

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

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

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Session

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?

Mary had no husband so how was she going to have a baby?

What was Mary's answer to God's question?

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?

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?

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?

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?

Jesus was not born in his parent's village. What special time was it and where did they have to travel to?

Mary was very pregnant at this time and almost ready to have the baby. When they arrived in Bethlehem what happened?

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.