

First Discourse on the Annunciation (part 2) (Saint Gregory the Wonder-Worker, Bishop of New Caesarea (ca. 213-270))

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



[The archangel continued]: ‘You alone, All-Holy Virgin, now receive the mysteries unknown to all of these and learn their origin. For where the Holy Spirit is, everything is already well-ordered.

Where there is Divine Grace, everything is possible for God. The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the holy child you bear will be called the Son of God’.

If He’s the Son of God, He’s also God, of one form and co-eternal with the Father, and in Him the Father is fully manifested. He’s His character personified, and the Father’s glory shines forth through His own radiance. Just as rivers flow from eternal sources, so also does the perennial and true light of the world, Christ our God, proceed from this eternal and ever-living source. This is what the prophets were preaching when they said: ‘The streams of the river make glad the city of

God'. And not only one, but all cities, because just as one city's made glad, so also does the whole world rejoice.



It was therefore entirely appropriate that the angel said first to Mary the holy Virgin: 'Hail, you who are full of grace, the Lord is with you', since the whole treasury of Grace was stored, as it were, in her. Of all generations she alone is a virgin pure in body and in spirit, and she alone bears Him who bears all things by His word. Nor is it only the physical beauty of this holy lady which is to be admired, but also the virtuous manner of her soul. This is why the archangel addressed her first with 'Hail, you who are full of grace, the Lord is with you'. Not any earthly bridegroom. 'He Himself is with you Who is the Lord of sanctification, the Father of purity, the Author of incorruption, the Bestower of liberty, the Guardian of salvation, and the Steward and Provider of true peace, Who made a man from the virgin earth, and out of that man's side then formed Eve. This is the Lord Who is with you, and, then again, will be of you'.

Come, then, my beloved friends, let us also take up the angelic praise, and, to the best of our ability, pay our due by singing:

'Hail, you who are full of grace, the Lord is with you.

Truly, this rejoicing is especially for you [1], since the Grace of God, in a way that He alone knows, has chosen to dwell with you.

With the handmaiden, the Lord of glory.

With the fair maiden, He Who is the fairest of all.

With the undefiled maid, He who sanctifies all things.

With you is God, Who is also the perfect man in Whom dwells the whole fulness of the Godhead.

Hail, you who are full of Grace, the source of the light that illumines everyone who believes in Him.

Hail, you who are full of Grace, the dawning of the envisioned Sun, the unblemished flower of life [2].

Hail, you who are full of Grace, the sweet-smelling meadow [3].

Hail, you who are full of Grace, evergreen vine which makes glad the souls of those who glorify you.

Hail, you who are full of Grace, though untilled you bear fruit bountifully.

You have, indeed, brought forth in accordance with the law of our nature, and by a normal pregnancy, and yet, in a way, beyond nature, or rather above nature, since God the Word came down from above to dwell in you, and formed Adam again in your holy womb. The Holy Spirit gave the power of conception to the holy Virgin and so His body was made real by assumption from hers.

[1] The word in Greek means 'Rejoice', but it was- and is- used as a greeting. So sometimes it's appropriate to translate it as 'Hail' and, at others, as 'Rejoice'.

[2] An early instance (Saint Gregory's dates are ca. 213-270) of the metaphor of Christ as a flawless blossom, which would later be used in the 1st Ode of the Canon of the Akathistos Hymn: 'Hail, from whom there springs the unfading rose'.

[3] Interestingly, in the Akathistos Hymn, the reference to the 'unfading rose', is followed immediately by something 'sweet-smelling', in that case an apple, rather than a meadow.