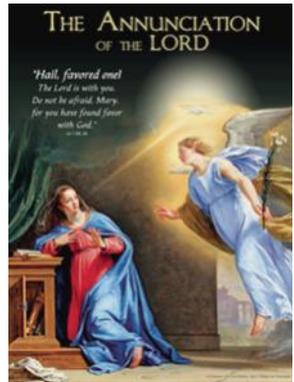


Did you know . . .

The Feast of the Annunciation

Tomorrow we celebrate the Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord, one of the principal feasts of the Christian Church. This feast celebrates the angel Gabriel's appearance to the Virgin Mary (Lk 1:32-38), telling her that she had been chosen to be the Mother of Our Lord, and Mary's fiat, her willing acceptance of God's plan.



This was originally a feast of our Lord, but is now celebrated as a Marian feast, dating back to around the 5th century. The date was set by the 7th century to be March 25, 9 months before Christmas. The Annunciation, therefore, always falls on March 25, Lady Day, (the traditional name in some English speaking countries), unless it falls on a Sunday of Lent, during Holy Week or during the octave of Easter. The Church considers Masses for the Sundays of Lent, any time during Holy Week and any time from Easter through the Sunday after Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday) so important that they cannot be replaced by any other feast. So if March 25 falls on a Sunday in Lent (before Palm Sunday), it is transferred to the following Monday. If it falls on Palm Sunday (as it did this year) or any day in Holy Week, it is transferred to the Monday after the Sunday after Easter. Hence the Annunciation this year is celebrated on April 9.

Mary asks a question of Gabriel on how this can be...that she will conceive without knowing man...but it is not one of skepticism as was that of Zechariah. He asked for proof that Elizabeth would bear a son; Mary asks for clarification, that of faith seeking understanding, rather than a lack of faith.

Mary's fiat is momentous as she will become the Mother of the Son of God, and because she is willing to suffer for seemingly being unfaithful to Joseph, damaging her reputation and her relationship with Joseph. Yet she still placed herself completely at the service of God's will. Pope Benedict XVI writes (Jesus of Nazareth 3: The Infancy Narrative, ch. 2) quoting from an Advent homily by St. Bernard of Clairvaux, "This is the crucial moment when, from her lips, from her heart, the answer comes: 'Let it be to me according to your word.' It is the moment of free, humble yet magnanimous obedience in which the loftiest choice of human freedom is made."

Judy Pearson