

# READERS VESPERS

Wednesday, March 25

The Feast of the Annunciation

*Abridged and adapted for use at Christ the Saviour Orthodox Church, as done by a Priest*

## A Brief Explanation of the Feast

*by + Fr. Thomas Hopko*

**T**he feast of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary comes nine months before Christmas on the twenty-fifth of March. It is the celebration of the announcing of the birth of Christ to the Virgin Mary as recorded in the Gospel of Saint Luke.

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end." And Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no husband?" And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her (*Lk 1:26-38*).

The services of the feast of the Annunciation, the Matins and the Divine Liturgy, stress again and again the joyous news of the salvation of men in the birth of the Saviour.

*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. Together with him let us cry to the Theotokos: Rejoice, O Full of Grace, the Lord is with you (Troparion).*

The celebration of the Annunciation, therefore, is the feast of our own reception of the glad tidings of salvation, and our own glorification of the maiden Mary who becomes the Mother of God in the flesh.



*At the appointed time we begin:*

O God cleanse me a sinner and have mercy on me (3).

Blessed is our God, always now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen. Glory to Thee, O God, glory to Thee!

O Heavenly King! The Comforter, the Spirit of Truth Who art everywhere and fillest all things. Treasury of blessings and Giver of life: Come and abide in us! Cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One!

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. (3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

O Most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, cleanse us from our sins. Master, pardon our transgressions. Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for Thy name's sake.

Lord have mercy. (3)

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

 ur Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power and the glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Lord have mercy (12) Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Come, let us worship God our King! (*metania*)

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God! (*metania*)

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ Himself our King and our God!  
(*metania*)

## Psalm 104

**B**less the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, Thou art very great! Thou art clothed with honor and majesty, Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment, Who hast stretched out the heavens like a tent, Who hast laid the beams of Thy chambers on the waters. Who makest the clouds Thy chariot, Who ridest on the wings of the wind, Who makest the winds Thy messengers; fire and flame Thy ministers. Thou didst set the earth on its foundations, so that it should never be shaken. Thou didst cover it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. At Thy rebuke they fled; at the sound of Thy thunder they took to flight. The mountains rose, the valleys sank down to the place which Thou didst appoint for them. Thou didst set a bound which they should not pass, so that they might not again cover the earth. Thou makest springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills, they give drink to every beast of the field; the wild asses quench their thirst. By them the birds of the air have their habitation; they sing among the branches. From Thy lofty abode Thou waterest the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of Thy work. Thou dost cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth, and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread to strengthen man's heart. The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly, the cedars of Lebanon which he planted. In them the birds build their nests; the stork has her home in the fir trees. The high mountains are for the wild goats; the rocks are a refuge for the badgers. Thou hast made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting. Thou makest darkness, and it is night, when all the beasts of the forest creep forth. The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God. When the sun rises, they get them away and lie down in their dens. Man goes forth to his work and to his labor until the evening. O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all; the earth is full of Thy creatures. Yonder is the sea, great and wide, which teems with things innumerable, living things both small and great. There go the ships, and Leviathan which Thou didst form to sport in it. These all look to Thee, to give them their food in due season. When Thou givest to them, they gather it up; when Thou openest Thy hand, they are filled with good things. When Thou hidest Thy face, they are dismayed; when Thou takest away their breath, they die and return to their dust. When Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created; and Thou renewest the face of the ground. May the glory of the Lord endure for ever, may the Lord rejoice in His works, Who looks on the earth and it trembles, Who touches the mountains and they smoke! I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being. May my meditation be pleasing to Him, for I rejoice in the Lord. Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the

wicked be no more! Bless the Lord, O my soul! Praise the Lord!

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: both now and ever, and to ages of ages. Amen.

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia. Glory to Thee, O God! (3)

### **Great Litany**

*The regular petitions are not intoned, instead:*

Lord, have mercy! (12) Through the prayers of our holy fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.

### **Lord, I Call**

*Tone 6*

**L**ord I call upon Thee, hear me! Hear me, O Lord! Lord, I call upon Thee, hear me! Receive the voice of my prayer, when I call upon Thee, hear me O Lord! Let my prayer arise, in Thy sight as incense, and let the lifting up of my hands, be an evening sacrifice, hear me O Lord!

Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth and a door of enclosure about my lips. Incline not my heart to evil deeds, to make excuses in sins. With men that work iniquity: let me never partake of their delights. Let a good man strike or rebuke me in kindness, but let the oil of the sinner never anoint my head. For my prayer is continually against their wicked deeds. When they are given over to those who shall condemn them, they shall learn that the word of the Lord is true. As a rock which one breaks and shatters on the ground, so shall their bones be strewn at the mouth of the Sheol. But my eyes are turned toward Thee, Lord God, In Thee I take refuge. Leave me not defenseless. Keep me from the trap which they have laid for me and from the snares of evildoers. Let the wicked fall into their own nets while I alone escape. I cried with my voice to the Lord, with my voice to the Lord did I make my supplication. I poured out my complaint before Him. I showed before Him my trouble. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then Thou knew my path. In the way wherein I walked have they secretly laid a snare for me. I looked on my right but there was no one that would know me. Refuge failed me. No one cared for my soul. I cried to Thee, O Lord, I said: Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living. Give heed to my cry for I am brought very low. Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are stronger than I.

**(6) If Thou, O Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee.**

Thou didst endure the Cross and Passion in the midst of the earth, O merciful Lord, granting all men redemption and freedom from passions. Therefore on the middle day of the Fast, we set Thy Cross before us and venerate it with rejoicing. Glorious with the light of divine virtues, may we be counted worthy to see Thy passion and life-giving Resurrection,// O only merciful Word of God.

**(5) For Thy name's sake have I waited for Thee, O Lord, my soul has waited for Thy word; my soul has hoped on the Lord.**

Nailed upon the Cross, Thy side pierced with a spear, Thou wast counted as a lifeless corpse, and given gall to drink, O long-suffering Master, Who sweetened the waters of Marah by the hand of Moses. Therefore I entreat Thee and pray: "Uproot the bitter passions from my understanding, sweeten my mind with the honey of repentance,// and grant that I may worship at Thy holy Passion!"

**(4) From the morning watch until night, from the morning watch, let Israel hope on the Lord!**

Today we see the mighty Cross placed before us which Moses once prefigured with outstretched arms, as He put Amalek to flight. O peoples, trembling, let us touch it with pure minds and lips, for Christ was raised up on it when he slew death. May we all be counted worthy of His grace, and, praising the Savior of all with hymns inspired by God,// let us pray that we may come to His saving Resurrection!

**(3) For with the Lord there is mercy and with Him is plenteous redemption, and He will deliver Israel from all his iniquities.**

Revealing to thee the pre-eternal counsel, Gabriel came and stood before thee, O Maiden, and greeting thee, he said: "Rejoice, earth that has not been sown! Rejoice, burning bush that remains unconsumed! Rejoice, unsearchable depth! Rejoice, bridge that leads to Heaven! Rejoice, ladder raised on high that Jacob saw! Rejoice, divine jar of mana! Rejoice, deliverance from the curse! Rejoice, restoration of Adam;// the Lord is with thee!"

**(2) Praise the Lord, all nations! Praise Him, all peoples!**

“Thou dost appear to me in the form of a man,” said the undefiled Maid to the chief of the Heavenly Hosts. “How then dost thou speak to me of things that pass man’s power? Thou hast said that God shall be with me and shall take up His dwelling in my womb. How shall I become the spacious habitation and the holy place of Him Who rides upon the Cherubim? Do not deceive me with trickery; for I have not known pleasure, I have not entered into wedlock.// How then shall I bear a Child?”

**(1) For His mercy is abundant towards us; and the truth of the Lord endureth forever.**

Then the bodiless Angel replied: “When God so wills, the order of nature is overcome, and what is beyond man comes to pass. Believe that my sayings are true, O all-holy and immaculate Lady!” And she cried aloud: “Let it be to me according to thy word, and I shall bear Him Who is without flesh! He shall borrow flesh from me, that through this union of natures He may lead man up to his ancient glory,// for He alone has power so to do.”

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.**

The Archangel Gabriel was sent from heaven, to announce to the Virgin the good news of her conceiving. And coming to Nazareth, he was filled with wonder at the miracle, and reasoned within himself: “How is it that He Who dwells on high, Whom none can comprehend, is to be born of a Virgin? How is He, Whose throne is Heaven and Whose footstool is the earth, to be contained in the womb of a woman? He upon Whom the six-winged Seraphim and the many-eyed Cherubim are not able to gaze is well-pleased to be made flesh from her at a single word. It is the Word of God Who is to come. Why then do I hesitate, and not say to the Maiden: ‘Rejoice, O Lady, full of grace, the Lord is with thee! Rejoice, pure Virgin! Rejoice, Bride without Bridegroom! Rejoice, Mother of the Life!// Blessed is the Fruit of thy womb!’”

## Gladsome Light



Gladsome Light of the holy glory of the immortal Father, heavenly, holy, blessed: Jesus Christ! Having come to the setting of the sun, and beheld the light of evening, we praise the Father, Son and Holy Spirit: God! At all times Thou art worthy, Thou art worthy of praise in songs as Son of God, and Giver of Life. Therefore, the world glorifies Thee!

## Evening Prokeimenon

Wisdom! Let us Attend! Prokeimenon in the 6<sup>th</sup> Tone: Sing to God, sing praises to His name; / lift up a sing to Him Who rides upon the clouds!

*verse: His name is the Lord, exult before Him!*

## Vouchsafe, O Lord

**V**ouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this night without sin. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the God of our fathers, and praised and glorified is Thy Name forever. Amen. Let Thy mercy be upon us, O Lord, even as we have set our hope on Thee.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord, teach me Thy statutes! Blessed art Thou, O Master, make me to understand Thy statutes! Blessed art Thou, O Holy One, enlighten me with Thy statutes!

Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth forever. O despise not the works of Thy hands. To Thee belongeth worship, to Thee belongeth praise, to Thee belongeth glory: to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen

## Litany of Supplication

*The regular petitions are not intoned, instead:*

Lord, have mercy! (12) Through the prayers of our holy fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.

## Aposticha

*Then the appointed Aposticha stikeron & verses are now sung/read. Note: On certain occasions verses other than those listed below may assigned to be used with the appointed stikeron.*

I surpass the Publican in transgressions, but do not even compete in his repentance. I have not accomplished the good deeds of the Pharisee, yet I boldly out-do his boasting. By Thine infinite humility, O Christ God, through which Thou didst lay low the high-minded demons on the Cross, establish in me the good deeds of the one and the humility of mind of the other, confirming in me the good intentions of each, // and save me, O Savior!

***To Thee, I lift up mine eyes, O Thou who art enthroned in the heavens! Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till He have mercy upon us.***

I surpass the Publican in transgressions, but do not even compete in his repentance. I have not accomplished the good deeds of the Pharisee, yet I boldly out-do his boasting. By Thine infinite humility, O Christ God, through which Thou didst lay low the high-minded demons on the Cross, establish in me the good deeds of the one and the humility of mind of the other, confirming in me the good intentions of each, // and save me, O Savior!

***Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us, for we have had more than enough of contempt. Too long our soul has been sated with the scorn of those who are at ease, the contempt of the proud.***

The Prophets, Apostles, and Martyrs of Christ have taught mankind to praise the consubstantial Trinity. They have given light to the nations that had gone astray // and have made the sons of men companions of the Angels.

***Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.***

Today the good tidings of joy are proclaimed,  
today is the festival of the Virgin;  
things below are joined together with things on high.  
Adam is made new;  
Eve is freed from the primal grief;  
and by the deification of the human nature that the Lord assumed,

the tabernacle of our substance has become a temple of God.

Oh, what a mystery!

The manner of His emptying cannot be known;

the manner of His conception is beyond speech.

An Angel ministers at the miracle; a virginal womb receives the Son;

the Holy Spirit is sent down; the Father on high is well pleased,

and according to their common counsel, a reconciliation is brought to pass in which and through which we are saved.

For this reason let us unite our song with Gabriel's, crying aloud to the Virgin:

“Rejoice, O Lady full of grace, the Lord is with thee!

From thee is our salvation, Christ our God,

Who, by assuming our nature, has led us back to Himself.//

Humbly pray to Him for the salvation of our souls!”

### **St. Symeon's Prayer**

**L**ord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people: a light to enlighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people, Israel.

### **Trisagion (Thrice Holy)**

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. (3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

O Most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, cleanse us from our sins. Master, pardon our transgressions. Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for Thy name's sake.

Lord have mercy. (3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.



ur Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power and the glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

*The Troparion(s) of the day are now sung/read.*

#### **Tone 4      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.  
Together with him let us cry to the Theotokos:  
“Rejoice, O Full of Grace, //  
the Lord is with thee!

#### **Litany of Fervent Supplication**

*The regular petitions are not intoned, instead:*

Lord, have mercy! (12) Through the prayers of our holy fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us.

#### **Dismissal**

Wisdom! Blessed is *He Who Is*, Christ our God, always now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

**Amen. Preserve O God, the Holy Orthodox faith of Orthodox Christians, unto ages of ages.**

Most holy Theotokos, save us!

**More honorable than the cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim: without defilement thou gavest birth to God the Word. True Theotokos, we magnify thee!**

Glory to Thee, O Christ, our God and our only sure hope, glory to Thee!

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen. Lord, have mercy. (3) O Lord, bless!**

**M**ay Christ our True God, through the prayers of His most pure Mother, whose honorable Annunciation we celebrate this day, by the might of the Precious and Life-giving Cross, of the Holy glorious and all-laudable Apostles, and of all those Saints who have shone forth in North America, and of the holy and righteous ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna, have mercy on us and save us, for as much as He is good and loves mankind. Amen.

*A short homily may be given here*

Through the prayers of our holy fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ our God have mercy on us and save us! Amen.