



How Can You Celebrate the Annunciation of the Lord?

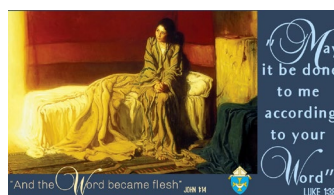
- **What's your 'Annunciation' story?** Imagine Mary's surprise when she was suddenly in the brilliant presence of the Angel Gabriel. Never could she have imagined what God would ask of her. After the Angel told Mary of God's plan for her to conceive our Lord through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Angel awaited her reply. Can you recall a moment when God revealed a special plan he had for you? Reflecting on our personal "annunciations", regardless of how big or small, helps us to understand how God is acting in our lives all the time. As Christians we understand the gravity of Mary's 'yes' to bring Jesus into the world in a radical way. We may not be asked to do things of this magnitude, but God still awaits our reply for both big and little things. He's always asking us if we'll say yes to His plans. How do you recognize that God continually calls **us** to bring Christ out into the world? Are you open to His call? Do you hear Him call your name?
- **Share 'Annunciation' stories with your children** – Share the Annunciation story with your child(ren) and then tell them about how their presence in your womb (or their birth mother's womb) was announced to you! Were you surprised? Scared? Frightened? Joyful? A combination of all of these? Consider sharing any ultrasound or prenatal images that you may have with you child, pointing out God's amazing handiwork, and reflect with your child(ren) how they and Jesus took on the same physical form and appearance at the earliest stages of life! Tell your child that they have been cherished and blessed from the very first moment of life. Your child is God's masterpiece! Consider placing ultrasound photos in a frame or on the refrigerator in recognition of the beauty and dignity of human life at its earliest stages. If your family was formed through the gift of adoption, consider sharing how your child(ren) was/were conceived in your heart and how God announced his plan for adoption or foster care to bless and grow your family. (Read the Annunciation story here: Luke 1:26-38; <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/032521.cfm>)
- **The Annunciation of the Lord: An Oasis during Lent!** – By mid- March, hopefully we're all in the swing of our special Lenten sacrifices and penances. This year our Liturgical Calendar offers us a beautiful mid-week Oasis during the 'desert' of Lent, The Solemnity of the Annunciation of Our Lord on Thursday March 25. The designation of *Solemnity* instructs us to treat this day as a true feast day, and so it is appropriate to pause from our Lenten sacrifices on this day and to celebrate! To show the importance that the Church places on this day, she even lifts the requirement to abstain from eating meat on Lenten Fridays when the Annunciation falls on a Friday, which will occur in 2022. During Lent, we enter a 'desert' to help us to prepare to experience the depth of Jesus'





ultimate sacrifice on the Cross, and to consider how we are called to participate in this sacrifice in order to live fully in the Resurrection. But on this day, we take some time to fully celebrate Mary's 'yes' to the Angel Gabriel and how God gives us the opportunity to open our hearts to freely give our own 'yes' to God's plans for our lives. We pause to celebrate the miracle of the Incarnation of our Lord, for without the Incarnation, there would be no Good Friday or Easter Sunday!

- **Celebrate the Annunciation of Our Lord at Home with a Treat** – Bring the joy of the Annunciation of the Lord into your home this year on March 25! Here are some ideas: Make some waffles! In Sweden, this feast day is known as 'Lady Day' and is often celebrated by making delicious waffles. Why waffles? In Swedish, the word for 'Lady Day' sounds a bit like the words for 'waffle day' and over time there developed a tradition to enjoy waffles for the Lady Day celebration. In England there is a tradition to bake a 'seed cake' for this feast day using either poppy seeds or caraway seeds. This cake reminds us to celebrate the 'seed' in Mary's womb planted by the Holy Spirit. You could also bake an Angel Food cake to remind us of the Angel Gabriel who came to Mary with this great announcement. Check out this link for recipes and more Annunciation inspiration: https://catholiccuisine.blogspot.com/2009/03/lady-day-feasting.html?sm_au=iVV4N783n8jwkLDjccp7vKQ08L82G
- **Celebrating the Annunciation of Our Lord (March 25) at Home with Flowers** – Prayerfully create a simple flower arrangement in your home to symbolize the Annunciation and Incarnation of the Lord. Consider starting with some red carnations as a reminder of God's love for his people expressed through his 'in-carnation'. Add a single white flower (carnation, lily or rose) to symbolize Mary's purity and her 'yes' that stands at the center of the coming of the Savior. Add ivy or similar greens to symbolize the fidelity and eternal love that were reflected in Mary's consent. Finally, add some baby's breath to remind us of the life-giving action of the Holy Spirit who breathes life into each of us. After March 25, as we finish Lent and prepare for Holy Week, let this arrangement be a reminder of Mary's loyal and loving presence at the foot of the cross. For more ideas, visit: <https://www.catholicculture.org/commentary/annunciation-and-lent-celebrating-new-life-through-mary-garden/>
- **Spiritually Adopt a Pregnant Mom and Baby in Crisis** - There are many women who learn that they are pregnant in the midst of very difficult circumstances. We pray that they would all receive the love and support they would need to say 'yes' to this





challenge, as Mary did to the Angel at the Annunciation of Our Lord. For these women, the 'annunciation' of this new life may leave them feeling scared, isolated and unable to see how they could possibly handle bringing this new life into the world. Sadly, many of them turn to abortion feeling that they have no choice. Consider using the Annunciation of our Lord, on March 25, as an inspiration to Spiritually Adopt a pregnant mom and baby over the next nine months. Although you will never see or know those for whom you are praying, be assured that your prayers will be heard and used for good by God. Consider praying for this mom and baby each day, and perhaps mark the 25th of each month on your calendar as a special milestone in the growth of this child. You may even wish to go online to see what is happening in the month to month development of the baby and what the mom may be experiencing. Perhaps you can even donate baby and maternity supplies to a local pregnancy help center or to a local food pantry over these nine months. Come Christmas Day, you will have given nine months of support to moms and babies in need – what a beautiful gift to present to the new born King!

- **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>

