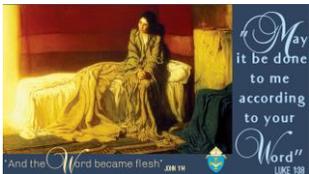




Fun Facts about The Annunciation:

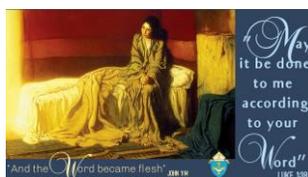
- **Christmas in March?** Well, yes...sort of! We often think about Jesus' birth on Christmas Day as the moment of His glorious arrival here on Earth. As a People of Life living in modern times, we know that human life begins at the moment of conception. So, wouldn't it be great to also recognize the moment of Jesus' conception nine months **before** Christmas? In a way, we do! Our Liturgical calendar places this special day of the Incarnation on March 25 (exactly 9 months before Christmas) under the title of the Solemnity of the Annunciation of Our Lord. Our celebration is a bit more subtle in March because while in the womb, Jesus could only relate to the world through Mary. The majesty of his vulnerable tiny presence was hidden and protected, veiled within Mary's body. His presence would not be announced to the world until the event of his birth. While we wait until Christmas Day to celebrate the public revelation of the Messiah's arrival, we can begin to rejoice on March 25th and more subtly proclaim, "Joy to the World, the Lord has Come!" For we know that upon the very moment of his conception, our Lord was truly present among us and that Heaven and nature began to sing!
- **How March 25th was chosen for the Annunciation of the Lord and Incarnation**—Many historians and theologians state that the date of the Solemnity was set on March 25th only after this date was declared to be the day of Christ's crucifixion. They saw the deep connection between the glory of the Incarnation and Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross. Some ancient Christians even believed that people died on the same date they were conceived. Even though we now know that this is not necessarily true, this gives us an opportunity to reflect on this profound connection between Jesus' hidden, humble moment of Incarnation in the womb and his ultimate sacrifice on the cross, ending in the tomb. Read more about this here: <https://aleteia.org/2020/03/25/why-is-the-annunciation-celebrated-on-march-25/>
- **Did you know that The Annunciation of the Lord ranks among the most significant events in Salvation History?** While all Catholic feast days are special days to remember and celebrate something or someone important to our faith, at the top of the feast-day hierarchy are those special days with the title **Solemnity**, and the Annunciation is one of these days! Solemnities mark the most significant events in the lives of Jesus, Mary and those most closely united to His work of salvation. In some countries, The Annunciation is a Holy Day of Obligation! Even though we are not obligated to attend Mass on the Annunciation here in the US, it is still a very special day! Wouldn't it be wonderful to find ways to observe this day in a special way? Consider having a special meal, making a





special treat, attending mass or adoration, and reading the account of the Annunciation (Luke 1:26-38; <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/032521.cfm>).

- **C'mon everyone, Take a Bow!** Did you know that while reciting the Creed at Mass, we are all supposed to bow? And not just a small bow of the head, but a **profound bow** from the waist? The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (*GIRM* 275) instructs the priest and the whole congregation to do this at every mass when we declare “...**and by the Holy Spirit (he) was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man.**” Are we all offering this profound bow? Maybe you are unaware that this is even a ‘thing’? What can we do to draw more attention to this important gesture at what it means? This moment of the Incarnation is so central to our faith that we are given specific instruction to use this gesture of a profound bow as an outward expression of our belief in this fundamental mystery of Christianity. This moment is fundamental because without the Incarnation, there would be no virgin birth, no teachings of Jesus, no crucifixion, no resurrection, no Eucharist, no salvation. In addition to this profound gesture each time we recite the Creed at Mass throughout the year, the Church also gives us a whole special day, the Solemnity of the Annunciation, March 25th , which is exactly nine months before Christmas Day, to recognize not only that God humbled Himself to become one of us, but also that He chose to hinge His whole plan for the salvation of the world on the consent of the young teenage girl, Mary. As an extra special expression of reverence, on this day and again on Christmas Day, we are instructed to **genuflect** when we declare the Incarnation during the Creed. So, as we move through Lent, let’s be more intentional about how we recognize this moment that Heaven joined to Earth through Mary’s consent and the saving power of God. Let’s follow the instructions of our Church to offer our profound bow as we declare the truth of the Incarnation and proclaim this great Feast!
- **Waiting for your Angel?** Young Mary was greeted by an Angel to announce the news of new life within her womb. But what happens when the hearts of a married couple are completely open to new life and they deeply desire to conceive a child, but no such announcement comes to them? Many couples struggle with fertility issues that may delay or even prevent the conception of a child. Their desire to be parents grows stronger each day and we pray that they follow God’s will in all their decisions as they may pursue medical testing, treatments and loving options like adoption or foster care. These couples should have great hope and confidence that regardless of their ability to conceive biological children, God has mighty plans for new life to come from their marital covenant in His own way and in His time. If you or someone you know is struggling with fertility issues, please know that our Church prays for and supports them.





Learn more about approaches to fertility issues that offer both highly effective, cutting edge medical care as well as care that upholds the dignity of marriage, the woman's body and of all human life, by contacting Peg Hensler, Associate Director of Marriage and Natural Family Planning, phensl@dioceseoftrenton.org

- **The Mother-Baby Bond, Science of Microchimerism and the Mary-Jesus Connection—**
The Annunciation of our Lord to Mary by the message of an angel and Mary's obedient and humble consent paved the way to the miraculous Incarnation as the Word became flesh. Overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, Mary conceived Jesus in her womb and became the Mother of God. For decades, medical science has been showing us more and more clearly the beauty and remarkable complexity of human development from the very moment of conception. Science has also shown us the awe-inspiring collaboration between the bodies of mother and baby throughout pregnancy. Now, new discoveries about the interaction between mom and baby during pregnancy point us to a whole new level of understanding about the mother baby bond that may bring us to a deeper understanding about Mary and Jesus, and about ourselves. As many people know, the placenta is an organ through which the mother and prenatal child interface and communicate. We now know that this organ is created cooperatively, that is by both mom and baby's bodies reaching out in a way toward each other in an incredible 'one of a kind' cooperative venture. In the past, this organ was understood to be a place where nutrients and goods were supplied to the baby and where waste was taken away. But new research is proving that the mother-baby bond goes much, much deeper than this! Medical research has proven that here in the placenta some cells of both the mother and the baby actually cross over and enter the other's body. These cells then migrate to essential tissues and organs of the other and integrate into those tissues and organs. This remarkable phenomenon is called microchimerism. But keep reading because there is more. These cells that enter and integrate into the other's body are not inert, but very active indeed! Scientific research is showing that mother and baby continue to help each other on a cellular level for weeks, years and perhaps even decades with these microchimeric cells. Wow – we are fearfully and wonderfully made! God, who is a community of persons in the Trinity, a relational being, has created us to be relational, too. And not just in a spiritual sense, but this relational connection, one of mutual giving and receiving, is reflected in our physical being, right down to the cellular level. Our call to relationship and community is not only spiritual but is-reflected in our biology! Reflect on this as you ponder the Incarnation of our Lord in Mary's womb. These scientific discoveries would point us to new depths of the role that Mary plays for us in the Church. Think about it...we believe that Jesus was fully human and fully divine and that His humanity informs us that he was conceived as a tiny embryo and followed the





normal path of human development in the womb, redeeming human creation at every moment. So, we could take from this that when Jesus was born and physically left Mary's body, that part of Him stayed with her. His cells, with their own unique and distinct genetic code would remain with Mary. Reflecting on these discoveries may amplify our understanding of Mary's role as the Mother of our Lord, as Theotokos (the God-bearer) and as the true Ark of the New Covenant. God is Good! Want to learn more? Watch here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oiqNEmoVnZ4&feature=youtu.be>

