

51// HERE FOLLOWETH THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE ANGEL GABRIEL TO OUR LADY

The feast of this day is called the Annunciation of our Lady, for on this day the angel Gabriel showed to the glorious Virgin Mary the coming of the Blessed Son of God. That is to wit, how he ought to come into the glorious Virgin, and take on her nature and flesh human for to save the world. It was well thing reasonable that the angel should come to the glorious Virgin Mary, for like as Eve by the exhorting of the devil gave her consent to do the sin of inobedience to our perdition, right so by the greeting of the angel Gabriel and by exhorting, the glorious Virgin Mary gave her consenting to his message by obedience, to our salvation. Wherefor like as the first woman was cause of our damnation, so was the blessed Virgin Mary beginning of our redemption.

THE ANNUNCIATION NARRATIVE

When that the angel Gabriel was sent for to show the incarnation of our Saviour Jesu Christ, he found her alone, enclosed in her chamber, like as St. Bernard saith, in which the maidens and virgins ought to abide in their houses, without running abroad out openly, and they ought also to flee the words of men, of which their honour and good renomee might be lessed or hurt. And the angel said to the glorious Virgin Mary: I salute thee, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

There is not found in Scripture in no part such a saluing. And it was brought from heaven unto the glorious Virgin Mary, which was the first woman that ever in the world offered to God first her virginity. And the angel said to her after: Thou shalt be blessed above all other women, for thou shalt escape the malediction that all other women have in childing in sin and in sorrow; and thou shalt be mother of God, and shalt abide a pure virgin and clean.

And our blessed Lady was much abashed of this salutation, and thought in herself the manner thereof. This was a good manner of a virgin that so wisely held her still and spake not, and showing example to virgins, which ought not lightly to speak, ne without advice ne manner to answer.

And when the angel knew that for this salutation she was timorous and abashed, anon he repeaced her, saying: Mary, be nothing afeared, for thou hast found soothly [truly] grace at God, for thou art chosen above all women for to receive his blessed Son and be mother to God, and moyen [intermediary] and advocate for to set peace between God and man, for to destroy the death and bring the life.

O thou that art a virgin, saith St. Ambrose, learn of Mary to be mannered and fearful to all men, learn to be still and to eschew all dissolutions.

Mary was afearred of the salutation of the angel, the which said: “Thou shalt conceive and bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus, and he shall be called the Son of God.” And Mary said to the angel: In what manner may this be that thou sayest? For I have purposed in mine heart that I shall never know man, and yet I never knew none, how then shall I have a child against the course of nature, and may abide a virgin?

Then the angel informed her, and began to say how her virginity should be saved in the conceiving of the Son of God, and answered to her in this manner. The Holy Ghost shall come in to thee, which shall make thee to conceive: the manner how thou shalt conceive thou shalt know better than I shall con say, for that shall be the work of the Holy Ghost, which of thy blood and of thy flesh shall form purely in the body of the child that thou shalt bear, and other work to this conception shalt thou not do. And the virtue of God sovereign shall shadow thee in such wise that thou shalt never feel in thee any burning ne covetise carnal, and shall purge thine heart from all desires temporal, and yet shall the Holy Ghost shadow thee with the mantle corporal, that the blessed Son of God shall be hid in thee and of thee for to cover the right excellent clarte [luminence] of his divinity; so that by this ombre or shadow may be known and seen his dignity; like as Hugh of St. Victor and St. Bernard say.

After, the angel said: And for as much as thou shalt conceive of the Holy Ghost and not of man, the child that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

Yet of this conception which is above nature, the angel said to her this example: Lo! Elizabeth thy cousin, which is barren, hath conceived a child in her age, for there is nothing impossible to God, which is almighty.

Then said the glorious Virgin Mary to the angel the answer for which he was come: Lo! the handmaid of God, he do to me that he hath ordained after thy words.

She hath given to us example to be humble when prosperity of high riches cometh to us, for the first word that she spake or said when she was made mother of God and queen of Heaven, that was that she called herself ancille or handmaid, and not lady. Much people is humble in low estate and but few in high estate, that is to wit in great estates, and therefore is humility more praised in them that be great in estate.

As soon as she said:, “Lo! here the handmaid of God, let it be done to me after thy words.” Thomas *in compendio*: In that same time that she had thus given her assent to the angel, she conceived in her Jesu Christ, which in that same hour was in her, perfect man and perfect God in one person; and as wise as he was in heaven, or when he was thirty years old.

THE DATE

This blessed Annunciation happened the twentyfifth day of the month of March, on which day happened also, as well tofore as after, these things that hereafter be named. On that same day Adam, the first man, was created and fell into original sin by inobedience, and was put out of paradise terrestrial. After, the angel showed the conception of our Lord to the glorious Virgin Mary. Also that same day of the month Cain slew Abel his brother. Also Melchisedech made

offering to God of bread and wine in the presence of Abraham. Also on the same day Abraham offered Isaac his son. That same day St. John Baptist was beheaded, and St. Peter was that day delivered out of prison, and St. James the more, that day beheaded of Herod. And our Lord Jesu Christ was on that day crucified, wherefore that is a day of great reverence.

MIRACLES OF THE ANNUNCIATION

The Knight and the Fleur-de-lis

Of the salutation that the angel brought to the glorious Virgin, we read an example of a noble knight which for to amend his life gave and rendered himself into an abbey of Citeaux, and, forasmuch as he was no clerk, there was assigned to him a master for to teach him, and to be with the brethren clerks, but he could nothing learn in long time that he was there save these two words: *Ave Maria*, which words he had so sore imprinted in his heart that alway he had them in his mouth wheresoever he was. At last he died and was buried in the churchyard of the brethren. It happed after, that upon the burials grew a right fair fleur-de-lis, and in every flower was written in letters of gold: *Ave Maria*, of which miracle all the brethren were amarvelled, and they did open the sepulchre, and found that the root of this fleur-de-lis came out of the mouth of the said knight, and anon they understood that our Lord would have him honoured for the great devotion that he had to say these words, *Ave Maria*.

The Knight Who Robbed People

Another knight there was that had a fair place beside the highway where much people passed, whom he robbed as much as he might, and so he used his life. But he had a good custom, for every day he saluted the glorious Virgin Mary, in saying: *Ave Maria*; and for no labour he left not to greet our Lady, as said is.

It happed that an holy man passed by his house, whom he robbed and despoiled, but that holy man prayed them that robbed him that they would bring him to their master for he had to speak with him in his house of a secret thing for his profit. And when the robbers heard that they led him tofore the knight their lord; and anon the holy man prayed him that he would do come all his meiny [retainers] tofore him. And when his meiny by the commandment of the knight were assembled the holy man said: Yet be they not all here; there is one yet to come.

Then one of them aperceived that the chamberlain of the lord was not come; and anon the knight made him to come. And when the holy man saw him come anon he said: I conjure thee by the virtue of Jesu Christ our Lord that thou say to us who thou art, and for what cause thou art come hither.

Anon the chamberlain answered: Alas, now must I say and knowledge myself, I am no man but am a devil which am in the form of a man and have taken it fourteen years, by which space I have dwelled with this knight, for my master hath sent me hither to the end that I should take heed night and day that if this knight ceased to say the salutation, *Ave Maria*, for then I should strangle him with mine own hand and bring him to hell because of the evil life that he hath led and leadeth. But because he saith every day this salutation, *Ave Maria*, I might not have

him, and therefore I abode here so long, for there passeth him no day but that he salueth our Lady.

When the knight heard this he was much afeard, and fell down to the feet of this holy man and demanded pardon of his sins. After this the holy man said to the devil: I command thee in the name of our Lord that thou depart hence, and go into another place where thou mayst grieve ne annoy no man.

Then let us pray to the glorious Virgin Mary that she keep us from the devil, and that we may by her come to the glory of heaven, to the which bring us the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen.

The [iconography of the Annunciation](#) is available at the [Christian iconography website](#).

For other saints, see the [index to this Golden Legend website](#).

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