

## Homily on the Annunciation (Saint Gregory the Wonder-Worker, Bishop of New Caesarea (ca. 213-270))

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



Today Gabriel, who stands before God, came to the pure virgin, announcing the glad tidings: ‘Hail, you who are full of grace’. She tried to think what kind of salutation this might be. But the angel went straight on to say: ‘The Lord is with you. Do not be afraid, Mary. You have found favour with God. You will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob unto the ages And of His kingdom there will be no end’.



Then Mary said to the angel: 'How will this happen to me, since I haven't known a man' Will I still be a virgin? Am I not traducing the value of virginity?' While the holy virgin was still perplexed by this, the angel gave her a brief summary of his message, saying: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. And the holy person born of you will be called the Son of God, since that is Who He is and that is what He will always be called'.

Grace, therefore, made the fitting selection of Mary, of her alone from among all generations. For she was truly wise in all things, and no-one like her has ever been born, in any generation. She was not like the first virgin, Eve, dancing alone in paradise, her mind on other things, who accepted without a second thought the word of the serpent, the author of all wickedness, and thus became depraved in her thinking. Through her, the deceiver discharged his venom, mingled with death which it brought to the whole world. This is what has caused all the labour of the saints. Only in the holy Virgin has the transgression of Eve been rescinded.

The holy maiden was not minded to accept this gift before she knew who had sent it, what kind of gift it was and who had brought it.

The holy maiden wrestled with these things in her mind and then said to the angel: 'Where have you brought us this blessing from and in this way? From what store of treasures has this pearl of the word been sent to us. What is the purpose of this gift as regards us? You came from heaven, but you're walking on the earth; you're



showing yourself in the form of a person, but you're as radiant as a shining light'. While the holy maiden was considering these things, the archangel resolved the difficulty of such thoughts by telling her: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. And the holy person born of you will be called the Son of God. Do not fear, Mary; I have not come to overpower you with fear, but to rid you of any reason to fear. Do not fear, Mary, for you have found favour with God. Do not question grace by the standard of nature, since grace does not endure submission to the laws of nature. You, Mary, know things that the patriarchs and prophets were only vaguely aware of. You have learned, Virgin, things which were concealed till now even from the angels. You have heard, All-Holy Lady, things which even the choir of God-bearing people was never deemed worthy to learn. Moses, David, Isaiah, Daniel and all the prophets prophesied concerning Him. But they did not know how it was to be. You alone, All-Holy Virgin, are the recipient of these mysteries and their origins, about which all the others were ignorant. Where the Holy Spirit is, everything is readily arranged. Where divine grace is present, all things are possible with God. The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. And the holy person born of you will be called the Son of God'.

And if He is the Son of God, then He is also God, of one form with the Father, and co-eternal. In Him the Father is made completely manifest. His nature is in the Person and through His reflection, glory shines forth. Just as rivers come from the eternal source, so also from this eternal and ever-living source does the perennial and true light of the world, Christ our God, proceed.

This is what the prophets cried aloud: 'The streams of the river make glad the city of God'. And not only one city, but all cities, since, in making one city glad, it also makes the whole world rejoice.

It was therefore appropriate that the angel said first to Mary, the Holy Virgin, 'Hail, you who are full of grace, the Lord is with you', because the full treasure of grace was stored in her.

Of all generations she alone has been a virgin pure in body and in spirit, and she alone bears Him Who bears all things by His word. Nor is it only the beauty of the holy maiden in the body that is to be admired, but also the virtuous manner of her soul.

This is why the archangel addressed her first with the salutation, 'Hail, you who are full of grace, the Lord is with you. Not an earthly husband, but He Who is Himself

the Lord of sanctification, the Father of purity, the Creator of incorruption, and the Giver of liberty, the Guardian of salvation, and the Steward and Provider of true peace, Who made man out of the virgin earth, and from his rib formed Eve. This Lord is with you, and, moreover, is from you'.

*to be continued*

**The best source we have for the life of Saint Gregory the Wonder-Worker is Saint Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 335-ca. 395), who received much of his information from his grandmother, Saint Macrina the Elder (before 270-ca. 340), who lived in New Caesarea. Gregory the Wonder-Worker seems to have been a major influence on Saint Gregory of Nyssa, particularly as regards his appreciation of Origen. The most important aspect of his theology, however, as is clear from this homily also, was his view of the Holy Trinity as co-equal, consubstantial and co-eternal. In his Exposition of the Faith, for example, he states: 'There is therefore nothing created, nothing greater or subservient in the Trinity, nothing added, as though it had not existed before, but never been without the Son, nor the Son without the Spirit. And this same Trinity is immutable and unalterable forever'. WJL.**