a garment of humanity.

The blue thread that she is holding represents that it was she who wove the veil in the Temple that later was miraculously rent from top to bottom at the death of her Son. Her acceptance of God's will is depicted in this icon by her upraised and open hand.

What special hymns do we sing that tell us what the feast is all about?

- The special hymns we sing are the Troparion, Kondakion and the Hirmos.

*Go over the words and Learn to sing these hymns:*

- Troparion:  
*TODAY IS the beginning of our salvation and the revelation of the Mystery that was planned from all eternity The Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin and Gabriel announces this grace. Let us join him in crying out to the Mother of God:: Hail O full of grace, the Lord is with you!*
- Kontakion  
*TRIUMPHANT LEADER, to you belongs our prize of victory! And since you saved us from adversity, we offer you our thanks. We are your people, O Mother of God! So, as you have that invincible power, continue to deliver us from danger that we may cry out to you: "Hail O Virgin and Bride ever pure.!"*
- Hirmos  
*O EARTH, proclaim the glad tidings of a great joy, and you heavens sing a hymn of praise to the glory of God. No profane hand may touch the living Ark of God, but the lips of the faithful will never cease to sing your praise, repeating with joy the angel's words: Hail, O full of Grace, the Lord is with you!*

Why is the birth of Jesus Important?

Discuss the following:

- *It changed our lives:*  
Jesus Christ came to : Identify with us  
Save us and  
Divine us
- He took on humanity to show us how to be divine

What is Mary's role in the salvation of the world?

*Discuss the following:*

- As Mary becomes the temple of God and Mother of Life, she becomes the instrument of the salvation of us all.
- St. Nicholas Cabasilas says, "The Incarnation was not only the work of the Father, of His Power and His Spirit: it was also the work of the will and the faith of the Virgin."
- In the words of another holy hierarch, "All creation held its breath, wondering what her answer would be."
- The virgin was taken by surprise and was quite afraid, but answered simply, "Behold the handmaiden of the Lord; be it unto me according to they word."
- Mary's answer to the angel was not a foregone conclusion: she could have refused! She had a free and positive part to play in God's scheme of salvation.
- The annunciation commemorates not only the divine initiative, but also the human response.
- This teaches us how much God respects our liberty.

Did God need Mary to say "Yes"?

*Discuss the following:*

- **Yes !** When God chose to become man, He desired to do so with the willing agreement of her whom He chose as His mother. The Virgin was a willing participant in God's grace for mankind. She played an active and positive role in God's plan of salvation.
- The salvation of the world is easily within the reach of the omnipotent God - but what is beyond it is in the world's affirmation of its salvation through its own free response.
- God can take upon Himself every iniquity, even unto death, but He cannot pronounce the "fiat" for man or answer for him.

- Mary not only said "yes" for herself, but for all humanity
- We in turn, must exercise our freedom to say "yes" as Mary did.

How does this feast change our lives?

*Discuss the following:*

- The feast celebrates our own reception of the Good News of our salvation in her person.

What is now possible for us because of the birth of Jesus?

*Discuss the following:*

- St. Anthanasius says, "God became man that man might become like God"
- Mary, a woman of our race, is the model of what we can become in Christ.

### Some Things To Do

- Attend vespers and Liturgy for the feast as a family
- Read the Epistle and the Gospel for the day  
*Take a few moments at home to read the following scripture prayerfully considering their lessons for you.*  
*Hebrews 2:11-18 and St.*  
*Luke 1:24-38*
- Meditate upon the Old Testament:  
*Genesis 28:10-17,*  
*Ezekiel 43:27-44:4, Proverbs 9:1-11,*  
*Exodus 3:1-8 and Proverbs 8:22-30.*
- *Attend the Divine Liturgy- spend a few minutes before or after reading the prayers for this Feast and consider the meaning in your own life.*
- Meditate upon the icon of the Annunciation.
- Enjoy the traditional fish dinner eaten on the Annunciation.  
 This feast usually occurs during Great Lent, for those who are fasting it provides a break from the traditional Lenten Fast from meat, fish, dairy products and olive oil

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February 5, 2006

Dear Father Ghazal,

Christ is in our midst!

To help promote our goal of catechesis focused on living our Eastern Christian faith and celebrating our Holy Days, we have enclosed flyers for the Feast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos celebrated March 25<sup>th</sup>.

The flyer is an excellent instructional aid that provides catechetical preparation for the feast and may be combined with the full liturgical celebration. It includes an explanation of the feast, an icon of the Annunciation and the Troparion, Kontakion and Hirmos. We have also enclosed for meditation and family instruction a suggested lesson plan to prepare for the feast in the home prior to the gathering of the family of God in celebration of the feast in the Church.

Lending your support and encouragement to catechists, adults and families interested in learning more about their faith will help them become what they celebrate. As the liturgical year unfolds, we hope you look forward to receiving our other major festival flyers prepared for this purpose,

Sincerely Yours In Christ God Trinity,

Frances Nejmeah Colie