

# Monday, January 11

Goals for today:

1. The Conception of John the Baptist
2. The Conception of Jesus
3. Mary's Immaculate Conception
4. Mary's Perpetual Virginity
5. The response of St. Joseph (if we get there)

For tomorrow:  
Luke 2:22-40

# The Conception of St. John the Baptist

1. His parents are *Zechariah* and *Elizabeth*
2. They are elderly and childless
3. Remember that childlessness was seen as a sign of God's disfavor. (Who in the OT was in a similar situation?)

Once when he was serving as priest in his division's turn before God, according to the practice of the priestly service, he was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord to burn incense. Then, when the whole assembly of the people was praying outside at the hour of the incense offering, the angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right of the altar of incense. Zechariah was troubled by what he saw, and fear came upon him.

But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall name him John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He will drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will be filled with the holy Spirit even from his mother's womb, and he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of fathers toward children and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, to prepare a people fit for the Lord."

Then Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years."

And the angel said to him in reply, "I am Gabriel, who stand before God. I was sent to speak to you and to announce to you this good news. But now you will be speechless and unable to talk until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled at their proper time."

**And now it's time for ...**

# **QUESTIONS ON THE READING!**

The name of today's  
contestant will be  
drawn now....

1. Tell me in general what happened.
2. What was the name of the angel?
3. What was Mary's first response to the angel?
4. What is Mary's second response to the angel?

Mary's *FIAT*

χαίρε, κεχαριτωμένη

Ave, gratia plena

Hail, “favored one”?—not “full of grace”?

When the Fathers and writers of the Church meditated on the fact that the most Blessed Virgin was, in the name and by order of God himself, proclaimed full of grace by the Angel Gabriel when he announced her most sublime dignity of Mother of God, they thought that this singular and solemn salutation, never heard before, showed that the Mother of God is the seat of all divine graces and is adorned with all gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Bl. Pope Pius IX

We declare, pronounce, and define that the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful.

Bl. Pope Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*, December 8, 1854

# DO NOT confuse the Immaculate Conception with the Annunciation!

*Immaculate Conception*: Mary is conceived without Original Sin

*Annunciation*: Gabriel announces to Mary that God has chosen her to be mother of the Messiah, and she accepts. (The implication is clear in St. Luke that she conceives immediately at that point.)

# The Perpetual Virginity of Mary

The Church teaches that Mary remained a virgin her entire life: “Before, during, and after the birth of Jesus.”

Then said Mary unto the  
angel, How shall this be,  
seeing I know not a man?

Mary is engaged to Joseph. Why should this be a problem? Gabriel did not say at first that the Messiah would have no human father. Many ancient writers think that Mary had already promised God that she would remain a virgin. She believes He accepted that promise, and doesn't understand how she is to have a child.

# The “Brothers” of Jesus

The Bible does talk about the “brothers” of Jesus, but this isn’t a problem. Hebrew doesn’t have all the distinct relationship words we do, and so “brother” could mean any close male relative. Even though Greek has such words, the translators of the LXX didn’t use them, and the writers of the NT did as they did.

# St. Jerome vs. Helvidius

A man named Helvidius wrote a pamphlet denying the perpetual virginity of Mary some time around A.D. 380. St. Jerome's friends asked him to write a reply, and he thought it was so obviously true that it was a waste of his time to write anything. But his friends persisted, and he gave in. Here's how his answer starts:

“I was requested by certain of the brethren not long ago to reply to a pamphlet written by one Helvidius. I have deferred doing so, not because it is a difficult matter to maintain the truth and refute an ignorant boor who has scarce known the first glimmer of learning, but because I was afraid my reply might make him appear worth defeating.”

Tuesday, January 12

Goals for today:

1. St. Joseph's puzzlement
2. The Visitation
3. Mary as Ark of the Covenant
4. The birth of John the Baptist
5. The birth of Jesus (if we get there)

For tomorrow:

Luke 2:22-40

# St. Joseph's Dilemma

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

# Three theories

1. St. Joseph thinks that Mary was pregnant by another man; generally rejected by ancient writers. And it doesn't make sense: If St. Joseph was a righteous man, he would have wanted to see the law carried out publicly and would not have hidden what had happened to Mary.
2. St. Joseph knows her well enough to know what *didn't* happen, but has no idea what did, and is afraid.
3. St. Joseph knows that God has become involved and is afraid because of the holiness involved (remember what happened to the guy who touched the Ark by accident)?

I vote for #2 or #3

# Joseph learns the truth

But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel” (which means, God with us).

When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

# The Visitation

Mary is not concerned over her own pregnancy; instead, she goes quickly to help Elizabeth.

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity for ever."

And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her home.

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Hannah also prayed and said, "My heart exults in the LORD; my strength is exalted in the LORD. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy like the LORD, there is none besides thee; there is no rock like our God. Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble gird on strength. Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger. The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn. The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low, he also exalts. He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and on them he has set the world.

2Sam 6: David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. And David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the LORD of hosts who sits enthroned on the cherubim. And they carried the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart with the ark of God; and Ahio went before the ark. And David and all the house of Israel were making merry before the LORD with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.

And when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there because he put forth his hand to the ark; and he died there beside the ark of God. And David was angry because the LORD had broken forth upon Uzzah; and that place is called Perez-uzzah, to this day. And David was afraid of the LORD that day; and he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?" So David was not willing to take the ark of the LORD into the city of David; but David took it aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. And the ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months; and the LORD blessed Obed-edom and all his household.

And it was told King David, "The LORD has blessed the household of Obed-edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God." So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David with rejoicing; and when those who bore the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling. And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the horn.

- Mary arose and went to the hill country of Judea. Ein Kerem (where Elizabeth lived) and Abu Ghosh (where the ark resided) are only a short walk apart. Mary and the ark were both on a journey to the same hill country of Judea.

- When David saw the ark he rejoiced and said, "How can the ark of the Lord come to me?" Elizabeth uses almost the same words: "Why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

- When David approached the ark he shouted out and danced and leapt in front of the ark. He was wearing an ephod, the clothing of a priest. When Mary, the Ark of the New Covenant, approached Elizabeth, John the Baptist leapt in his mother's womb — and John was from the priestly line of Aaron. Both leapt and danced in the presence of the ark.
  - The Ark of the Old Covenant remained in the house of Obed-edom for three months, and Mary remained in the house of Elizabeth for three months. The place that housed the ark for three months was blessed, and in the short paragraph in Luke, Elizabeth uses the word blessed three times. Her home was certainly blessed by the presence of the ark and the Lord within.
    - When the Old Testament ark arrived — as when Mary arrived — they were both greeted with shouts of joy.