



**The Annunciation of our Most Holy Lady,
the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary
Which the Holy Church Celebrates on March 25.**

Six months after John the Forerunner's conception, the Archangel Gabriel was sent by God to Nazareth, a town of Galilee, unto Mary the Virgin, who had come forth from the Temple a mature maiden (see Nov. 21). According to the tradition handed down by the Fathers, she had been betrothed to Joseph four months. On coming to Joseph's house, the Archangel declared, "Rejoice, thou Full of Grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." After some consideration, some turmoil of soul, and fear because of this greeting, the Virgin, when she had finally obtained full assurance concerning God's unsearchable condescension and the ineffable dispensation that was to take place through her, and believing that all things are possible to the Most High, answered in humility, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord be it unto me according to thy word." And at this, the Holy Spirit came upon her, and the power of the Most High overshadowed her all-blameless womb, and the Son and Word of God, Who existed before the ages, was conceived past speech and understanding, and became flesh in her immaculate body (Luke 1:26-38).

Bearing in her womb the Uncontainable One, the blessed Virgin went with haste from Nazareth to the hill country of Judea, where Zacharias had his dwelling; for she desired to find Elizabeth her kinswoman and rejoice together with her, because, as she had learned from the Archangel, Elizabeth had conceived in her old age. Furthermore, she wished to tell her of the great things

the Mighty One had been well-pleased to bring to pass in her, and she greeted Elizabeth and drew nigh to her. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, she felt her six-month-old babe leap for joy in her womb for joy. By leaping thus even before he had beheld the light of life, her babe, Saint John the Baptist, prophesied of the dawning of the spiritual Sun. Immediately, the aged Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and recognized her as the Mother of her Lord, and with a great voice blessed her and the fruit that she held within herself. The Virgin also, moved by a supernatural rejoicing in the spirit, glorified her God and Saviour saying: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour," and the rest, as the divine Luke hath recorded (1:39-55).

Rest from labour. Fish allowed.

Dismissal Hymn. Fourth Tone

TODAY is the fountainhead of our salvation and the manifestation of the mystery which was from eternity. The Son of God becometh the Virgin's Son, and Gabriel announceth the good tidings of grace, for this cause, let us cry to the Mother of God with him: Rejoice, thou who art full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

*Kontakion. Plagal of Fourth Tone
The Original Melody*

WHEN the bodiless one learned the secret command, in haste he came and stood before Joseph's dwelling, and spake unto the Maiden who knew not wedlock: The One who hath bowed the Heavens by his descent is held and contained unchanging wholly in thee. Seeing Him receiving the form of a servant in thy womb, I stand in awe and cry to thee: Rejoice, thou Bride unwedded.

*Another Kontakion. Same Tone
The Original Melody*

TO thee, the Champion Leader, we thy flock dedicate * a feast of victory and of thanksgiving * as ones rescued out of suff'rings, O Theotokos; * but as thou art one with might which is invincible, * from all dangers that can be do thou deliver us, * that we may cry to thee, * Rejoice, thou Bride unwedded.

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VESPERS

We begin Great Vespers without prostrations and readings from the Psalter.

For Lord, I have cried, we allow for six verses and chant the following Stichera, repeating them all:

Plagal of the Second Tone. Having laid up all their hope

COMING to reveal to thee * that counsel which was determined * from before
eternity, * Gabriel saluted thee, crying out: Rejoice, * holy earth never sown;
* bush unburnt, rejoice thou; * O rejoice, thou ladder raised on high, which Jacob
saw of old; *rejoice, thou depth unfathomed and unexplored; * rejoice, thou
bridge which leadest up * to the highest Heaven; rejoice, divine * vessel of the
Manna; * rejoice, complete destruction of the curse; * recall of Adam to God,
rejoice: * With thee is the Lord most high. *(Twice)*

TO the Chief of Heaven's hosts, * the undefiled Maiden answered: * Thou dost
seem to be a man; * how is it that thou dost speak * things beyond man's
strength? * For thou hast said to me * that God shall be with me * and shall make
His dwelling in my womb. * Tell me, I pray of thee, how shall I become then the
spacious land * and the dwelling-place of holiness * for Him that doth ride on the
Cherubim? * Do thou not beguile me * deceitfully; for pleasure I know not, *
neither in wedlock have I been yoked. * How then shall I bear a child? *(Twice)*

WHERESOEVER God doth will, * there nature's order is conquered, * spake
he that is bodiless; * and that which exceedeth man * then is brought to
pass. * O thou all-holy Maid, * purer than all telling, * now believe these truthful
words of mine. * She cried aloud to him: * Be it unto me as thou hast said, * and I
shall bear the Fleshless One, * Who shall borrow flesh from me, so that He, * Who
alone is able, * might lead man back up to His first estate * and ancient dignity
once again * by His union with our race. *(Twice)*

Glory; both now. *Same tone. By John the Monk*

GABRIEL the Archangel was sent from heaven to announce to the Virgin the
glad tidings of her conceiving; and coming to Nazareth, he pondered in
himself, amazed at the wonder. How shall He Who dwellest in the highest,
Whom none can comprehend, be born of a Virgin? Shall He whose throne is
Heaven, and Whose footstool is the earth, be held in the womb of a woman? He,
upon Whom the six-winged Seraphim and the many-eyed Cherubim cannot
gaze, hath been pleased with a single word to become flesh of her. It is the word
of God Who is present. Why then do I stand here and not say to the Maiden:
Rejoice, O full of Grace; the Lord is with thee? Rejoice, O pure Virgin; rejoice.
Thou bride unwedded. Rejoice, O Mother of Life; blessed is the fruit of thy
womb.



† THE ELEOUSA MOTHER OF GOD

Courtesy Holy Nativity Convent Boston Massachusetts

REJOICE THOU BRIDE UNWEDDED.