

ACTION GUIDE

SOLEMNITY OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD: MARCH 25*

INTRODUCTION

The celebration of the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord commemorates the visit of the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary to inform her that she was to be the mother of our Savior. After giving her consent to God's word, Mary conceives Jesus in her womb and becomes the mother of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. God becomes incarnate in the womb of a woman, and "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14).

In modern times, this feast day has taken on special meaning in Respect Life ministry. Scientific advances have allowed us to confirm that life begins at conception. This solemnity helps us to recognize the gift of new life from its very beginning. It calls us to reflect on how we are to care for, protect, and welcome new life, as the Blessed Mother did for the Christ child.

The Solemnity of the Annunciation also coincides with the anniversary of the papal encyclical *Evangelium vitae* (*The Gospel of Life*). This Church teaching on the value and inviolability of every human life remains an indispensable source of truth for all people. Written by Pope St. John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae* was appropriately given in Rome on March 25, 1995.

The encyclical highlights the importance of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Annunciation of the Lord in the Church's efforts to promote and defend human life:

The angel's Annunciation to Mary is framed by these reassuring words: "Do not be afraid, Mary" and "with God nothing will be impossible" (Lk 1:30, 37). The whole of the Virgin Mother's life is in fact pervaded by the certainty that God is near to her and that he accompanies her with his providential care.... Mary is a living word of comfort for the Church in her struggle against death. Showing us the Son, the Church assures us that in him the forces of death have already been defeated.¹

Additional resources for celebrating the *Gospel of Life* anniversary can be found at respectlife.org/gospel-of-life.

To help you celebrate the Solemnity of the Annunciation, sample timelines, homily helps, announcements, activities, and more are provided. You are encouraged to adapt these resources as needed to fit your specific parish, school, or ministry. The supplemental resources referenced in this action guide can be found at respectlife.org/action-guides, unless otherwise noted.

**The Solemnity of the Annunciation is generally celebrated on March 25. However, depending on how this date falls within Lent, its observance is sometimes transferred to another day or even to the Easter season. The proposed dates and timelines used in this action guide assume that it will be celebrated on March 25, but be sure to check whether the celebration will be transferred when making your plans.*