

## Lesson 1

# PROPHECIES ARE FULFILLED



The angel of the Lord appeared in a small house in the town of Nazareth in Galilee. There was a virgin in that house, who was engaged to Joseph, a man belonging to the tribe of David. Her name was Mary. The angel Gabriel approached her and said: **“Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with you”**. But she was deeply troubled by his words and wondered what his words meant. The angel said to her, **“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him 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 ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end”**. Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” The angel said to her, **“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 holy; he will be called the son of God”** (Luke. 1: 28-35).

Knowing that nothing is impossible with God, Mary said: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (Luke. 1: 38). The moment she gave consent to the will of God, she was filled with Holy Spirit. God who is the Word took human form in her womb.

## Prophecies

This annunciation was the good news that humanity had been waiting to hear from the very beginning. In the beginning God created heaven and earth. Finally he made man, the crown of creation. God formed him in His own image and likeness.

But the first parents sinned by defying God's command. God punished them for disobedience. They were expelled from paradise - the Garden of Eden. However, they were also given a promise of salvation. To Satan who went to the first parents in the form of a serpent to tempt them, God said: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head" (Gen. 3: 15). Humanity was filled with expectations of a woman and her son who would crush the serpent's head.

Through the patriarchs and the prophets, God repeated this promise of a saviour. Hopes of a saviour to come were raised in Israel by many prophecies such as: "I will raise up for them a prophet like you, from among their own people" (Deut. 18: 18), God's words to Moses; "A star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel" (Num. 24: 17), the prophecy of Balaam, "The young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel" (Is. 7:14), the prophecy of Isaiah.

The people of Israel prayerfully awaited this saviour. In the fullness of time God decided to fulfill His promises. All the hopes of Israel for a redeemer came to fruition in the annunciation.

## Nativity

The Evangelist Luke describes the birth of the saviour in these words: "In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world

should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn" (Luke. 2: 1-7).

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke. 2: 8- 11). And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" (Luke. 2: 14). At the start of the Holy Mass, we sing this hymn in memory of the birth of Jesus. On receiving the good news from the angel, the shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem. There they saw Mary and Joseph as well as the infant in the manger, and they glorified God and praised Him (Luke. 2: 15- 16).

### **Visit of the Wise Men**

A star rose in the east announcing the birth of Jesus. Seeing this star three wise men (magi) from the orient started on a journey to pay homage to Jesus. Looking for this divine infant, they reached the palace of King Herod. When King Herod heard this he was frightened and called together the chief priests and scribes of the people he enquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him: "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it had been written by the prophet: "And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,

are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel". Then Herod called the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then opening their treasure chests they offered him gifts of gold, myrrh and frankincense (Mt. 2: 1- 12).

## **The Year of Christ A. D.**

At the birth of Jesus the history of the world was divided into two the period before Jesus, **B C** (Before Christ), and the period after Jesus, **A D** *Anno Domini* (**year of the Lord**).

## **Annunciation-Nativity Periods**

Through the various periods or seasons of the liturgical year of the Syro-Malabar church, we remember and experience the Christ-mystery that forms the foundation of our salvation. The first season of the liturgical year is that of annunciation which consists of the four weeks in preparation for Christmas. In Syriac, this season is called *subara* which means **declaration** or **announcement**. The following two weeks form the nativity period. Our church has the tradition of observing abstinence for twenty-five days before Christmas. The Sunday readings of this season are related to the birth of the saviour.

## Salvific Events Commemorated in these Seasons

Annunciation	Nativity
Creation of humanity Sin and its results Salvific interventions of God in the Old Testament history Prophecies about the savior Announcement to Zachariah Annunciation to Mary Mary visiting Elizabeth Mary's song of praise, the Magnificat Birth of John the Baptist Announcement to St. Joseph.	Birth of Christ Shepherds and wise men visit Jesus Naming of Jesus Presentation of Jesus in temple The Holy Family of Nazareth The private life of Jesus.

### Christmas

The birth of Jesus is the central event of the Annunciation-Nativity period. **Christmas, the feast of Jesus' birth, is celebrated on the twenty-fifth of December.** We are to participate in the Holy Mass and other church services of Christmas day with devotion and reverence. Praise and gratitude to God who gave us a saviour, veneration to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and joy at the birth of the saviour, should fill our hearts during this period.

The shepherds venerated Jesus, born as the saviour of the whole world. The wise men who came in search of Jesus, having seen the star that announced his birth as the king of the Jews, acknowledged his kingship, priesthood and (divinity) Prophetism by offering gold, myrrh and frankincense. Let us also acknowledge Jesus as our Lord and Saviour and worship him.

## **Let us Pray**

O! Jesus, bless us with your grace and help us to be nourished by the fruits of your incarnation.

## **Read the Word of God and Narrate**

Matthew 1:18 - 2:23



## **Word of God for our Guidance**

Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word (Luke.1:38).

## **Let us do**

Prepare a narration of the nativity of our Lord based on the Gospel of St. Luke.

## **My Decision**

I will remember daily the presence of  
Jesus who resides in my heart.

### **Let us find out the answer**

1. Mention two prophecies which aroused hope among the Israelites about the coming of the Saviour?
2. Which is the song that we sing during the Holy Mass remembering the birth of Jesus?
3. What are the gifts that the wise men from the east offered to infant Jesus?
4. What are the salvific events that we commemorate during the season of Annunciation?
5. What is the attitude that we have to keep during the seasons of Annunciation- Nativity?
6. Which is the prime event in the seasons of Annunciation and Nativity?