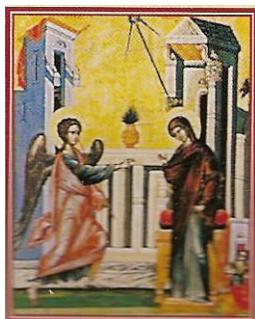


March 25

G. ☩ *Annunciation of Our All-holy [Panagia] Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary*



The feast of Annunciation is dedicated to the commemoration and glorification of the event written about in the Gospel (Lk. 1:26-38).

Ancient Christians had various names for this feast: "Conception of Christ", "Annunciation about Christ", "Beginning of Redemption", and "Annunciation of the Angel to Mary". And only in 7th century did it acquire the name for eternity the "Annunciation of the All-holy Theotokos".

This feast was established by the ancient church. St. Athanasius (4th century) in his sermon on this feast names it first and specially honored in the order of feasts, as he recalls the beginning of the economy of the salvation of the people.

In the 5th and 6th centuries because of heresies, which humiliate the person of the Mother of God and deform the teaching of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, presented separately, prompted the Church to magnify the celebration of the feast. For this time the divine services for the feast were enriched with many hymns in which the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God and majesty of the Mother of God is opened.

In the 8th century, St. John of Damascus and Theophanes, Metropolitan of Nicaea, composed a Canon for this feast, which is sung up to now. According to ancient Christian writers, in establishing the custom to celebrate the feast, the tradition of the Church places it on March 25, because the incarnation was accomplished on this day. Besides this day stands in natural agreement with December 25¹.

Troparion, tone 4

**Today is the crown of our salvation,
And the revelation of our eternal mystery:
The Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin,
And Gabriel announces the glad tidings of grace:
Therefore let us cry out with him to the Theotokos:
Rejoice, O Lady full of grace, the Lord is with you.**

Kontakion, tone 8

**O victorious leader of triumphant hosts,
For delivered from evil, we, your servants,
Sing our grateful thanks to you, O Theotokos:
But as you possess invincible might,
Set us free from every calamity, that we may hymn you:
Rejoice, O unwedded Bride.**

Magnification

The voice of the archangel sings to you, O Pure One: rejoice, O Lady full of grace, the Lord with you.

Note the chapter in the Ustav [Typikon] and Menaion: If Annunciation falls: 1) on Saturday of the 3rd or 4th week; 2) on the 3rd Sunday; 3) on Monday of the 4th, 5th or 6th week; 4) on Wednesday of the 3rd week; 5) on the 4th or 5th Sunday, 6) on Wednesday of the 5th week; 7) on Thursday of the 5th week; 8) on Saturday of the 5th week; 9) on Saturday of the 6th week; 10) on the 6th Sunday; 11) on Great Monday; 12) on Great Tuesday; 13) on Great Wednesday; 14) on Great Thursday; 15) on Great Friday; 16) on Great Saturday; 17) on Sunday of Pascha; 18) on Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday of Bright Week.

The feast of Annunciation will occur during the time interval between Thursday of the 3rd week of Great Lent and Wednesday of Bright Week. In the features of divine services Annunciation comes closer to the feasts of the Nativity of Christ and Theophany, and will never be left in doubt on what day of the church year it would fall.

All-night Vigil on Annunciation begins either with Great Vespers (on Mondays, Sundays of the Forty Day Fast and on all days of the Bright Week), or with Great Compline (on the other days of the Forty Day Fast, and also on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of Passion Week), or even Matins (on Great Friday and Saturday).

The festal Gospel is always read in Matins on Annunciation, except on Palm Sunday when the Gospel for this Sunday with the Polyeleon and Magnification is read. "More honorable than the Cherubim" after the 8th Ode of the Canon is sung only on the 3rd, 4th and 5th Sundays of Great Lent. On all the other days up to Palm Sunday, the refrains and the Irmos of the feast are sung, but with Palm Sunday sing the refrains and Irmos of the Triodion. The Great Doxology is sung on Annunciation on Saturday and Sunday of Great Lent; on the other days it is read (then at the end of Matins the Litany "Have mercy on us, O God" is intoned; "Lord, have Mercy" 40 times is not read); in the Paschal week it is not necessary at all. The great prostrations in Matins on Annunciation are only done on those days on which they are prescribed during Lent (there are only 3 prostrations with the prayer "O Lord and Master of my Life", then the Litany "Have mercy on us, O God").

The Hours are sung either daily (on Saturdays and Sundays of the Forty Day Fast, on Thursday and Saturday of Holy Week; on this Saturday the 3rd, 6th and 9th Hours are done together and the dismissal comes after them), or lenten (on the other days of the Forty Day Fast and Passion Week), and in the lenten hours in the days of the Forty Day Fast prostrations are done only in the 1st Hour and at the end of the Typical Psalms (prostrations in 3rd, 6th

and 9th Hours are not necessary), but during Passion Week they are done in each hour. During the Veneration of the Cross week on Monday, Wednesday (at the 1st Hour) and Friday (after the dismissal of the Hours) the veneration of the Cross is done. During Passion Week the gospels are read in the Hours. On Annunciation on Great Friday the same Hours prescribed for Great Friday, and during the Paschal week the Paschal Hours are read. When the Lenten Hours are served on Annunciation, but also on Thursday, Friday and Saturday of Passion Week, Vespers is served before the Liturgy on these days. On Saturdays and Sundays of the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th weeks of the Forty Day Fast and during Paschal week, Vespers is served after the Liturgy. The Liturgy of John Chrysostom or Basil the Great, when the latter is specified according to the Ustav [Typikon], is always served in full on whatever day the feast of Annunciation falls. On the day of the Annunciation after the Liturgy, in the evening, either Vespers or a Little Compline is appointed (if on this day the Vespers was not served before the liturgy), or only the Compline (if on this day the Vespers was served before the liturgy). If great prostrations are specified on March 26, then these prostrations are done both at Vespers and Compline on March 25, and the "Alleluia" is sung with the Hymns to the Trinity in the tone of the week.

In particular: 1) when Annunciation day falls on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of the Forty Day Fast, but also on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of Passion Week, then on the eve of the feast Vespers follows directly after the reading of Hours (3rd, 6th, and 9th) and the Typika. At Vespers at "Lord, I Call" to the stichera of the Triodion add the stichera of the Feast, besides this in this Vespers there is an entrance, the paramoegas of the day (Triodion) and of the feast (three) are read. On Wednesday and Friday after the paramoegas follows "Let my Prayer arise" with three great prostrations, and the rest of the Presanctified Liturgy, but on the other days after the paramoegas "Vouchsafe, O Lord", "the Aposticha" of the Triodion, "Glory, both now and ever" of the feast, after "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace" the Troparion of the feast. In the further order of Vespers served as daily is ended with the Litany of Fervent Supplication and the Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian with three great prostrations.

All-night vigil begins with Great Compline followed by Matins. In the beginning of Great Compline there is a censuring and singing of "God is with us", after the first set of the "Trisagion Prayers" is the Troparion of the Feast, after the second set of the "Trisagion Prayers" is the Kontakion of the Feast, after the reading: "Glory to God in the highest", the Lita follows with the singing of the stichera of the feast; further there is a festal order of service, ending with the Canon, except for this feature that in Matins three Kathismas are read, and after the 1st Kathisma there is no Litany and the Sessional Hymns are read from the Triodion; but also adds to the Canon of the Feast the Three Ode Canon of the Triodion (troparia of Three Ode Canon are read with the refrain: "Glory to Thee, Our God") and for the 9th ode of the canon

"My Soul Magnifies the Lord" is not sung (as this happens for all twelve major feasts), refrains of the feast are sung; the Exapostilarion, the stichera of the Praises are festal. The end of a Matins keeps the daily character: the "Doxology" is read, after the Litany of Supplication are prescribed the stichera for the Aposticha from the Triodion (but after "both now" the stichera of the feast); Matins ends with the Litany of Fervent Supplication and the Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian with three great prostrations.

In the first hour the Kathisma is prescribed, but at its end is the Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian. On the day of the feast in the 3rd, 6th and 9th Hours the reading of the ordinary Kathisma are prescribed, in 6th Hour the usual paramoedas (from the Triodion) are read, after the 9th Hour the Typika is read, ending with the Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian, then comes the Prayer "All Holy Trinity" and the dismissal of the Hours, as before the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts.

The liturgy (St. John Chrysostom) begins with Vespers. At Vespers the Kathisma is not read, to the stichera of the Triodion are added the stichera of the feast, after the entrance (with the Gospel) two paramoedas of the day and two of the feasts are read, then follow: the Little Litany, the intonement "Of the Trisagion", and then follows the usual Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.

2) If Annunciation falls on one of the sabbatical days of Great Lent then the All-night Vigil will also consist of Great Compline and Matins and the Great Compline is done the same as told above (see 1). But in Matins "there is a service for the entire feast, the Four Ode Canon (sung on Thursday) is below, other than that the sabbatical is sung, but everything for the feast, we sing (but not read) and the "Great Doxology". Likewise the Liturgy (St. John Chrysostom) also is all festal. The liturgy is anticipated by the fulfillment of the usual three psalms of the 3rd and 6th Hours and the "Typika" is not specified.

3) If Annunciation falls on Monday of whatever week of Great Lent (not excluding Monday of Passion Week), then on the eve of the feast the Little Vespers with the Little Compline is fulfilled. The All-night Vigil consists of Great Vespers and Matins.

Great Vespers begins with the singing of the introductory psalm and the First Antiphon "Blessed is the Man". At "Lord, I Call, are sung the stichera of the Triodion and of the feast, the entrance, Prokeimenon of the day and three paramoedas of the feast, the Litany: "Let us say", "Vouchsafe, O Lord ", the Litany: "Let us complete our evening prayer to the Lord", the usual exclamations and then the Lita. In general, Vespers has a completely festal character these days.

Matins and Liturgy are done with the above mentioned features (see 1).

4) When Annunciation falls on one of the Sundays of Great Lent, the Divine Services represent the usual connection of the Sunday service with that of the Theotokos by the general rule (see Ustav [Typikon] September 8), with this feature, that the stichera for the Sunday of the Veneration of the Cross will not be dropped, the Troparion and the Canon of the Cross and the stichera in Matins after the Great Doxology will be for the veneration of the Cross.

5) When Annunciation falls on one of the last days of Passion Week, the divine services change according to the service on this or that day of Passion Week. So, if Annunciation falls on Great Friday, the Vespers is done on Great Thursday in connection with the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, the Little Compline is read (with the Three Ode Canon of the Triodion).

All-night vigil consists of one of the Matins divine services with the reading of 12 Gospels of the passion of the Lord and with the singing of the special 15 antiphons on Great Friday, during which at "God is the Lord" is sung the Troparion of the feast twice, "Glory, both now and ever" and of the day ("When the glorious disciples"), after the reading of the 7th "Passion" Gospel the antiphon of degrees in the 4th tone is sung and the Gospel of the feast and the 8th Passion Gospel are read. The Canon of the feast combined with the Three-Ode Canon is sung. The Great Doxology is read and the ending of Matins is daily, as on Great Friday. On the feast itself the Royal Hours are read. Then the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom preceded by Vespers is sung. (The carrying out of the shroud is discussed below in the Triodion).

If Annunciation falls on Great Saturday, on the eve on Great Friday Great Vespers is served separately from Matins with the reading of the Epistle and Gospel, according to the Ustav [Typikon] for Great Friday. On the same day of the feast the All-night Vigil, as well as on Great Friday, the Matins divine service begins, during which at "God is the Lord" the Troparion of day "The noble Joseph" is sung and at "both now and ever" the Troparion of the feast, then follows the singing of the "undefiled" [the 17th Kathisma] (divided into 3 stases) with a censing, ending with the singing of the troparia "the Angelic Council". After this the Polyeleon of the feast "Praise the name of the Lord" and the Magnification, "The voice of the Archangel", is sung, the Antiphon of Degrees in tone 4, the reading of the Gospel of the feast and the rest of the festal Matins. The Canon of day is added to the Canon; the Great Doxology is sung. After the Great Doxology a Cross procession with the shroud is made, after its completion the reading of the Paramoia, the Epistle and the Gospel, according to the Ustav [Typikon] for Great Saturday. The Liturgy of St. Basil the Great is preceded by Vespers.

6) When Annunciation falls on the feast of Pascha, then a) on the first day of Pascha the Annunciation Canon is added to the paschal Canon, after

the 6th Ode of the Canon the Gospel of the feast is read, the stichera of Annunciation are added to the Resurrection stichera on the Praises; in the Liturgy the Epistle and Gospel of Pascha are read first, then those for Annunciation; the rest of the divine services keeps the paschal character of the divine service.

b) On the second or third day of Pascha, on the eve Little Vespers is served and then the All-night Vigil, consisting of Great Vespers and Matins with features of the paschal divine service: the introductory psalm is replaced with the singing of "Christ is Risen!" with the verses "Let God arise", to the stichera for the Aposticha are added the stichera of Pascha with the refrain "Let God arise", after their ending the Troparion of Annunciation is sung three times, blessing of the loaves, then in Matins, instead of the Six Psalms, after the blessing of the priest, "Christ is Risen!" with the verses "Let God arise". After the Great Litany the Polyeleon of the feast, the antiphon of degrees in the 4th tone, the reading of the Gospel and the rest is festal Matins up to the canon; the canon of Pascha is added to the canon of the feast; instead of the Great Doxology after the stichera on the praises of the Resurrection and of the feast are the stichera of Pascha with the verses "Let God arise"; Matins with the two Litanies and the paschal dismissal. The Hours are paschal.

Paramoea: 1) Gen. 28:10-17; 2) Ezek. 43:27; 44:1-4; 3) Pr. 9:1-11. **These paramoeas in Great Lent are read on the eve in the evening, on the feast in the Liturgy following are appointed:** 1) Ex. 3:1-8; 2) Pr. 8:22-30. **Matins Gospel:** Lk. 1:39-49, 56; sel. 4. **Epistle:** Heb. 2:11-18; sel. 306. **Gospel:** Lk. 1:24-38; sel. 3.

Icon of the Annunciation of the Mother of God in the granary in Moscow

It appeared written on plaster on a wall of the Kremlin tower prison. In 1731 Empress Anna Ivanovna ordered a stone church be built around the icon so that the external side of the tower with the icon was inside the church. This church is whole up this time.

¹There is a touching custom, especially in Moscow, to set birds in cages free on Annunciation as the day of announcing freedom to the entire world.

Simple people honor this feast as one of the greater ones. They consider that working on this day even though it is light work counts as a heavy sin. The commoner is convinced that even a bird does not weave itself a nest on this day. They also believe that on Annunciation, as on other great feasts, the sun plays during its rising.

Among thieves there exists this rough superstition: whoever will manage to steal on the eve of Annunciation, will be successful in thievery for the entire year.

There is a custom to distribute unsanctified and uncut Prosphora to the people on the feast of Annunciation. This custom has half Pagan and half Christian origins and from here on is connected to various kinds of superstitions our simple people hold. That is why it should not be supported where it exists, but should be suppressed (Rukovodstvo dlia Seljskikh Pastirej (Manual for Village Pastors) 1886, 14).

In view of the existence in some villages of the Samara diocese of the superstitious custom of the distribution of Prosphora accompanied by various improprieties to the people by parish Prosphora bakers on the day of the feast of Annunciation, ostensibly "for blessing the planting of grain", the Samara Spiritual Consistory in agreement with the resolution of the local bishop, more strictly forbid Prosphora bakers to prepare Prosphora on the feast of Annunciation for the observance of the senseless and superstitious custom in people. But it requires the

priests to explain to their parishioners that crops of grain depend on the blessing of God whom it is necessary to petition by fervent prayer during a good truly Christian life. For nonfulfillment of this order, the Prosphora baker may be removed from their duty as not in line with the Christian church moral standards among Orthodox people. (Samarskiia Eparkhialniia Vedomosti (Samara Diocesan News) 1894, 11).

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2nd ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900), pp, 0119-122.
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