

LINK — TO — LITURGY



The Annunciation 4th Sunday of Advent

Lessons and Discussions

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“How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?”

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Communion Antiphon (Isaiah 7:14) – Simple English Propers

This should be chanted so that the time of prayer, study and discussion can be made sacred. Another song can be substituted, but should have the same theme.

Ecce virgo *Is. 7: 14*

I Ehold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and his name shall be called Emmanu-el.

Source: <http://www.ccwatershed.org/>

Alternate options:Hymns

Immaculate Mary

Hail Holy Queen Enthroned Above

Come, O Long Expected Jesus

Savior of the Nations, Come

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Remnant

Ave Maris Stella

Totus Tuus

Collect – Roman Missal

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord,

your grace into our hearts,

that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son

was made known by the message of an An-gel,

may by his Passion and Cross

be brought to the glory of his Resurrection.

Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Gospel Reading – Luke 1:26-38 – Roman Missal

NOTE: In the Roman Catholic Tridentine Lectionary this Gospel is read on the Ember Wednesday in Advent.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke
- Glory to you O Lord

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his Kingdom there will be no end." But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "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, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

The Gospel of the Lord.
- Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

Spiritual Reading – Office of Readings – March 25

From Pope Saint Leo the Great

Lowliness is assured by majesty, weakness by power, mortality by eternity. To pay the debt of our sinful state, a nature that was incapable of suffering was joined to one that could suffer. Thus, in keeping with the healing that we needed, one and the same mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, was able to die in one nature, and unable to die in the other.

He who is true God was therefore born in the complete and perfect nature of a true man, whole in his own nature, whole in ours. By our nature we mean what the Creator had fashioned in us from the beginning, and took to himself in order to restore it.

Responsory (Luke 1:31, 42) – Office of Readings – March 25

Receive, O Virgin Mary, the word which the Lord has made known to you by the message of the angel: You will conceive and give birth to a son, both God and man,
– and you will be called blessed among women.

A virgin, you will indeed bear a son; ever chaste and holy, you will be the mother of our Savior.
– And you will be called blessed among women.

The Annunciation – Lesson and Discussion

“The angel Gabriel was sent from God”

The Annunciation is a feast day that is linked to the Incarnation.

What is the Incarnation? The Incarnation is, “The union of the divine nature of the Son of God with human nature in the person of Jesus Christ. The Son of God assumed our flesh, body, and soul, and dwelled among us like one of us in order to redeem us. His divine nature was substantially united to our human nature. Formerly the Feast of the Annunciation was called the Feast of the Incarnation.”[1]

What is the Annunciation? The word annunciation comes from the Latin “annuntiatio”, an announcing, or an announcement. In the case of The Annunciation it was the Angel Gabriel visiting Mary and announcing the Divine will of God to incarnate for the salvation of souls. It is also the announcement of Mary’s yes, “Let it be done unto me according to thy word.” (Luke 1:38)

What then, is the connection between the Incarnation and the Annunciation? This may best be understood by reading the words of St. John’s Gospel, “The Word became flesh” (John 1:14) The Annunciation is the proclamation, the “word” of God via the Angel Gabriel and the “word” or response of the Blessed Virgin

[42] Saint Ambrose

[43] Bechtel, F. (1907). The Brethren of the Lord. In The Catholic Encyclopedia. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Retrieved November 25, 2010 from New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02767a.htm>

[44] cf <http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/2000/0007sbs.asp>

[45] Fr Gabriel of St Mary Magdalen, OCD; *Divine Intimacy* pg. 84

[46] CCC 496

[47] CCC 496

[48] CCC 503

[49] Cf. Fr. Luis Granada, *Life of Jesus Christ*, I

[50] CCC 497

[51] CCC 500

[52] CCC 499

[53] CCC 507

V. The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.
R. And she conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray. Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we to whom the incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made know by the message of an angel may, by His Passion and Cross, be brought to the glory of His resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen

“The End” Notes

- [1] Fr. John Hardon, *Modern Catholic Dictionary*
- [2] Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)1015
- [3] Fr. Leonard Goffine's; *The Church's Year* pg. 582
- [4] Ibid.
- [5] Fr. John Hardon, *Basic Catholic Catechism Course*
- [6] St. Augustine, *Sermo* 169,11,13
- [7] CCC 489
- [8] From the Opening Prayer in this Link to Liturgy Packet
- [9] Redemptoris Mater 9.3
- [10] CCC 430
- [11] CCC 435
- [12] CCC 430
- [13] CCC 430
- [14] CCC 432
- [15] <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07421a.htm>
- [16] <http://www.fisheaters.com/posture.html#1>
- [17] Endnotes NAB Luke 1:32
- [18] Fr. Leonard Goffine's; *The Church's Year* pg. 582
- [19] Fr. Leonard Goffine's; *The Church's Year* pg. 582-583
- [20] Fr. Leonard Goffine's; *The Church's Year* pg. 582
- [21] *The Order of the Mass I*
- [22] Ibid
- [23] CCC 144
- [24] Redemptoris Mater 14.1
- [25] Fr. Francis Fernandez; *In Conversation with God* 6 29.3
- [26] Fr. Francis Fernandez; *In Conversation with God* 6 29.3
- [27] Fr. Leonard Goffine's; *The Church's Year* pg. 582
- [28] Fr. John Hardon, *Basic Catholic Catechism Course*, Mary's Incapacity to sin, pg.26
- [29] LG 56
- [30] Fr. Francis Fernandez; *In Conversation with God* 6 28.3
- [31] Fr. Leonard Goffine's; *The Church's Year* pg. 582
- [32] Cf. Fr. Leonard Goffine's; *The Church's Year* pg. 584
- [33] *Modern Catholic Dictionary* pg. 266
- [34] Fr. Leonard Goffine's; *The Church's Year* pg. 584
- [35] Ibid.
- [36] CCC 499
- [37] CCC 510
- [38] pg.. 40-41
- [39] Weimer's *The Works of Luther*, English translation by Pelikan, Concordia, St. Louis, v. 11, pp. 319-320; v. 6. p. 510.
- [40] *Zwingli Opera, Corpus Reformatorum*, Berlin, 1905, v. 1, p. 424.
- [41] <http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/quickquestions/keyword/virginity>

Mary, her yes or fiat. Through God's grace and Mary's open response and cooperation to the Grace of God, the Incarnation occurs. God's grace and Mary's yes. It is through Mary, within her womb, that Jesus, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity assumes flesh, body, and soul. Mary's "yes" at the Annunciation ushers in the Incarnation.

TV Show - Oprah's 'Ultimate Favorite Things - POP CULTURE CONNECTION 3:02

<http://youtu.be/E9UKqHSV6QM>

This video is hilarious. Seeing people lose their minds over nice material things. We see this year after year, people on her show going crazy for this episode. As excited as everyone was at receiving stuff, we should all feel just as excited and hopefully more excited when we ponder what took place at the Annunciation. The announcement of God's greatest gift, the gift of Himself taking on flesh.

Why do we celebrate the feast of The Annunciation on

March 25th? The celebration of the feast of The Annunciation on March 25th is nine months prior to the Nativity or birth of Christ, which is December 25th. The celebration of this feast dates back as early as the fifth century. December 25th is a few days after the Winter Solstice. It is in the darkest, coldest time of the year that Jesus, the "Light of the World", enters into the world to bring light and warmth. March 25th is a few days after the Spring Equinox. It is in the springtime, when life is first budding and being formed that the Word begins to form and bud, slowly taking flesh within the womb of Mary.

Why is the feast of The Annunciation so important? The simple answer is that the Annunciation ushers in the Incarnation. God will be formed, knit in the womb of Mary, thus becoming the "fruit" of her womb. It is this flesh, the flesh formed within Mary, on which Salvation hinges. "The flesh is the hinge of salvation." We believe in God who is creator of the flesh; we believe in the Word made flesh in order to redeem the flesh; we believe in the resurrection of the flesh, the fulfillment of both the creation and the redemption of flesh." [2] In one short phrase flesh is mentioned six times. The Annunciation is the beginning of the redemption of flesh; it is cause for all of us in the flesh to celebrate.

What does it mean by the "sixth month"? The sixth month was speaking of Mary's cousin, Elizabeth, being in her sixth

month of pregnancy with Saint John the Baptist.

Who is the Angel Gabriel? The Angel Gabriel is one of the Archangels and a messenger of God. He is one of only three angels mentioned by name in the Bible. He appeared to the prophet Daniel to explain his visions to the coming Messiah (Daniel 8: 16-26; 9:21-27), he appeared to Zachary in the temple to announce the coming of his son, John the Baptist (Luke 1:11-20) and lastly, he appeared to Mary to announce to her that she was the one to be chosen among all women to bear the Saviour of the world. (Luke 1:26-38)

Why was the Angel Gabriel sent to Mary? “The Angel Gabriel was sent to Mary to announce to her that it was God’s will that His divine Son, in order to redeem the human race by His sufferings and death, should take human nature from her, and because the human race, redeemed by Christ, was to occupy the place made vacant by the fallen angels.”[3]

Did the Incarnation have to happen for our Salvation? Yes! Jesus, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, who is Divine, could not suffer without taking on human flesh. He could not be ridiculed, humiliated and ultimately die, if He did not take on flesh. He must become flesh in order to redeem flesh. All of this happens through the mystery of the Incarnation. “This shows the enormity of sin, for which no man however pure, no, not even an angel, but only a God-Man could atone.”[4]

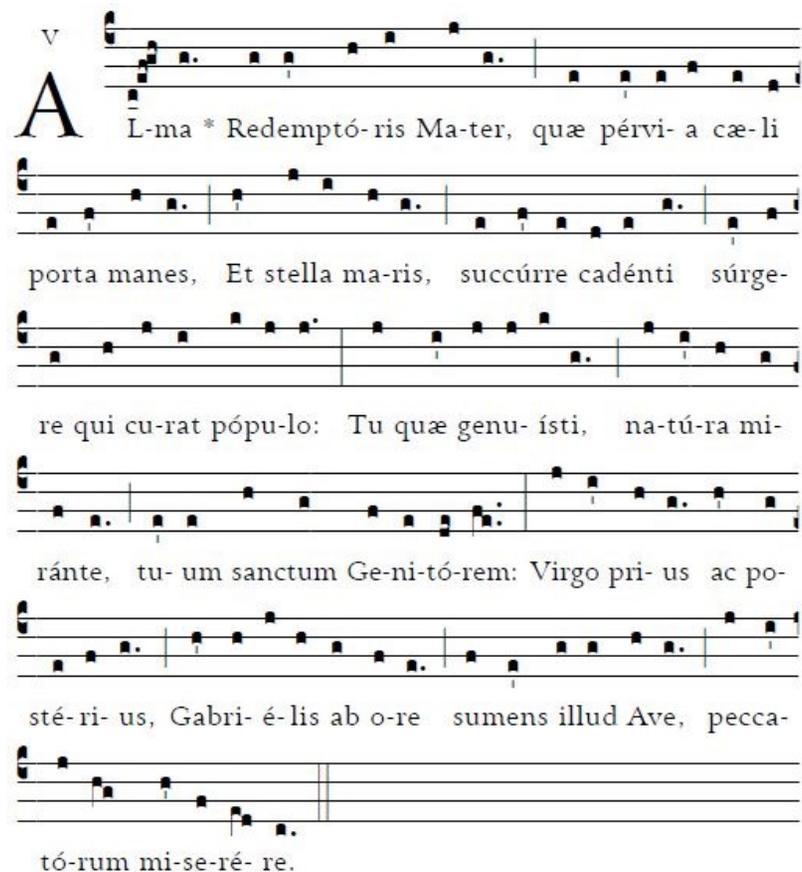
When was Jesus conceived in Mary’s womb? “At the very moment of her yes, the Holy Spirit overshadowed her, and the second person of the Holy Trinity took flesh.”[5] The Third Article of the Apostles Creed is “Conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary”. This article shows the link between the Annunciation (conceived by the Holy Spirit) and the Incarnation (born of the Virgin Mary). The article also points to the cooperation between God (the Third Person of God, the Holy Spirit) and man (Mary, the New Eve, the fairest of the human race).

Why is the Annunciation considered a Marian Feast Day? In the providence of God, God willed that Mary’s “yes” would bring forth the Savior, Jesus Christ. “God created us without us: but he did not will to save us without us.”[6] Mary’s “yes” is the perfect example of how each of us is expected to cooperate with the Grace of God in our life to bring about the salvation of

Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection, through the same Christ Our Lord.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Marian Antiphon – Alma Redemptoris Mater



V
A L-ma * Redemptó-ris Ma-ter, quæ pérvī-a cæ-li
porta manes, Et stella ma-ris, succúrre cadénti súrge-
re qui cu-rat pópu-lo: Tu quæ genu-ísti, na-tú-ra mi-
ránte, tu-um sanctum Ge-ni-tó-rem: Virgo pri-us ac po-
sté-ri-us, Gabri-é-lis ab o-re sumens illud Ave, pecca-
tó-rum mi-se-ré-re.

Alma Redemptoris Mater (English Translation)

Loving mother of the Redeemer, open door to heaven and star of the sea, come quickly to the aid of thy people, fallen indeed but striving to stand again. To nature’s astonishment thou wert the mother of thy holy Creator without ceasing to be a virgin, and heard from Gabriel that greeting: “Hail.” Have pity on us sinners.

immortal life. She herself is a virgin, who keeps in its entirety and purity the faith she pledged to her spouse.”[53]

Profession of Faith or Popular Devotion – The Angelus

This prayer was initiated by Pope Urban II in 1095, asking Mary’s protection for the crusades. Pope Urban had the bells rung in the morning, noon and in the evening each day. This prayer had been traditionally prayed at 6AM, Noon and 6PM each day, and has been prayed faithfully by Catholics for a thousand years. It is a great short prayer to get us used to praying throughout the day and most importantly showing reverence and thanksgiving to Our Lord for His Incarnation. The Angelus also increased in us a devotion to Our Lady for her faith and obedience.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen

The Angel of the Lord declared to Mary:
And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord: Be it done unto me according to Thy word.

Hail Mary . . .

And the Word was made Flesh: And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary . . .

Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God: that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray:

Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts; that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and

our own soul and the souls of others. “Throughout the Old Covenant and Old Testament, all the holy women had prepared the way for Mary beginning with Eve. Although Eve had sinned, God had promised her prosperity over the evil one. Sarah conceived a son in spite of her old age. (cf. Gn. 18:10-14; 21:1-2). Against all human expectation God chooses those who were considered powerless and weak to show forth his faithfulness to his promises: Hannah, the mother of Samuel; Deborah; Ruth; Judith and Esther; and many other women. (cf. 1 Cor. 1:17; 1 Sam. 1) After a long period of waiting, Mary, who saw herself as the lowliest, was raised as the greatest, the exalted Daughter of Sion, and the new plan of salvation is established.”[7]

Today marks the climax of history. The promised fulfilled in the words of Isaiah, “The Virgin is with Child and shall bear a son, and she will call him Emmanuel”[8]. Emmanuel, God with us, is made into reality! Saint John Paul II wrote, “The Annunciation, therefore, is the revelation of the mystery of the Incarnation at the very beginning of its fulfillment on earth. As a result she is also the favorite daughter of the Father and the temple of the Holy Spirit.”[9]

SACRED ART ACTIVITY – The Angelus and the Annunciation
This activity can end up being a whole lesson. Go to the Annunciation Main Page and download the five-page activity sheet. The activity sheet should be used with the “Annunciation Slide Show” in the PCC Section.

Name of Jesus – Lesson and Discussion

“...you shall name him Jesus.”

“At the annunciation, the angel Gabriel gave him the name Jesus as his proper name, which expresses both his identity and his mission.”[10] “All liturgical prayers conclude with the words ‘through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ The name of Jesus is at the heart of prayer. The Hail Mary reaches it’s highest point in ‘blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.’ The Eastern prayer of the heart, the Jesus Prayer, says, ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ Many Christians, such as St. Joan of Arc, have died with the one word ‘Jesus’ on their lips.”[11]

What does “Jesus” mean? “Jesus means in Hebrew ‘God saves.’”[12]

Video - Nicknames by Brian Regan - POP CULTURE**CONNECTION 1:24**

<http://youtu.be/fQ8BoYEGy1I>

Brian Regan jokingly talks about names. We know names are very important. We never like it when people don't get our names right or if they misspell our name. The same goes with Jesus. His name mattered more than anyone else's because he was the Son of God. He is God who saves us all.

Why name the Son of God, Jesus? The name expresses His identity; He is the Second person of the Holy Trinity, and His mission to save mankind from damnation. "Since God alone can forgive sins, it is God who, in Jesus His eternal Son made man, 'will save His people from their sins.'" [13] "The name 'Jesus' signifies that the very name of God is present in the person of his Son, made man for the universal and definitive redemption from sins. It is the divine name that alone brings salvation, and henceforth all can invoke his name, for Jesus united himself to all men through his Incarnation so, 'there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.'" [14]

Why do we give honor to the name of Jesus? "We have given honor to the name of Jesus, not to the actual name or in its lettering, but because the name of Jesus reminds us of all the blessings we receive through our Holy Redeemer." [15] We learn later through the life of Jesus that at the calling of his name, there is real and meaningful power. In today's Gospel, we learn that his name will be powerful in that His Kingdom will reign forever and ever. Have you ever seen people bow their head when the name of Jesus is said at Mass or Liturgy of the Hours? "The custom of bowing the head at the mention of His Name was formally written into law at the Second Council of Lyons, A.D. 1274, convened by Pope Gregory X: 'Those who assemble in church should extol with an act of special reverence that Name which is above every Name, than which no other under Heaven has been given to people, in which believers must be saved, the Name, that is, of Jesus Christ, Who will save His people from their sins. Each should fulfill in himself that which is written for all, that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow; whenever that glorious Name is recalled, especially during the sacred Mysteries of the Mass, everyone should bow the knees of his heart, which he can do even by a bow of his head.'" [16]

What does "Son of the Most High"? In the Gospel of Luke,

How could Mary remain a virgin even though she was pregnant with Jesus? The Church teaches us through the Gospel accounts of this divine work, of the conception of Jesus, that it "surpasses all human understanding and possibility" [50] It is by God's power that this came to be, and to show "nothing is impossible to God". (Luke 1:37)

Did Mary have any other children? What about when it says Jesus' brothers and sisters? No, Jesus is Mary's only son. Many people see this in the Bible and are confused. "The Church, as always, understood these passages as not referring to other children of the Virgin Mary. In fact, James and Joseph, 'brothers of Jesus' are the sons of another Mary, a disciple of Christ, whom St. Matthew significantly calls 'the other Mary'. They are close relations of Jesus, probably cousins, according to an Old Testament expression." [51]

Why did Mary stay a virgin? Mary had taken a vow of virginity. This vow is broken by the fact that she is married to St. Joseph neither does it have to be broken based on the task asked of her at the Annunciation. Mary's role as the Mother of God is linked with her vow of virginity. One of Mary's titles is the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark was a vessel that contained within it the most sacred items of the Old Testament. Saint Joseph was aware that Mary, his wife, was the new Ark of the Covenant and contained the sacred life of God within her. Mary was not his to touch. She is not for one, as wife is to husband and husband to wife, but rather Mary is for all as the New Eve, the Mother of God and the Mother of the Church. In being ever-virgin but at the same time married, Mary is an example of both the religious life and the married life.

What does "ever-virgin" mean? "The deepening of faith in the virginal motherhood led the Church to confess Mary's real and perpetual virginity even in the act of giving birth to the Son of God made man. In fact, Christ's birth 'did not diminish his mother's virginal integrity but sanctified it.' And so in the liturgy of the Church celebrates Mary as *Aeiparthenos*, the 'Ever-virgin'". [52]

The virginity of Mary is also a symbol of the Church. The Church, "by receiving the word of God in faith becomes herself a mother. By preaching and Baptism she brings forth sons, who are conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of God, to a new and

With all of this being said, the firm teaching of the matter is Mary was a virgin every moment of her life; before, during and after the marriage to St. Joseph, and remained a virgin before, during, and after the Incarnation.

Holy Mary, Ever Virgin Part II – Lesson and Discussion

“How can this be, since I no relations with man?”

“From the first formulations of her faith, the Church has confessed that Jesus was conceived solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, affirming also the corporeal aspect of this event: Jesus was conceived ‘by the Holy Spirit without human seed’.[46] She remained a virgin before, during, and after the conception and birth of Christ. Mary’s virginity is one of fulfilled promise and of faith in God.

Why does Mary virginity even matter? “The Fathers see in the virginal conception the sign that it truly was the Son of God who came in a humanity like our own.[47] In today’s first reading, we read of the prophet Isaiah prophesying: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son.” (Isaiah 7:14)

Was Mary a virgin before conceiving Jesus? Yes. How do we know? In today’s Gospel, Mary says, “How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?” (Luke 1:34) She is saying to the angel I am not engaging in any sexual intercourse, so how can I conceive a child? It also points to her perpetual virginity. She is saying not only has she never, but will never have “relations” with a man.

Is it important that Jesus is born of a Virgin? Yes. Besides the fact that it is a fulfillment of the prophecies, the virgin birth has theological significance in helping us understand the person of Jesus and His two natures, human and divine. “He is naturally Son of the Father as to his divinity and naturally son of his mother as to his humanity...”[48] God makes a new Adam (Jesus) and a new Eve (Mary). When God had created Adam, there was an environment fit for him. Thus, Mary had to be created to fit for Jesus and his environment.[49] You can take the most pure water (Jesus) and place it in a dirty cup and the pure water will become tainted or dirty. Three of Mary’s titles in the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary are, “spiritual vessel, vessel of honor, singular vessel of devotion”. Mary is the pure vessel, the pure cup, into which the pure and sinless Word is made Flesh.

Jesus is identifying with this title. It is also a parallel to St. John the Baptist who is described as “prophet of the Most High.”[17]

Movie - Bilbo/Smaug Scene - "Barrel-rider" - POP CULTURE CONNECTION 1:24

<http://youtu.be/05pDYZOhZLc>

This link gives example of individuals being referred or cited by their titles or names that depict a standing or experience.

Can anyone else be named Jesus? It is okay to name your child Jesus. This cultural tradition is seen mostly in Central and South America. In other countries and nationalities, we see many cultural names used. For example, in Italy men Antonio and Mario are common names, Antonio after St. Anthony and Mario after the Blessed Virgin Mary. Naming a child after a holy figure can help parents shape their child through proper teaching of the Faith. Being named after a Saint can help a child make a connect to a patron Saint and kindle in them a love for and imitation of their patron Saint.

Why is David called the father of Christ? “Mary descended from the house of David, and therefore, David according to nature was the forefather of Christ.”[18] This genealogy can be read in the Gospels of Matthew 1 and Luke 3. Both Mary and Joseph had family ties to the house of David.

Who was Christ’s father? “To answer this properly, we must observe that in Christ there are two natures, the divine and the human. According to His human nature He had indeed a mother, but not father, for Joseph was only His foster-father; according to His divine nature He had no mother, but only a father, the Heavenly Father.”[19]

What is meant by the throne of David? “The kingdom of Christ, of which David’s government was a representation (Psalm 131).”[20] In the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, Mary is called the “Tower of David” because she is in the line of David. She is also called the “Seat of Wisdom”, because Christ the King would sit within her womb. She is the “House of Gold” because the most precious thing, God Himself would make Mary His house. It is good to take a look at the titles of Mary, especially in the Litany and discover what they say about the person and mission of Mary.

Why was it important that the Messiah come from David? In

the Psalms, David writes of this promise, “The Lord swore to David a firm promise from which he will not withdraw: ‘Your own offspring I will set upon your throne; If your sons keep my covenant and the decrees which I shall teach them, Their sons, too, forever shall sit upon your throne.’ For the Lord has chosen Zion; he prefers her for his dwelling.” (Psalm 132) This prophecy is fulfilled in the announcement of Gabriel, “He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his Kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:32) Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s covenant with David. This prophecy comes true and Saint John in the book of Revelation is given a vision of the fulfillment of the prophecy. “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb! And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, ‘Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.’” (Revelation 7:9-12)

We on earth join in this praise at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass when we sing the Gloria, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, and we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father. Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.”[21] We also sing this praise and honor at the Sanctus during the Eucharistic Prayer, “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts, Heaven and earth are full of your glory, Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.”[22]

Mary’s Fiat (and the effects)– Lesson and Discussion

“May it be done to me according to your word.”

from the marital act. Although this choice of total abstinence on the part of a couple is not allowed by the discipline of the Church at this time, there was a time in history that the Church did allow Josephite Marriages. For example, Saint Henry II, the Holy Roman Emperor and his wife had a Josephite Marriage.

The marriage of Joseph and Mary is in a different realm with a different set of circumstances that no other married couple has ever had to face nor every will have to face. The marriage did not seem “weird” to them because of their extreme humility and faith in God, who had blessed them with “the greatest of His works: the Incarnation of the Word.”[45] It was not the marriage of Mary and Joseph that was unusual, but rather the extraordinary task asked of this married couple. In the Divine Praises we say, “Blessed be Saint Joseph, her most chaste spouse.” This praise of Saint Joseph expresses his unity with the Blessed Virgin Mary. Saint Joseph is one with his spouse Mary and shares in the virtue of her chastity.

Was Mary a consecrated virgin? If so, why would Joseph marry her? Though consecrated virgins were rare during the time of Mary and Joseph, the practice did exist. There is a document, The Protoevangelium of James, that was written around 120 A.D., this document is proof that there were virgins consecrated to God and given over to a life of service in the temple. The Protoevangelium of James is not in the canon of the Bible, so therefore it is not considered Sacred Scripture, but it does shed light on a historical fact.

The Protoevangelium states when Mary’s birth was prophesied, her mother, St. Anne, intended to dedicate Mary to service in the Temple. Therefore after Mary’s birth, St. Anne dedicated her daughter to the temple and it was there that Mary was to be raised. St. Anne vowed her daughter Mary to the service of God and a life of perpetual virginity. The rules of ceremonial cleanliness stated that around the age of first menstruation, a girl was to have a guardian or protector. However, according to the customs, the man, if not a family member, could not live under the same roof without being wed. Thus, Joseph wed Mary. Typically a guardian was older than the girl and a widower. This would fall in line with the belief that Joseph was much older, may have had other children before wedding Mary, and died before Jesus reached the age of adulthood. Joseph’s primary role was to regard Mary’s vow of virginity with great respect.

would never hold anything else before or after. It would be sacrilegious to put Kool-Aid or any other drink in a chalice that is set aside and consecrated. “The Virgin’s womb swells, but the door of chastity remains shut.”[42]

Doesn’t scripture say in Matthew 13:55 Jesus had brothers and sisters? The Greek origin of “brother” has a very wide range of meaning. Yes, it could mean brother, but it could also mean uncles, nephews, friends and/or cousins. We also know the names mentioned in this scripture verse were sons of another Mary who was also a disciple of Christ.[43] In Matthew 23:8, Jesus tells all of us to call each other “brothers”. It is also thought that St. Joseph may have been a widower, and may have had other children in a previous marriage. In any case, the Church’s position on this passage is that the “brothers” did not come from the womb of Mary.

Movie – My Brother, My Captain, My King – The Lord of the Rings - POP CULTURE CONNECTION – 1:49

<http://youtu.be/iBSLBI-64fk>

The link is to the scene of Boromir's death, where Boromir refers to Aragorn as his brother. Both lessons have portions about Jesus having brothers and sisters and this clips helps to give an example of when brother doesn't necessarily refer to blood relation.

How could Mary and Joseph be married, but not have sex?

Wouldn’t that make their marriage invalid? For any Sacrament to be valid, two things are necessary: matter and form. In the case of marriage, the matter is the man and the woman, the form is the consent, the vows. A Catholic is bound to consent according the rite of the Catholic Church or there is a lack of form and the marriage is invalid. Mary and Joseph were faithful Jews and were bound to the form given them by the Jewish faith. They were obedient to the laws of their faith. Whether Catholic, Jewish or even pagan, if the consent is given in the proper form, the marriage is valid. A marriage is said to be valid when consent is given in the proper form, a marriage becomes indissoluble when it has been consummated.[44] Thus, Mary and Joseph had a valid marriage throughout their life even though they did not consummate it.

It may seem very odd, that although married Joseph and Mary, would not have consummated the marriage by engaging sexual intercourse. There is what is called a Josephite Marriage. This is a marriage in which two people mutually choose to abstain

Mary’s Fiat, or yes, to the request of God shows her complete humility and obedience to God. “To obey (from the Latin ob-audire, to ‘hear or listen to’) in faith is to submit freely to the word that has been heard, because its truth is guaranteed by God, who is Truth itself. Abraham is the model of such obedience offered us by Sacred Scripture. The Virgin Mary is its most perfect embodiment.”[23] “Mary’s faith can also be compared to that of Abraham, whom St. Paul calls ‘our father in faith’ (cf. Rom. 4:12). In the salvific economy of God’s revelation, Abraham’s faith constitutes the beginning of the Old Covenant; Mary’s faith at the Annunciation inaugurates the New Covenant. Just as Abraham ‘in hope believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations’ (cf. Rom. 4:18), so Mary, at the Annunciation, having professed her virginity (‘How shall this be, since I have no husband?’) believed that through the power of the Most High, by the power of the Holy Spirit, she would become the Mother of God’s Son in accordance with the angel’s revelation: ‘The child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God’ (Lk. 1:35).”[24]

What does Fiat mean? Fiat is a formal authorization or proposition; a decree. It stems from the Latin “let it be done”. This is exactly what Mary said to the angel, “Let it be done unto me according to thy word (Luke 1:38)”. Mary gave authorization to the Father to allow her to become pregnant through the Holy Spirit.

Why did Mary choose these words instead of simply just saying, “Yes, I will do it”? She was saying yes to many things, her vocation, God’s Will, and salvation history. “Mary’s reply fiat is more final than a simple ‘yes’. It is the complete surrender of her will to what God wanted of her at the moment, and for the whole of her life.”[25] The whole heavens, earth, and existence were waiting for her “yes”. It is because of her yes that we have redemption, we have salvation, and we have God made flesh because “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

“We should ask Our Lady for help with our own vocation. We should ask her to help us correspond with God’s calling and that like her, we would “not be afraid”. Let us ask her to enable us to give a prompt and firm reply on each occasion. The only thing that can fill our lives and give them their full meaning is our vocation.”[26]

Why does Mary call herself “the handmaid of the Lord”? By saying this, she is freely giving of herself in accordance to God’s Will without a single sin to restrain her. In saying this she acknowledges that she understands what her role and vocation is in this world, to be a servant to the Lord. She is also showing us how to be lifted up, by allowing ourselves to be humble, lowly and in complete obedience to the Lord.

Why did God require Mary’s yes? Mary had a choice. God would never force himself on her as He never forces Himself on us. God, however, does give us chances to accept His invitations. We have the free will to choose to say yes or no. Mary, being born without original sin, and being as holy as she was, understood the weight of the situation, but was not scared by it. Because of her yes, Venerable Bede says, “that because of her consent God imparted to Mary all, even the greatest graces, greater than all creatures, angels as well as men, ever merited.”[27]

What if Mary said “no”? To say “no” to God would have been a sin and Mary cannot sin. “Some are puzzled by the idea that Mary could not sin. It sounds as though she did not truly have a free will. How are we to understand this? Like Jesus, Mary did have a free will. But a free will is not defined by the ability to choose to do evil. A will is more free when its choices are ‘good’ and ‘better’ or even ‘best,’ than ‘good’ and ‘evil.’”[28] Mary, therefore was using her free will throughout her life, but being “full of Grace,” a special privilege given to her by God, she was so disposed to choose “good”, “better” and “best”. Evil was not an option. It is safe to say that due to the Grace given to a particular individual they are so disposed to choose “good”, “better” and “best” in certain areas and evil is not an option. For example, for a happily marriage grace filled couple, evils such as divorce and adultery are not options. We can compare these moral choices to the physical abilities of an athlete. One could argue that a basketball player is so good, so full of talent that they could not miss a simple layup. The skills of the athlete are perfect and therefore a flaw is not possible.

What happened to Mary after her yes? “Mary, a daughter of Adam, consenting to the divine Word, became the mother of Jesus, the one and only Mediator. Embracing God’s salvific will with a full heart and impeded by no sin, she devoted herself totally as a handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her

What does the Church teach about her virginity? The Catholic Church teaches that Mary’s perpetual virginity is a Dogma of the Catholic Church. Not one Church Father disputes this Dogma. The Catechism states, “...Christ’s birth ‘did not diminish his mother’s virginal integrity but sanctified it.’ And so the liturgy of the Church celebrates Mary as the ‘Ever-virgin.’”[36] The Catechism goes on to say, “Mary ‘remained a virgin in conceiving her Son, a virgin in giving birth to him, a virgin in carrying him, a virgin in nursing him at her breast, always a virgin’ with her whole being she is ‘the handmaid of the Lord’ ”[37]

How could her virginity be preserved before, during and after birth? The Catechism of the Council of Trent states, “This was the work of the Holy Ghost, who, at the conception and birth of the Son, so favored the Virgin Mother as to impart to her fecundity [fertility, fruitfulness], and yet preserve inviolate her perpetual virginity.”[38]

Even the protestant reformers believed in the perpetual virginity. Martin Luther wrote, “It is an article of faith that Mary is Mother of the Lord and still a virgin. ... Christ, we believe, came forth from a womb left perfectly intact.”[39]

Likewise, the Swiss reformer Zwingli, who besides Luther, was one of the most famous of the people who left the Church wrote, “I firmly believe that Mary, according to the words of the gospel as a pure Virgin brought forth for us the Son of God and in childbirth and after childbirth forever remained a pure, intact Virgin.”[40]

Why does it even matter if she was a virgin forever? As Fr. Vincent Serpa so eloquently puts it, “Besides the fact that the Church has taught that Mary was always a virgin from its earliest days before the New Testament was even written, it continues to do so today because of what this fact says about Jesus. From the cross Jesus shared his Mother with us all. But her womb was a tabernacle for him alone. We wouldn’t think of using the tabernacles in our churches to house anything but the Eucharist because it is the sacred body of Christ; so too with Mary’s womb. It’s all about who Jesus is. Mary is special because of how much more he is special. She is all about him!”[41] Mary was consecrated, set aside. Just as a chalice at Mass is set aside, consecrated to hold only the precious Blood of Jesus, so to Mary was set aside to hold Jesus and her womb

way. For in You, O Lord, there is no stain, and in Your mother no stain.”[33]

The word “grace” in the language of the Bible means a special gift, which according to the New Testament has its source precisely in the Trinitarian life of God himself. His gift was completely and entirely whole for Mary. Her gift was even more special than anyone else's. Because of this gift of sublime grace, she far surpasses all other creatures, both in heaven and on earth.

What does “the Lord is with you” mean? St. Augustine wrote, “The angel wished to say: The Lord is with thee more than with me; the Lord is with thee, so that He may be in thy heart, in thy body, may fill thy spirit, may fill thy flesh.”[34]

Why did Gabriel say “blessed are you among women”? This means, “you are the happiest of women, for you of all your sex are chosen to be the Mother of God, at the same time Mother and Maid.”[35] God had a plan for Mary set before all of time. She was seen with favor and was blessed beyond anything and anyone before her.

There is so much contained in this simple yet profound double greeting from one of the highest angels closest to God addressing Mary as full of God's Grace, and blessed more than anyone. Just as we love and acknowledge Mary, Satan hates Mary because it is through Mary that his defeat was ushered. It is important to have a love and devotion to our Lady for many reasons. We want to always pursue good and avoid evil. We see that it is God, the angels and Jesus that honor, love and respect Mary. How much it should move us to love and acknowledge Mary, our most tender Mother.

Hail Mary: Holy Mary, Ever Virgin Part I – Lesson and Discussion

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.”

No practicing Christian at any point can deny the Incarnation. This is when through the power of the Holy Spirit, Mary conceived Jesus in her womb. However, there have been many arguments and speculations to Mary's virginity throughout her life.

Son, under Him and with Him, by the grace of almighty God, serving the mystery of redemption.”[29] She was forever connected with Jesus in every way, including his sufferings, and especially at the foot of the cross. Mary is a model for all mothers, who give birth to their children and have a unique and profound connection with their children. Mother and child are forever connected.

Story of the importance of mothers

There was a poll in Japan where Japanese men were asked, “Who would you save if your mother, your wife, and your child were drowning, and you could only save one of them?” The majority of men said they would save their mothers. In our western culture that seems odd because we would probably save our children. The response from these men who said that they would save their mothers was, “Of course you would mourn any loss, but you can always remarry and have more children, but you only have one mother.”

This story shows us the importance of mothers, and just like Mary, there is only one of her in human history and because of her yes, we have salvation.

MOVIE – “Remember the Titans Locker room scene” POP CULTURE CONNECTION – 0:00 to 1:30

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cshMYPMktIU>

Part of American culture is the “your mama joke”. There are no “your daddy jokes” or “your brother jokes”. Why? Because we all love our mothers and we care if someone talks bad about our mother. The existence of “your mama jokes” points to the reality in American culture that we do in fact love our mothers.

What was the impact of Mary's yes? “The impact of Mary's yes is the single greatest act in human history. Without her yes, there would have been no Incarnation thus no Jesus Christ. Without Christ, life has no meaning. It is only through Christ that we will come to comprehend our inner self: the hidden values of pain and work, the authentic peace and joy that surpass natural feelings and the supernatural reward in our eternal homeland.”[30]

Movie – Back to the Future - POP CULTURE CONNECTION - 2:33

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qEeF9r_8JMA

The movie is based on a young man time traveling back in time

and having to make sure everything went right for his parents to be together or else we would not exist. As he quickly learned, it wasn't as easy as he thought because with every choice there was a ripple effect. Eve made a choice that had negative consequences for us, this is called original sin. Eve's "no" had an effect on humanity. Mary's fiat, her "yes" more than makes up Eve's "no". Humanity

What is the impact of our yes? Mary was the first disciple, the first follower of Christ. We are all called to imitate her example of discipleship. We consecrate ourselves to Mary, so that we can have the same heart of Mary, a heart of a servant, a handmaid, a heart of complete surrender. There are many consecration prayers to Mary, one of the shortest and easiest to memorize is the *Totus Tuus* prayer, prayed by Saint John Paul II, "I belong to you entirely. And all that I possess is yours. I take you into everything that is mine. Give me your heart Mary." Mary gives everything to her Son, Jesus, so anything we give or consecrate to her, is given even more perfectly to her son. Imagine if we were to have the heart of Mary. Imagine the power of our yes if we could belong to Jesus as Mary did, give all that we possess to Jesus, as Mary did, bring Jesus into our whole life, as Mary did.

Double Greeting- Lesson and Discussion

"Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you."

Wherever we are, when we come in contact with another person, we show some sign of greeting. Whether it is a kind "hello" or a smile, we show acknowledgment of their presence. When we see someone we know, we usually will say his or her name or his or her title. For example, we could say "Hi Father!" if we see our local priest, or "hello doctor" if we see our physician. When the Angel Gabriel came in contact with Mary, his greeting and acknowledgment was more profound and special.

Why was Gabriel's greeting special? His greeting is not just of his own accord, but that of God's. He is known as the messenger angel, and Gabriel wished to bring the words of God to Mary. There are countless appearances of angels in both the Old and New Testaments, but in every case the human lowers themselves in posture to the angel, never does an angel lower or bow down to a human. Remember in the hierarchy of creation, angels are higher than humans. The case of Mary is different. She is chosen by God to be the perfection of the human race, free from all sin and full of Grace. In this case, alone the angel bows down

before a human, the Blessed Virgin Mary. The humble Virgin would in time be named by the Church, "Queen of the Angels". It is under this title that Mary was honored in the naming of one of America's largest cities. The original name of Los Angeles, founded in 1781, is "El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Ángeles de Porciúncula" which translates "town of our lady the Queen of Angels of the little Portion").

How did Gabriel greet Mary? "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." (Luke 1:26) This greeting was very unique in many ways. First, it has double greeting. Gabriel greets Mary as "full of grace" and "blessed are you among women". This was not a usual greeting. Also, she was not greeted by her name, Mary. In addition, the angel acknowledges her as blessed among all women. This made Mary troubled.

Why did this greeting trouble Mary? "On account of her humility and modesty. She was so humble that she regarded herself as the least of all creatures, and could not comprehend how such an honor could be hers. She was so modest, and loved virginal purity so much that the presence of the angel and his message troubled her. From this all maidens should see that their loveliest adornments and most necessary virtues are modesty, humility and love of purity, which Mary so valued that she would not lose them even to become the Mother of God".[31]

What does "full of grace" mean? We first have to take a look at the word before these, which is "hail". For an angel to "Hail Mary", this expressed great reverence for the Blessed Virgin. The words: full of grace remind us that God bestowed more graces upon the Blessed Virgin than upon all men and angels together. [32] It also means that she was completely filled with God's Grace, and thus lacking in nothing. Lastly, this was how the angel of God named her. Gabriel did not say, "Hail, Mary!" He said, "Hail, full of grace!" This shows the essence of Mary is full of Grace and without any sin, even original sin. Mary is honored with the title, "Immaculate Conception". Pope Pius IX made the solemn definition of the Immaculate Conception in 1854, a definition, which was confirmed by Our Lady herself when she appeared to Saint Bernadette, four years later and called herself the Immaculate Conception. This belief does not begin in 1854 but traces back to the Church Fathers. "Mary, they said, was most perfect in purity or morals and holiness of life. St. Ephrem (306-373) addressed Christ and Mary with the words, 'You and Your mother are the only ones who are totally beautiful in every