

*“For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.”*

“Behold, the Promised One now manifests Himself to us”: the Incarnation

### **What the Gospels Say**

*And he said to me, “This gate shall remain shut, it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it; for the Lord, the God of Israel, has entered by it; therefore it shall remain shut...” Then he brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple; and I looked, and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the temple of the Lord; and I fell upon my face. (Ezekiel 44:2-4)*

*Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary you wife, for that which is conceived in her womb is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save His people from their sins. (Matthew 1:20-21)*

*“Do not be afraid Mary, for you have found favour 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)*

*...for to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:11)*

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only-begotten Son from the Father (John 1:14)*

*For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known. (John 1:17-18)*

### **What the Church Prays**

Today is the joy of the annunciation and the feast of virginity. The creatures of earth unite with those of heaven. Adam is renewed and Eve is freed from her ancient sorrow. She who is of our own substance becomes the temple of God by the divinity of Him who was conceived. O what mystery, the incomprehensible quality of the condescension and the inexpressible wealth of goodness...Through the universal will, reconciliation is accomplished for all. Let us, who have been saved in it and through it, sing with Gabriel to the Virgin: Rejoice, O Full of Grace! For our salvation, Christ our God took nature from you and joined it to Himself.

***Aposticha of the Annunciation of the Theotokos***

Behold, the promised One now manifests Himself to us. It is beyond comprehension that God unites Himself to the human race. At the word of the archangel, deceit is cast out because the Virgin receives the Joy. The things of the earth become like heaven; the world is freed of the original curse. Let creation rejoice, and may voices cry out: O our Creator and Deliverer, O Lord, glory to You!

***Aposticha of the Annunciation of the Theotokos***

An archangel was sent from heaven to greet the Mother of God, and as he saw You assuming a body at the sound of his bodiless voice, O Lord, he stood rapt in amazement and cried to her in these words:

Rejoice, O you through whom joy will shine forth;  
Rejoice, O you through whom the curse will disappear!  
Rejoice, O Restoration of fallen Adam;  
Rejoice, O Redemption of the tears of Eve!...  
Rejoice, for you have become a kingly throne;  
Rejoice, for you carry Him who carries all!  
Rejoice, O Star who manifests the Sun;  
Rejoice, O Womb of the Divine Incarnation!  
Rejoice, O you through whom creation is renewed;  
Rejoice, O you through whom the Creator becomes a Babe!

***Ikos of the Annunciation***

Today is the beginning of our salvation,  
The revelation of the eternal mystery!  
The Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin  
As Gabriel announces the coming of Grace.  
Together with him let us cry to the Theotokos:  
Rejoice, O Full of Grace,  
The Lord is with You!

***Troparion for the Annunciation***

Come let us rejoice in the Lord; let us proclaim the present mystery by which the partition has been broken and the flaming sword withheld. Now the Cherubim shall let us all come to the Tree of Life. As for me, I am returning to the bliss of Paradise from which I had been banished by disobedience. Behold! The Image of the Father and his unchangeable eternity has taken on the form of a servant. Without suffering He has come forth to us from an all-pure Virgin, and yet He has remained unchanged. He is true God as He was before, and He has taken on Himself what He had not been, becoming man out of His love for all. Therefore, let us raise our voices in hymns, singing: O God, born of the Virgin, have mercy on us.

***Vespers sticheron for the Nativity***

Today heaven and earth unite, for Christ is born. Today God came to earth in the flesh, and the human race was lifted up to the heavens. Today, for the sake of all, He is seen in the flesh, the One who by nature is invisible...

***Litiya sticheron from Great Compline for the Nativity***

For our sake, O long-suffering Saviour, You were placed in the animal's manger, and You willingly lived as an infant. The shepherds and angels extolled You, saying: Glory and praise to Christ our God who is born on earth and deifies the human race.

***Sessional hymn from Matins***

***for the Nativity***

Your Nativity, O Christ our God, has made the light of knowledge dawn on the world; for through it, those who worshiped the stars were taught by a star to worship You the Sun of Righteousness, and to know You the dayspring from on high, O Lord, glory be to You.

***Troparion of the Nativity***

**Closing Prayer**

**Bethlehem has opened up Eden for us. Come and let us see the delights that we have found there in secret. Come and let us gather the fruits of Paradise that are within the cave. There, the unwatered root has manifested itself, and It has sprouted forgiveness. There, the undug Well, of which David yearned to drink, is found. There, the Virgin, who gave birth to the Infant, immediately quenched the thirst of Adam and David. Therefore, let us hasten to the place where the young Infant, the Eternal God, is born.**

***Ikos of the Nativity***