March 25

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The Annunciation of the Lord

Today the Eastern and Western churches celebrate the Annunciation of the Lord, which the Byzantine tradition calls the feast of the Evangelization of the Mother of God.
This solemnity is based on the famous biblical story of the angel's announcement to Mary of Nazareth. In today's reading, Luke presents Mary as a personification of the poor, humiliated remnant of Israel, whose only hope is the coming of the Messiah. By listening to and welcoming the word of God brought to her by the angel, Mary conceives in her womb the Son of God, the Word of the Most High made flesh, by the power of the Holy Spirit.
In the patristic tradition Mary came to be called the New Eve, the mother of all believers, because the Lord makes his dwelling in all believers through their faith.
The feast of the Annunciation can be traced back to early sixth-century Constantinople. It gradually spread from the Byzantine capital to the entire East and West. Today's date, which is tied to the celebration of Christmas on December 25, gives the feast a strongly christological character. This is reinforced by the fact that the Western church had an ancient tradition of commemorating Christ's incarnation, passion and resurrection on March 25.
In the early Mozarabic liturgy, the Annunciation was celebrated on December 18. This choice kept the feast's date close to that of Christmas and also allowed for a more solemn celebration. The Syriac liturgy still dedicates the last two Sundays before Christmas to the Lucan pericope of the announcement to Mary. In the Ambrosian liturgy, this pericope is read on the Sunday in Advent called 'Incarnation Sunday.'

PRAYER

Lord our God,
today we relive the angel's announcement
to the Virgin Mary.
By welcoming your word,
Mary allowed the Word to become flesh.
Make us open and willing to do your will, as she was,
and help us welcome the salvation you grant us
in Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord.

BIBLICAL READINGS
Heb 10:4-10 (vigil); Isa 7:10-14; Eph 1:3-12; Lk 1:26-38

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:
Annunciation of our Lord to the blessed virgin Mary

WESTERN CATHOLICS:
Annunciation of the Lord (Roman and Ambrosian calendars)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (16 baramhat/maggabit):
Michael I (d. 767), 46th patriarch of Alexandria (Coptic Orthodox Church)
Justus (2nd cent.), patriarch of Alexandria (Coptic Catholic Church)

LUTHERANS:
Annunciation of the Lord's birth to Mary; *Ernest the Pious* (d. 1675), duke of Saxony

MARONITES:
Annunciation of the Virgin

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
Annunciation of the most holy Mother of God and ever-virgin Mary
Basil of Poiana Marului (d. 1767), hesycast (Romanian Church)

WEST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:
Annunciation of the Lord to the Mother of God

EAST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:
Annunciation of the Lord to the Mother of God (Chaldean and Malabar Church)
OLD CATHOLICS:
Annunciation to Mary