

Weekly Gospel Readings The 2nd Sunday of Kiahk

Birth of Jesus Foretold

On this Sunday (12/17/23), the second Sunday of Kiahk, the Church reads about the annunciation of the birth of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ to our Mother and Virgin Saint Mary from [Luke 1:26-38](#).

In [verse 28](#) the Gospel reveals, “And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!”. St Gregory of Nyssa draws a connection between this greeting and The Fall in [Genesis 3](#) saying, “Far different then to the news formerly addressed to the woman [Eve], is the announcement now made to the Virgin. In the former, the cause of sin was punished by the pains of childbirth; In the latter, through gladness, sorrow is driven away. Hence the angel not mistakenly proclaims joy to the Virgin, saying, "Hail"”.



The next [verse](#) reads, “But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be”. A comparison with Zechariah's reaction highlights that while Zechariah was troubled and fearful in the presence of the angel, St Mary was only troubled at the Angel's message. This suggests that St Mary was no stranger to the appearances of angelic or spiritual beings, revealing to us that St Mary lived a life in perfect love with God. On the other hand, Zechariah was fearful of the angel. This reminds us of St Anthony the Great's saying, “I no longer fear God, but I love him; for perfect love casts out fear.” This might seem contradictory to [Psalm 19:9](#) which says, “the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever...”. However, the fear spoken of in 1 John is the fear of God due to the consequences of our sins, while the fear that endures spoken of in Psalm 19 is a fear of being forsaken by Him.

Archangel Gabriel reassures St Mary, urging her not to be afraid, and reveals that she will give birth to the Savior of the world. St Mary, perplexed, responds, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” ([Luke 1:34](#)). Archangel Gabriel says, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.” ([Luke 1:35](#)). The term "overshadow" is also found in Exodus 40 in the Coptic Bible and can be translated as 'settle' ([Exodus 40:35](#)). The Holy Spirit made His settlement, His habitation, His dwelling in the Virgin. However, the Holy Spirit can also dwell in

us. In John 1:14 we read, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among [in] us”, and in 2 Corinthians 6:16, “For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among [in] them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” May we, like the Virgin Mary, purify ourselves for the Holy Spirit, inviting Him to settle, dwell, and make His habitation within us.

The passage concludes with St Mary's acceptance of Archangel Gabriel's message, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38). St Irenaeus of Lyon emphasizes that it was St Mary's obedience to God's commandments that led to God choosing her, stating, “The knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary.”

May we strive to live in perfect love and communion with God, making our hearts a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit, and emulating the obedience of St Mary.

Sources:

- Against Heresies, St Irenaeus of Lyon
- Bible, English Standard Version
- Catena Bible, Commentary on Luke
- Coptic Bible
- Patristic Bible Commentary on Luke, Fr Tadros Yacob Malaty
- The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, Benedicta Ward



*: Through this article, the name “Zechariah” appears as is the spelling of the name in the English Standard Version. Other translations might use “Zacharias,” or “Zachariah.” But all these names refer to the same person (the husband of St. Elizabeth).