

The Annunciation and Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Annunciation March 25/April 7

Nativity of our Lord December 25/January 7

Youth Group Session Three – Session Leader

Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry – Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA

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Objective: To provide a good understanding of:

- ✓ The Annunciation and the importance of Mary's acceptance of God's will
- ✓ The Nativity of our Lord and the new role Mary assumed as the Mother of God

Items in **blue** are notes for the Session Leader. For younger children read for them – you may want to paraphrase and ask questions often to keep their interest. For older children, allow them to read aloud or to themselves.

This curriculum was written to be used in conjunction with the book *The Illustrated Life of the Theotokos for Children* by Georgia and Helen Hronas. This book is published by Light and Life and can be obtained from them at www.light-n-life.com or by calling 952-925-3888.

Related books for Session Leader's Reference:

The Illustrated Life of the Theotokos for Children by Georgia and Helen Hronas – Light and Life Publishing.
The Incarnate God: The Feasts of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary editor Catherine Aslanoff translated by Paul Meyendorff. St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 2002.

Pre-session Preparation

Make needed copies of Lesson Three Handouts.

Purchase needed number of books for *The Illustrated Life of the Theotokos for Children*

Craft – Mosaic Icon of the Theotokos and Child

This craft will be worked on at each session. It is labor intensive but is extremely beautiful and will stay with the youth for their entire lives. See the attached explanation for the craft.

Session

Begin the session in prayer

“What would you do for a million dollars.” Ask participants if they would do certain things that might be difficult, scary, gross, or otherwise unpleasant. (i.e. scrub the McDonalds bathroom with a toothbrush, sing a Ukrainian song at the half time show of the Super Bowl, eat fish flavored jell-o.) Then ask if they would do those things for million dollars. Explain that Mary did something that no one back then would have done for a million dollars. It might have been a little scary or embarrassing, but she did it anyway because it was what God wanted her to do.

The most important part of God's plan for Mary is about to take place. Let us begin by opening our textbooks and reading pages 10 –14.

Remember that we talked about Mary's willingness to accept whatever God asked of her.

What did the Archangel Gabriel tell Mary? [That she would have a son named Jesus who would rule over the house of David.](#)

Mary had no husband so how was she going to have a baby? [The Holy Spirit would come to her.](#)

What was Mary's answer to God's question? [God's work will be done.](#)

Here is where we witness Mary's great obedience to God. What kind of questions do you think you might ask Archangel Gabriel if he came to you and asked you to do the same thing? [What about my family, how can it happen, do I have to?](#) Did Mary ask any questions? No. She knew that God would only ask her to do something that was good for her and for the rest of the world. She also knew that anything that God asked her to do was more important than any worries she had about having a baby. Mary accepted God's will to carry his son. She was probably scared but was comforted by Archangel Gabriel and she knew that God's plan was greater than anything she could understand.

The angel also told Mary something about her cousin. What was that? [Her cousin Elizabeth was also going to have a son.](#)

Elizabeth's son is St. John the Baptist or Forerunner. He prepared the people for the coming of Jesus the Messiah by teaching them about Christ and baptizing them, this is why he is called the forerunner.

Mary went to visit her cousin after she heard this wonderful news. After reading about Mary's talk with Archangel Gabriel and her visit to Elizabeth, did anything you read sound familiar to you? [Hail Mary! Full of Grace the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and Blessed is the fruit of your womb. For you have born the salvation of our souls.](#)

The words spoken by the angel and Elizabeth are one of the prayers we often say for Mary.

Mary also spoke some very important words – that she would be called Blessed by all generations. Her words are true and we give Mary the praise and honor due to the Mother and Birth-giver of God.

Now read pages 16-19. When Mary returned home to her betrothed husband Joseph, he discovered that she was going to have a child. He was very confused and did not know what to do. He was worried that people might treat him and Mary badly. He also worried about caring for and protecting this new baby.

Who helped Joseph decide to stay with Mary? [An angel came to him and explained that the child was from God.](#)

Jesus was not born in his parent's village. What special time was it and where did they have to travel to? [The people were to be counted and taxed. You had to return to your family town for this to happen. Joseph and Mary had to travel to Bethlehem, the hometown of Joseph's family.](#)

Mary was very pregnant at this time and almost ready to have the baby. When they arrived in Bethlehem what happened? [There were too many people in the town and they couldn't find anywhere to stay.](#)

An innkeeper felt bad for Mary and Joseph so he let them rest in the cave where he kept his animals. This is where our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was born. In a simple cave, surrounded by animals. There wasn't even a doctor or anyone to help Mary and Joseph!

Mary became the Mother of God, the Birth-giver of God, the Theotokos. This very humble birth helps us to understand what kind of king Jesus was going to be. Remember that he was born in a plain cave surrounded by the animals when he came here on Earth, not a fancy palace surrounded by wealthy people. Christ was not

meant to be a king of money and power but a king to lead every man and woman to salvation. A heavenly king!

We read that the angels and shepherds also came to welcome the new king. In time, three wise kings came to offer gifts to the new king. They gave him special gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. These were considered very valuable during this time in history. Mary witnessed all of these things and remembered them. They helped her to understand who her son was and what He would become.

The icon of the Nativity on page 15 reveals many things to us. One thing in particular stands out. Does Mary look at her new baby? Don't you think a new mother would be looking lovingly at her child? Remember that we talked about how icons can show us more than just what happened at a certain place. We know that Mary loved Jesus and cared for Him, but there is a special message in this icon. In this icon we see that Mary is looking away from Jesus and looks sad. This shows us that she knows what will happen to Christ in the future - His suffering, death and resurrection.

At this time you may do any of the following:

- Have a short discussion time about the material or for teenagers an open Q & A.
- Review and discuss the icon of the Annunciation and/or the Nativity of Christ
- Present a copy of the Annunciation and Nativity Icons to the Participants
- Give time for a snack and short break for the participants to play games
- Move right into the next activity
- End the session in prayer to the Theotokos, "Hail Mary Full of Grace". This prayer should be used for the remainder of the lessons.
- Add their worksheet to their worksheet binder

Have the participants use the remaining time to work on their mosaic icons.