

Week Two:

The Annunciation and Saint Mary the Mother of God (Theotokos)

The Mother of God, the Theotokos, the God-Bearer: all these are names of the holy woman we thank for saying "yes" to God and for willingly becoming the Mother of His Son, Jesus Christ, when He took a body and became Man for our salvation. She was prepared for this from childhood, spending time around the Temple in worship and prayer, learning the ways of God. Her parents, Joachim and Anna, were devout, humble people who raised her in the same way.

But what Mary was asked to do was not easy, nor was it something she expected. So when the archangel Gabriel told her God's plan for her to be the mother of Jesus, the Son of the Most High, she asked him, "*How shall this be, since I have no husband?*" (Luke 1: 34).

Still, she was ready to do what God asked of her, to trust Him, and so she answered, "*I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word*" (Luke 1: 38).

But before he told her any of this, Gabriel said to her, "*Do not be afraid*" (Luke 1: 30). Mary the Theotokos is the greatest of many people in the Bible who were called on to do something great, or to face something that was startling and unexpected. All of them were reassured and told not to be afraid, because sometimes it isn't easy to do what God asks! Here are a few other examples:

Deuteronomy 20: 1—*When you go forth to war against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and an army larger than your own, you shall not be afraid of them; for the Lord your God is with you, who brought you up out of Egypt.*



Matthew 14: 26-27—*But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. But immediately he spoke to them, saying, "Take heart, it is I; have no fear."*

Matthew 28: 5-6—*But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay."*

Can we trust in God, as Mary the Theotokos did, even when facing something that might make us afraid? Psalm 46: 1-3 gives us some good words to remember:

God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

What recent experiences all over the world have reflected these verses? Do you know of any examples of people who trust God, as the Theotokos did, even when their lives have gone through great and perhaps difficult changes?

The Theotokos' own words, in her song known as the Magnificat, tell us that any fear she may initially have felt is overcome by her joy. Look through the song in Luke 1: 46-55, and pick out some of the words that reflect this joy.