

## PASTOR'S CORNER

*For the remainder of the summer I will be printing a series of essays concerning the Apostles Creed.*

### **The Creed: *Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary***

Volumes have been written about the depth of meaning and doctrinal content contained in just this one abbreviated statement of the creed. We hear of the third person of the Trinity by name for the first time, which completes our indoctrination into the Trinitarian nature of the God in which we profess to believe. The context of the Spirit's appearance is that great mystery of joy called "the Annunciation." A messenger of God appears to Mary in Nazareth, in her home. The same angel, Gabriel, appeared to Zechariah in order to announce the coming birth of the Baptist, in the Temple in Jerusalem, the normative place of human/divine contact. With Mary, the angel comes to her, for she is "full of grace", a "highly-favored" one. Mary is the first human person conceived without original sin since Adam and Eve. She is, at around the age of 15, still without sin. Born in communion with God, she has remained pure. The angel asks her a question upon which the future of the universe depends: 'Will you bear in your womb the Savior of the world, the Son of God?'

Mary does not doubt, but she is perplexed, for she has taken a vow of perpetual virginity, a vow that will be protected by Joseph through their upcoming marriage. It seems likely that Joseph had been married before and had many children by his first wife, which would account for the fact that tradition recounts that he is much older than Mary. In agreeing to wed Mary, Joseph agrees to act as guardian of her virginity. Imagine his shock and consternation when he discovers that she is pregnant! At the time of Gabriel's appearance, Mary knows that being a perpetual virgin, she cannot conceive in the normal course of conjugal relations, hence her query: 'How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?'

The angel explains that the Holy Spirit of God will "overshadow" her and she will conceive through His miraculous intercession. The verb in Greek for "overshadow" is the same used in the Old Testament (LXX) to describe how the glory cloud (*shekinah*) of God's presence overshadows the Tabernacle in the desert and later fills the Holy of Holies in the Temple. With all of the cosmos figuratively 'holding its breath', Mary issues her "fiat": 'Let it be done unto me according to thy word.' At the instant of her agreement, Jesus is conceived in her womb; the Word of God has 'pitched his tent among us.' This doctrine provides one of the two miraculous bookends of Jesus' life and is called the incarnation (the other being the resurrection). It is of such sublime importance, that we execute a profound bow at this point during our communal recitation of the creed and remain bowed until this clause is completed (on the Solemnities of the Annunciation (Mar 25) and Christmas (Dec 25), we kneel rather than bow). It is through the incarnation of the Son of God that God comes to dwell among his people in order to save us from our sins.

The title 'Virgin' given to Mary in the creed reflects both the miracle of the virginal conception of Jesus (to be distinguished from the immaculate conception of Mary) and the fact that Mary has been called to live out a perpetual vow of virginity. Many other titles flow forth from the wonders summarized here: Mary is the immaculately conceived, ever-virgin, sinless Mother of God, Queen of heaven and earth. Jesus may have been conceived in an extraordinary manner, but he remains nine months in the womb of his mother and is born in the normal human way. He is born, we are told elsewhere, in a stable, most likely a

cave, in Bethlehem of Judea, because there was “no room at the inn.” This fact is not just indicative of the likely impoverishment of the holy family, but also foreshadows the rejection Jesus will receive in his adult ministry. For, as John’s Prologue recounts for us, ‘the Word came to dwell among us but we knew him not.’ This rejection sets the stage for the passion of Jesus, which will concern us next week.

*Fr. Stephen Geer*

### Ninth Week after Pentecost

DAY	DATE	TIME	OBSERVANCE	MASS INTENTION
VIGIL	Aug 5	5:00 pm	Vigil of the Transfiguration	Joanna Kong +
SUNDAY	Aug 6	9:00 am	The Most Holy Eucharist of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: The Transfiguration of the Lord	Julie Yang +
		11:30 am	The Most Holy Eucharist of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: The Transfiguration of the Lord	Parishioners
Monday	Aug 7		No service	
Tuesday	Aug 8	11:00 am	Funeral Mass	Michael Moore +
Wednesday	Aug 9	8:30 am	St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Virgin & Martyr	Anthony Yrizarry +
Thursday	Aug 10	8:30 am	St. Lawrence, Deacon & Martyr	Richard Lerwick +
Friday	Aug 11	8:30 am	St. Clare, Virgin	Anna Tieu Nguyen +
Saturday	Aug 12	8:30 am	St. Jane Frances de Chantal, Religious	Aili Castricano +
			<u>Readings for the Sunday Mass:</u> 1 Kings xix 9-13; Psalm lxxxv; Romans ix 1-5; Matthew xiv 22-33	
VIGIL		5:00 pm	Vigil of the Sunday Mass	Joanna Kong +
SUNDAY	Aug 13	9:00 am	The Most Holy Eucharist of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ	Loretta Smith +
		11:30 am	The Most Holy Eucharist of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ	Parishioners