

Thou hast heard, O purest one, things of which even the choir of inspired men was never deemed worthy. Moses, and David, and Isaiah, and Daniel, and all the prophets, prophesied of Him; but the manner they knew not. Yet thou alone, O purest virgin, art now made the recipient of things of which all these were kept in ignorance, and thou dost learn the origin of them. For where the Holy Spirit is, there are all things readily ordered. Where divine grace is present, all things are found possible with God. The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall; overshadow thee. Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." And if He is the Son of God, then is He also God, of one form with the Father, and co-eternal; in Him the Father possesses all manifestation; He is His

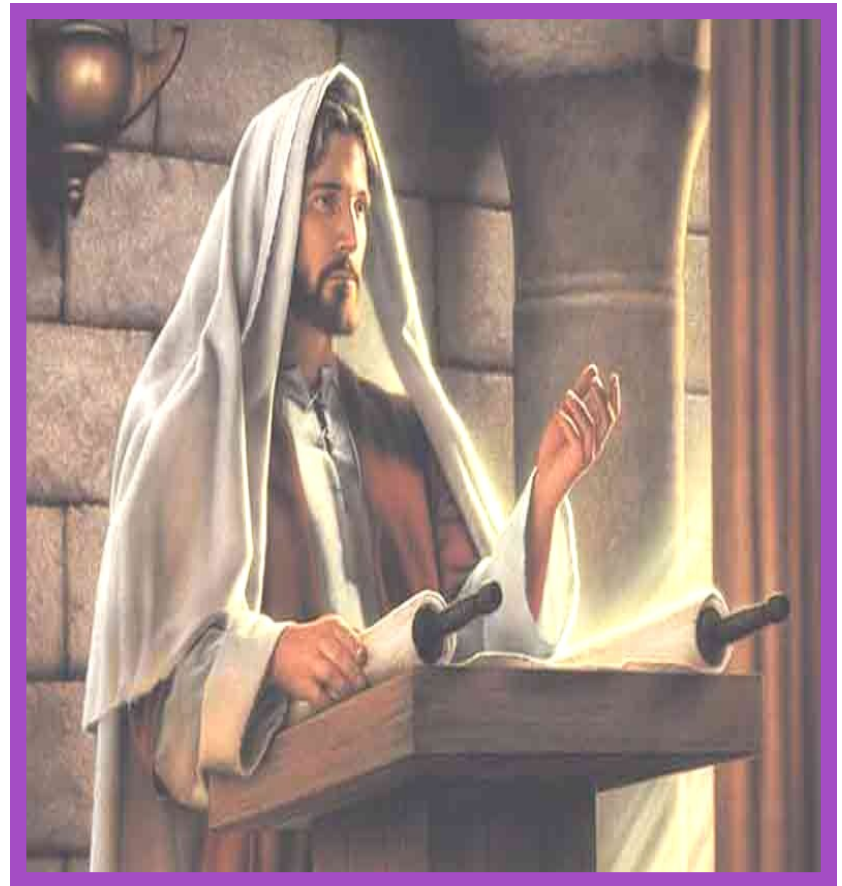


image in the person, and through His reflection the Father's glory shines forth. And as from the ever-flowing fountain the streams proceed, so also from this ever-flowing and ever-living fountain does the light of the world proceed, the perennial and the true, namely Christ our God. For it is of this that the prophets have preached: "The streams of the river make glad the city of God." And not one city only, but all cities; for even as it makes glad one city, so does it also the whole world. Appropriately,

therefore, did the angel say to Mary the holy virgin first of all, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee; "inasmuch as with her was laid up the full treasure of grace. For of all generations she alone has risen as a virgin pure in body and in spirit; and she alone bears Him who bears all things on His word.



**SERMON ON
THE ANNUNCIATION
FROM THE FATHER'S OF THE CHURCH
143-1**



JESUS, OUR FIRST PREACHER!

MARCH 25TH

Homily on the Annunciation to the Holy Virgin Mary

By St. Gregory Thaumaturgus (a.k.a. Gregory of Neocaesarea),
A.D. 213 - ca. 270 (excerpt)

Today are strains of praise sung joyfully by the choir of angels, and the light of the advent of Christ shines brightly upon the faithful. Today is the glad springtime to us, and Christ the Sun of righteousness has beamed with clear light around us, and has illumined the minds of the faithful. Today is Adam made anew, and moves in the choir of angels, having winged his way to heaven. Today is the whole circle of the earth filled with joy, since the sojourn of the Holy Spirit has been realized to men. Today the grace of God and the hope of the unseen shine through all wonders transcending imagination, and make the mystery that was kept hid from eternity plainly discernible to us. Today are woven the chaplets of never-fading virtue. Today, God, willing to crown the sacred heads of those whose pleasure is to hearken to Him, and who delight in His festivals, invites the lovers of unswerving faith as His called and His heirs; and the heavenly kingdom is urgent to summon those who mind celestial things to join the divine service of the incorporeal choirs. Today is fulfilled the word of David, "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad. The fields shall be joyful, and all the trees of the wood before the Lord, because He cometh." David thus made mention of the trees; and the Lord's forerunner also spoke of them as trees "that should bring forth fruits meet for repentance," or rather for the coming of the Lord. But our Lord Jesus Christ promises perpetual gladness to all those who believe on Him. For He says, "I will see you, and ye shall rejoice; and your joy no man taketh from you. Today is the illustrious and ineffable mystery of Christians, who have willingly set their hope like a seal upon Christ, plainly declared to us.

Today did Gabriel, who stands by God, come to the pure virgin, bearing to her the glad annunciation, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured! And she cast in her mind what manner of salutation this might be. And the angel immediately proceeded to say, The Lord is with thee: fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever: and of His kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" Shall I still remain a virgin? is the honour of virginity not then lost by me? And while she was yet in perplexity as to these

the angels. things, the angel placed shortly before her the summary of his whole message, and said to the pure virgin, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." For what it is, that also shall it be called by all means.

Meekly, then, did grace make election of the pure Mary alone out of all generations. For she proved herself prudent truly in all things; neither has any woman been born like her in all generations. She was not like the prime-val virgin Eve, who, keeping holiday alone in paradise, with thoughtless mind, unguardedly hearkened to the word of the serpent, the author of all evil, and thus became depraved in the thoughts of her mind; and through her that deceiver, discharging his poison and refusing death with it, brought it into the whole world; and in virtue of this has arisen all the trouble of the saints.

But in the holy Virgin alone is the fall of that (first mother) repaired. Yet was not this holy one competent to receive the gift until she had first learned who it was that sent it, and what the gift was, and who it was that conveyed it. While the holy one pondered these things in perplexity with herself, she says to the angel, "Whence hast thou brought to us the blessing in such wise? Out of what treasure-stores is the pearl of the word despatched to us? Whence has the gift acquired its purpose toward us? From heaven art thou come, yet thou walkest upon earth! Thou dost exhibit the form of man, and (yet) thou art glorious with dazzling light.

These things the holy one considered with herself, and the archangel solved the difficulty expressed in such reasonings by saying to her: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee. Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And fear not, Mary; for I am not come to overpower thee with fear, but to repel the subject of fear. Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God. Question not grace by the standard of nature. For grace does not endure to pass under the laws of nature. Thou knowest, O Mary, things kept hid from the patriarchs and prophets. Thou hast learned, O virgin, things which were kept concealed till now from the angels.