

*You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus...
(Luke 1:31)*

My Lamplighter message to you every February or March usually has something to do with Lent. The season of Lent, of course, is that 40-day (excluding Sundays) period of time when our attention turns toward ongoing and intentional repentance from sin and seeking forgiveness from our Savior. This repentance and preparation can take many forms, often at the same time – worship, prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and other Christian disciplines. Worship looks different, as the paraments are changed to purple, the ‘alleluias’ are dropped, and the hymns have a more somber tone. Lent comes to an end during Holy Week, the week when we commemorate the Passion, death, and burial of our Lord during the services on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. Only after this traveling with Jesus from temptation to suffering to death do we then celebrate fully again on Easter morning.

This month, though, I want to focus on a particular day during Lent. While it’s true that Sundays are not included in Lent – each being its own mini-celebration of the resurrection of Jesus – most seasons of Lent also include one of the important feast days of the Church. On March 25, the Church celebrates The Annunciation of Our Lord. Since March 25 falls nine months before Christmas – the celebration of our Lord’s nativity – this is the day we hear again the story of the angel Gabriel announcing to Mary that she would bear a child. *“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end (Luke 1:30–33).* Though this was a joyous message for all of mankind, it was also a confusing message for Mary. *How will this be, since I am a virgin? (1:34).* The Holy Spirit, the power of the Most High, would overshadow her, and her child would be called the Son of God, Jesus. In a testimony of her faith, Mary responded, *Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word (1:38).* What trust and humility!

Just as each Sunday is a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus, so too does the Annunciation of our Lord bring us joy even during our season of repentance and restraint. This feast day is an island of gladness in the middle of the somber Lenten season. For a day, the white paraments return, the alleluias are heard, the hymn of praise is sung, and we rejoice in a God who keeps his promises! I invite you to join us as we gather together on March 25 for a special Divine Service at 11:00 AM, that we might worship together with joy the God who gives us his only Son as our Savior and Lord!

-Pastor Squire

“‘For know a blessed mother thou shalt be, all generations laud and honor thee; thy son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold, most highly favored lady.’ Gloria! Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head; ‘To me be as it pleaseth God,’ she said. ‘My soul shall laud and magnify God’s holy name.’ Most highly favored lady, Gloria!”

(“The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came,” *LSB 3564*, vv. 2–3)