

ANNUNCIATION RETREAT/PROJECT

Developed by Mindy Spelius
Assumption Greek Orthodox Church, Scottsdale, AZ, 2010

Objectives:

1. The students will be able to explain the Annunciation icon with or without the box of cards.
2. The students will be able to tell the story of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary, with or without the use of the box of cards.
3. The students will be able to relate what they learned with their parents using the box of cards.



Materials

1. 1 wedding favor box for each child (100 for \$14.99 from Michaels craft store)
2. 1 Annunciation Icon to be glued to the top of the box for each student; about 1.77" x 2.44" in size [provided]
3. 1 set of 9 cards printed on cardstock for each student; 8 for discussion; 1 to be glued to the front of the box. Card stock color is your choice & can be printed on a home computer
4. Black marker – to write names on boxes
5. Glue sticks
6. Foamie pieces and/or stickers to decorate the boxes
7. Scissors [opt.]
8. Bibles [opt.]
9. A mounted icon of the Annunciation to examine for detail

Before the Retreat / Class

1. Photocopy the large handouts of the line drawing of the Annunciation and text appropriate to your students' grade.
2. Print the sets of 9 cards on card stock; color is your choice. This can be done on a home printer.
3. There are two icons on the Card page and 10 icons on 1 page for your convenience. Print the icons on a color printer or photocopy them on a color copier.
4. To save time, cut the cards and icons with a paper cutter.
5. Place each set in a box.
6. Review the three-page description of the icon. Follow the highlighted sections to develop the main points for the age-appropriate discussion with the students. Make a point to use the cards as key points.

Directions

1. Distribute 1 box containing 1 set of cards and 1 icon to each student.
2. Place glue sticks, markers and other supplies in the center of each work area.
3. Distribute the age-appropriate handout to your students.
4. Ask the students to write their names on the handout and bottom of the box with black markers.
5. Direct the students to glue the icon on the lid of the box and "Annunciation March 25" card on the front as depicted in the illustration above.
6. Invite the students to decorate the front and sides of the boxes with foamie pieces.
7. Once the students complete decorating their boxes, or after a period of time, begin the lesson.



The Annunciation of the Virgin Mary / Theotokos

A young girl named Mary was busy spinning yarn with a special tool in her hand. She looked up and was very surprised to see the Archangel Gabriel. The angel told her that God wanted her to be the Mother of Jesus because she was such a good and holy person. She told the angel that she only wanted to do what God asked of her. We celebrate the day the Angel Gabriel came to see Mary on March 25th every year.

The Annunciation of the Virgin Mary / Theotokos

March 25



Think, for a moment, about the icons we see at the front of an Orthodox Church. As we face the altar, we see the icon of the Archangel. Michael at the right, and the icon of the Archangel Gabriel at the left.

The Archangel Michael was sent by God to direct Adam and Eve out of Paradise. God sent the Archangel Gabriel to the Blessed Virgin Mary to announce that she would give Birth to the Christ Child, Who would save the world.

This second event, known as the Annunciation (announcement) took place 2000 years ago and is celebrated on March 25. The Angel found Mary and told her she was going to have a child. As you would expect, she was startled at first and asked many questions.

“Do not be afraid,” said the Angel Gabriel, “the Lord is with you because God has chosen you among all the women in the world.”

Mary could have said, “No or given a whole list of reasons why she did not want to accept God’s invitation. Instead, she said, “Let it be according to the will of God.” She allowed herself to be an instrument of God. She did not change nor did she become a robot or a puppet. She let the Holy Spirit come within her and her life. She let God bless her and guide her. She let the baby Jesus be born of her.

The Feast Day of the Annunciation is a very important holiday for all Christians, because the Blessed Virgin Mary said, “Yes,” which gave all humanity a chance to be saved, to return to Paradise with God.

By her example we can say “Yes” to God, too!

Secondary Level

<http://www.orthodoxonline.com/lessons/annunciation.pdf>

Edited by Phyllis Meshel Onest, M.Div., Director, Office of Religious Education, Metropolis of Pittsburgh, 2011.

<p>Archangel Gabriel came to tell Mary that she would have a baby.</p>	<p>Mary wanted to do whatever God asked her to do.</p>	<p>God wanted Mary to be the Mother of Jesus because she was a good and holy person.</p>
<p>Mary's acceptance of God's will is shown in this icon by her upraised and open hand.</p>	<p>Mary is holding the scarlet yarn to be used to make the veil for the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem Temple.</p>	<p>The semi-circle at the top of the icon represents Heaven. The three rays represent the Holy Spirit coming down on Mary..</p>
<p>ANNUNCIATION March 25</p>	<p>Annunciation is the day of "Good News."</p>	<p>Will I say, "yes" when God asks me?</p>



<p>Archangel Gabriel came to tell Mary that she would have a baby.</p>	<p>Mary wanted to do whatever God asked her to do.</p>	<p>God wanted Mary to be the Mother of Jesus because she was a good and holy person.</p>
<p>Mary's acceptance of God's will is shown in this icon by her upraised and open hand.</p>	<p>Mary is holding the scarlet yarn to be used to make the veil for the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem Temple.</p>	<p>The semi-circle at the top of the icon represents Heaven. The three rays represent the Holy Spirit coming down on Mary.</p>
<p>ANNUNCIATION March 25</p>	<p>Annunciation is the day of "Good News."</p>	<p>Will I say, "yes" when God asks me?</p>



FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR MOST HOLY LADY, THE THEOTOKOS AND EVER VIRGIN MARY



INTRODUCTION

The Feast of the Annunciation of Our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary is celebrated on March 25 each year. The Feast commemorates the announcement by the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would become incarnate and enter into this world through her womb.

BIBLICAL STORY

The biblical story of the Feast of the Annunciation is found in the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke (1:26-39). The Archangel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary, who was living in Nazareth, and said to her, "Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you." Mary was perplexed and wondered what kind of greeting this was.

The angel told her not to be afraid, for she had found favor with God. He said, "You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High;

and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Mary responded to the angel by asking how this could happen since she had no husband. The angel told her that the Holy Spirit and the power of God would come upon her, and that the child to be born of her would be called holy, the "Son of God."

The angel then proceeded to tell the Virgin Mary that her cousin Elizabeth had conceived a son in her old age (John the Baptist), and affirmed that with God nothing is impossible. In faith and obedience to the will of God, Mary replied to the angel, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be according to your word." Upon her response, the angel departed.

It is on the Feast of the Annunciation, that Orthodox Christians commemorate both the divine initiative of God, whereby He took on flesh from the Virgin for our salvation, and the human response, whereby Mary freely accepted the vocation offered to her. He elected to become man, and He desired to do this with the willing agreement of her whom He chose as His mother. Mary could have refused, for she was not a passive instrument, but an active participant with a free and positive part to play in God's plan for our salvation. Thus, when on this and other feasts the Orthodox Church honors the Theotokos, the Mother of God, it is not just because God chose her but also because she herself chose to follow His will.

ICON OF THE FEAST

The icon of the Annunciation is one that presents the joy of the announcement of the coming of Christ. It is an icon of bright colors, depicting the Archangel Gabriel (1), who has descended from heaven, and the Virgin Mary (2), who has been chosen to be the Mother of God.



1. The Archangel Gabriel presents the good news of the coming of Christ to Mary (detail).



2. The Virgin Mary, who was chosen to be the Mother of God (detail).

The Archangel is shown with his feet spread apart as if he is running to share the good news with Mary (3). In his left hand is a staff, the symbol of a messenger. His right hand is extended toward Mary as he delivers the message and announces the blessing bestowed upon her by God (4).



3. The position of Archangel Gabriel's feet suggests that he is running to share the news with Mary (detail).



4. The Archangel's right hand is extended towards Mary as he announces the blessing bestowed upon her [Mary] by God (detail).

On the right side of the icon the Virgin sits on an elevated seat, indicating that as the Mother of God she is "greater in honor than the cherubim, and beyond compare more glorious than the seraphim, who without corruption gave birth to God the Word." In her left hand she holds a spindle of scarlet yarn (5) which depicts the task she was assigned of preparing the purple and scarlet material to be used in making the veil for the Temple in Jerusalem. Her right hand is raised in a gesture of acceptance in response to Gabriel's message (6). Her posture expresses willing cooperation with God's plan of salvation. The three stars on her garments (7) represent that she was a Virgin before, during, and after the birth of Christ.



5. Her left hand holds a spindle of crimson yarn depicting the task that she had of making the veil of the Temple in Jerusalem (detail).



6. Mary's right hand is raised in acceptance of Gabriel's message (detail).



7. The three stars on the garments of the Theotokos represent that she was a Virgin before, during, and after the birth of Christ (detail).



8. A depiction of the divine realm and the Holy Spirit coming upon the Theotokos (detail).

At the top of the icon the segment of a circle represents the divine realm (8), from which three rays emerge. This demonstrates the action of the Holy Spirit coming upon her.

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CELEBRATION OF THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE THEOTOKOS

The Feast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos is celebrated with the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, which is conducted on the morning of the Feast and preceded by a Matins (Orthros) service. A Great Vespers is conducted on the evening before the day of the Feast. Scripture readings for the Feast are the following: At Vespers: **Genesis 28:10-17; Ezekiel 43:27—44:4; Proverbs 9:1-11. At the Matins: Luke 1:39-49, 56.** At the Divine Liturgy: **Hebrews 2:11-18; Luke 1:24-38.**

The Feast of the Annunciation in the Greek Orthodox Church also marks a day of national celebration for the people of Greece and those around the world of Greek descent. It was on March 25, 1821 when Greece officially declared its independence and began the revolution that would eventually give the nation its freedom after 400 years of rule by the Ottomans. In addition to the services for the Feast, festivities and parades are held and official proclamations are offered throughout the world in recognition of Greek Independence Day.

HYMNS OF THE FEAST

Apolytikion (Fourth Tone)

Today marks the crowning of our salvation and the revelation of the mystery before all ages. For the Son of God becomes the son of the Virgin, and Gabriel proclaims the grace. Wherefore, we also cry out with him, "Hail, O full of grace, the Lord is with you."

Kontakion (Plagal of the Fourth Tone)

To you, Theotokos, invincible Defender, having been delivered from peril, I, your city, dedicate the victory festival as a thank offering. In your irresistible might, keep me safe from all trials, that I may call out to you: "Hail, unwedded bride!"

RESOURCES

- ✘ ***Festival Icons for the Christian Year*** by John Baggley (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000), pp. 21-30.
- ✘ ***The Festal Menaion***. Translated by Mother Mary (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 1969) pp. 60-61.
- ✘ ***The Incarnate God: The Feasts of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary***, Catherine Aslanoff, editor and Paul Meyendorff, translator (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995).
- ✘ ***The Life of the Virgin Mary, The Theotokos***, written and compiled by Holy Apostles Convent (Buena Vista, CO: 1989).
- ✘ ***The Synaxarion: The Lives of the Saints of the Orthodox Church, Vol. 4***, compiled by Hieromonk Makarios of Simonos Petra and translated from the French by Mother Maria Rule and Mother Joanna Burton (Chalkidike, Greece: Holy Convent of the Annunciation of Our Lady, 2003) pp. 227-232.
- ✘ *Source of this article* - http://www.goarch.org/special/listen_learn_share/annunciation/