09/04/2026

The feast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos at the Patriarchate



On Great Tuesday, 25 March / 7 April 2026, the feast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos was celebrated by the Patriarchate.

On this feast, the whole Church, and especially the Church of Jerusalem, commemorates that the Archangel Gabriel, descending from the heavenly vaults, announced to the maiden of Nazareth, the Virgin Mary, the conception by the Holy Spirit of the Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

This event is proclaimed by our Church in the Apolytikion of the feast of the Annunciation:

“Today is the beginning of our salvation, and the manifestation of the mystery from all eternity: the Son of God becometh the Son of the Virgin, and Gabriel proclaimeth the good tidings of grace. Wherefore we also, together with him, cry aloud unto the Theotokos: Rejoice, thou who art full of grace, the Lord is with thee.”

This event was celebrated at the Metropolitan Church of the Annunciation, situated in the centre of the city of Nazareth, presided over by His Beatitude our Father and

Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos, along with their Eminences, the Metropolitans Kyriakos of Nazareth, Hesychios of Capitolias, the Archbishops Damaskinos of Yaffo, Aristarchos of Constantina, Philoumenos of Pella, together also with the Patriarchal Commissioner His Eminence Metropolitan Makarios of Acre–Ptolemais, the Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks, the Archimandrites Artemios and Leontios, and Archimandrite Christodoulos, local Presbyters of the city of Nazareth, including the celebrating parish priest of Nazareth, Fr Psara-Evangelos, priests from the surrounding districts of Nazareth, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Evlogios.

Also present in honour were the Ambassador of Greece to Israel, Mrs Maria Solomou, Mr Mavroeidis, and the President of the Community Council, Mr Basim, the whole celebration having been diligently prepared by His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth.

Before the Holy Communion, His Beatitude delivered the following sermon:

“Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women,” said the angel Gabriel, sent by God, to the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:26–28).

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Devout Christians and pilgrims,

The grace of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Most High, which overshadowed the Virgin Mary, has gathered all of us in this holy place of the Annunciation of the Theotokos, that we may celebrate the feast of feasts—the revelation, indeed, of a mystery hidden for eternal ages (Rom. 16:25). This mystery is relevant to the fact that the pre-eternal Son and Word of God is conceived beyond human reason and understanding, and is incarnate from the pure blood of the ever-virgin Mary, in the city of Galilee called Nazareth (Luke 1:26–38).

“Now the Catholic and Apostolic Church is glorified, exceedingly rejoicing. Let the heavens, the earth, and the nethermost parts, and all that is therein, be glad,” Saint John of Damascus exclaims. This is because the loving and merciful God the Father, beholding the work of His hands, that is, mankind, enslaved and oppressed by the devil and subjected to idolatry, willed to send forth His only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to redeem him from the hands of the devil.

The divine Paul blesses God for revealing this mystery of salvation, saying: “Blessed be God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ… having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Him,

unto the administration of the fulness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth, in Him" (Eph. 1:3, 9–10).

According to the interpreter Theodorus of Mopsuestia, "The mystery of God's will is nothing else than His hidden will, the secret, namely that which regards His counsel for the salvation of mankind." This counsel of God was revealed in the angel Gabriel's greeting, "Hail, full of grace" (Luke 1:28) to the Virgin Mary, thus fulfilling the promises of the prophets who said, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and thou shalt call His name Emmanuel" (Isa. 7:14), according to the mighty Isaiah. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee, righteous and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zech. 9:9; Sof. 3:14), as declared by Zechariah and Zephaniah.

These prophetic words are fulfilled in the person of the Virgin of Nazareth, who, according to Origen, "being obedient, said to the angel, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.'" Commenting on Mary's willing and free consent, Saint Irenaeus of Lyons notes: "The Virgin Mary stands in obedience; Eve was disobedient… and became a cause of death for herself and all mankind; so too Mary… obeying, became a cause of salvation for herself and all mankind" (Iren. III, 22:4).

This contribution of the ever-virgin Mary to the mystery of Divine Providence, namely the salvation of mankind, is most vividly expressed hymnographically by our Father Theophanes: "The mystery from eternity is revealed today, and the Son of God becomes the Son of Man, that, partaking of the worse, He may impart the better. Adam long deceived, and God's desire did not fail; man becomes God, that Adam may reach God. Let creation rejoice, let nature dance, for the Archangel stands before the Virgin in awe, and brings the greeting, 'Hail,' contrary to sorrow."

It is evident that the Virgin Mary was shown to be the perfect instrument of the divine will, that is, of the salvation of mankind. This is because Christ, "the light of the world" (John 8:12), "the God of love and peace" (2 Cor. 13:11), "the Saviour of the world" (John 4:42), "the body of the Church" (Eph. 1:23), was born from her womb. "He is the head of the body, the Church" (Col. 1:18), "and He is the Saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:23), the wise Paul proclaims. All this attests to the great significance which the unique person of the ever-virgin Theotokos Mary maintains in the work of salvation, accomplished on earth and in heaven by the Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, and continued in the Church.

Noteworthy here is the teaching of Saint Cyril of Alexandria: "If anyone does not

confess that Emmanuel is truly God, and therefore that the Theotokos, the holy Virgin, gave birth to flesh indeed of the Word of God from the Father, let him be anathema."

These scripturally and theologically grounded words of Saint Cyril acknowledge the incomprehensible mystery of salvation, namely the incarnation and becoming-man of the Word of God from the pure blood of the most blessed ever-virgin Theotokos Mary. The prophet-king David also foretold this extraordinary marvel of the Annunciation, the salvation of mankind, saying: "O sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Bless His name; show forth His salvation from day to day" (Ps. 95:1–2).

This Davidic message, "Show forth His salvation from day to day," is addressed fully, by our Lord Jesus Christ, to those sitting in the land and shadow of death (cf. Matt. 4:16), and also to the rulers of the age of confusion and ignorance.

We say this because the Annunciation of our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, is, according to the Apostle Paul, the wisdom of God. Thus he says: "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory; which none of the princes of this world knew" (1 Cor. 2:7–8).

Therefore, beloved brethren in Christ, honouring this feast of the Theotokos and Mother of God, let us, with Saint John of Damascus, say: "Hail, full of grace, the common salvation of all the ends of the earth and the Christian protection of all Christians. Receive our prayer, and extend thy mercy, O all-good Lady, to those who know thee; and look upon thy servants, and direct all unto the path of peace, and, by thy mediation, grant reconciliation with thy Son and our God, to whom be all glory, together with His Father Who has no beginning and the consubstantial and holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen."

Many and peaceful returns and a blessed Pascha!"

Immediately after the Dismissal, the congregation went to the ceremonial hall beside the church, under heavy rain, for a reception hosted by the President of the Community and by the Scout Corps. This year's procession was cancelled due to war security measures.

The President of the Community welcomed His Beatitude and thanked Him for His protection of the Community of Nazareth and of the whole Christ-named flock of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

The feast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos was also celebrated in Jerusalem at the All-Venerable and Theotokos' Tomb in Gethsemane, according to the liturgical order of our Church and the Status Quo, with reception of the Hierarch of the Patriarchate, His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda, who celebrated Matins with the blessing of bread and the Divine Liturgy. Concelebrants to His Eminence were Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks from the neighbouring monasteries of the Patriarchate, the clergy of the Cathedral of Saint James the Brother of God, and the Hierodeacons Prodromos and Cornelius.

The chanting was offered by the choir of the shrine and by students of the Patriarchal School of Zion in Greek, and by the choir of Saint James in Arabic, with the participation of nuns and a small number of local faithful.

After the Dismissal, refreshments were offered to the Episcopal entourage and to the congregation by the Hegumen of the Shrine, His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis.

From the Chief Secretariat

Live video from the Liturgy in Nazareth: see link.

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