

# The Annunciation

## Planting Seeds of Love and Faith

### Needed:

something to contain the plant —  
a flowerpot or paper cup with  
a hole punched in the bottom  
potting soil  
seeds — at least 3  
a plastic spoon to use as a shovel  
water  
newspaper



Put a piece of newspaper on your desk to keep it clean.  
Take a container and fill it with potting soil until it is almost full.  
Place at least 3 seeds on the soil.  
Cover the seeds with a little more soil.  
Water carefully — not too much!

Take your plant home and care for it. Give it water when the soil seems to be drying out, but do not overwater it. Place it on a sunny window ledge and watch it grow. When your plant is a few inches tall, you might want to transplant it outside.

Watching plants grow is a nice activity. It makes you feel good to see something grow, making leaves and flowers. You feel you have done something right if the plant grows well.





# The Story of Mary, a Girl Who Said Yes to God

Anne and Joachim looked at the new little baby girl they had. Their hearts filled with love.

“I must go to the temple and thank God for answering our prayers. All these years we have wanted a child. We have prayed and prayed. At last God has answered our prayers. I will go and thank him,” said Joachim.

“Yes,” said Anne. “God has been very good to us. He has

heard our prayers and he has answered them. Now we have a child at long last."

"We shall call her Mary. And we will dedicate her to the Lord for without God's help she would have never been born." Joachim reminded Anne of a promise they had made to God a long time ago. They had promised to help their child become someone who would always love God and do God's will.

They did not forget their promise. They taught Mary to love and trust God. They told Mary that their faith in God's love had been proven by her being born. They taught Mary to believe in God's love. They taught her to do what God would want her to do.

Mary grew up to be a fine young woman. It was arranged that she would marry Joseph. In those days that is how people were married. But first Mary and Joseph would be betrothed. It is like being engaged. Everyone would know that Joseph and Mary were going to be married soon.

One night Mary had a special visitor. An angel of God came to her.

"Hello, Mary," said the angel. "Don't be afraid. God loves you very much. God has sent me to tell you that you are going to have a baby. It will be a boy and you will name him Jesus. He will be known as the Son of God. He will be the leader of the people God chooses to love forever."

Mary wanted to obey God and have the baby, but she had a question. "How can I have a baby? I am not married."

The angel said that God would make it happen. He told her that God could do anything; even things that seemed impossible to people. He told her that her cousin Elizabeth, who was too old to have a baby even though she wanted one very much, was now going to have a baby because God willed it. God had chosen to answer Elizabeth's prayers.

Mary knew she must do God's will. She knew she must obey God. Her parents had always taught her that. She remembered that her parents had dedicated her to God and that she belonged to God. She told the angel, "I accept God's will. I belong to him."

The angel went away and Mary knew she would have a baby boy just as the angel had told her.

Mary was an ordinary girl. But she did something that was very extraordinary. She responded to God's gift of love by allowing herself to be the mother of God's Son Jesus. She chose to say yes to God when he asked her to do that for him.



## My Seeds Grow

Children are like soil in a flowerpot. Parents put seeds of love and faith in their children and watch them grow. Parents are happy when their children grow up to be the kind of people the parents wanted their children to be.

Our heavenly Father God is happy when we grow up to be the kind of people he wants us to be.

What kinds of seeds are growing in you? Seeds of kindness, love, and faith? Seeds of helpfulness and caring? Seeds of politeness and good manners? Write what kinds of seeds are growing in you on the leaves of this plant.



2. Say: "Look at the words I have written on the board: TRUST, FAITH, BELIEF. All of them describe our relationship to God. They also describe our relationship with our parents. Have your parents ever said to you, 'Don't touch that, you'll get hurt?' Perhaps it was something that was hot or sharp. Because you have learned that you can trust your parents, you have faith in them to know what is good for you, you believe in them, you do not touch it." (You may allow children to give examples of times their parents have asked them to trust their judgment.)

"We trust our parents because we know they love us and want what is best for us. The same is true about God. We trust God because we know he loves us. We believe in him because of his love for us. That is what faith is all about.

"We have been together for almost a whole school year. I think you know you can trust me and you can trust each other. We would not do anything that would hurt each other. Now I'm going to ask you to act on that faith. Half of you will put your blindfolds back on. The other half and I will rearrange the room and make an obstacle course. We'll turn chairs over and move desks around and put things on the floor for you to step over or around. Then we will lead you around the room so that you will not get hurt. We have to trust each other." (Have half the children put blindfolds back on; make sure they cannot see at all. Then rearrange room as described above. Put shoeboxes, rulers, empty cans, etc., on the floor here and there for the children to step over. Assign a partner for each child and have them walk around the room.)

"Take off your blindfolds and look about the room. See what you have been through safely because of your faith?"

Reverse partners, but use same course.

Put room back to normal and continue lesson. Collect blindfolds and obstacles. (30 min.)

3. Continue: "Today I asked you to put your trust in me and each other. God asks us to do the same, to put your trust in him. You were able to let us guide you around the room because you knew we would not hurt each other. You are able to believe in God because you know he loves you and would not harm you.

"Our story is about two men who were blind but trusted in Jesus. Trusting in someone is like saying 'Yes' to that person. It is as if God asks us, 'Do you believe I love you and want good things for you?', and we answer 'Yes' to God as a way of responding to God's love, as a way of loving him back. Let's read this story about two people who said 'Yes' to God." (Read "The Two Blind Men" on page 163 to the children or have them read silently or aloud.) Discussion questions:

- Why were the blind men able to see? (Because of their faith in Jesus.)

- Why did Jesus help the blind men to see? (He had pity on them.)
- What is pity? (To feel sorry for someone and want to help because you like them.)
- Do you think the word *mercy* could be substituted for *pity*? (Yes.)
- When we say "Der voghormya," Lord have mercy, are we asking God to have pity on us as these blind men did? (Yes.)
- Do you think God will have mercy on us? (Yes.)
- Why? (Because he loves us, because we love him.) (20 min.)

4. *Homework:* Tell students to try the blindfold and obstacle course with their families. Tell them it is a demonstration of faith and love. Report on how well the family does. Directions are in the text.

Closing prayer: "Our ending prayer is going to be a litany. I will say the prayer and you respond with the words, *Der voghormya*. At the end I will say *Amen* and you repeat it.

Lord, because you love us (response)

Lord, because we love you (response)

Lord, because we want to be with you in the kingdom (response)

Thank you Lord for your love. Amen. (repeat) (5 min.)

### Extending the lesson

Using a children's Bible, read about other miracles Jesus performed.

Read and discuss Matthew 6:25-33.

Make a banner that says, "Trust in the Lord."

Do blindfold activity outside!

*Reminder:* This session may be short. It will allow you to spend time reviewing the year's lessons. Or, you may have to catch up on lessons you were unable to do during the year.

## Session 2—The Annunciation

### Key Concepts

1. St. Mary, the Mother of God, is our church's best example of someone who said "yes" to God in response to his gift of love.
2. One example of Mary choosing to accept and return God's love is the Annunciation.
3. Mary was able to be obedient to God, to say yes to God, to choose God, because of her upbringing by her parents.
4. Our parents say yes to God when they choose to bring us to Sunday School, to provide for our Christian education, when they have us baptized, etc.



## Objectives

Students will

1. Plant seeds as an example of nurturing good growth through care and love.
2. Discuss choosing to follow God's will as a way of responding to God's gift of love.
3. Read a story about Mary's childhood and the Annunciation.

## Background for Teacher

Our lesson today is about someone who is a shining example of one who had "seeds" planted in her heart and mind by her family. Mary's family taught her to love and obey God at an early age. Since she knew and loved God as her heavenly Father, she was able to be obedient to his will quite easily because of the seeds planted in her heart.

She answered the angel who came with the message that she above all women had been chosen to be the mother of God with these words, "I am the servant of the Lord to do his will. Let it be to me as you have said."

We can help our young children by planting seeds of love and obedience, by making sure they attend church, Sunday School, and teaching them to live according to God's will. Good examples set by home and church are excellent guidelines. By the proper nourishment of these seeds, faith, trust and belief will develop and enable all of us to respond to God's will as easily as Mary did.

The Armenian Church honors Mary, the Holy Mother of God, many times throughout the year. In summer (around August 15) is the feast of the Assumption. This commemorates Mary being taken up to heaven after her death and is one of the major feast days of the church. You might want to remind the children to look forward to this holy day during the summer. (Perhaps by then their plants, if flowers, will be blooming and might be offered as altar flowers.)

The lesson starts with planting seeds and then draws the parallel of planting and caring for them to the raising of Mary by Joachim and Anne. The story of Mary's birth and the annunciation is given to stress her obedience, her choosing God, her saying yes to God. It ends with an activity designed to get the children thinking of their own growth in relationship to their love of God.

## Materials Needed

- Pencils
- A container to plant seeds in (flower pot, paper cup, small milk carton)
- Potting soil (this might be easier to handle if put in an old plastic wash basin or box)
- Seeds (marigold, stringbeans, bush type, other flower seeds)

- Newspaper
- Paper towels for cleaning up
- Plain stickers for name tags for the pots
- A watering can or plastic bottle of water

## Procedure

*Have pots, seeds, water, potting soil, newspaper, plastic spoons, etc., on central desk or table.*

1. As children enter, check homework briefly and direct them to do the planting activity in their book.

When all have planted their seeds, have the children put them on your desk (to keep them from being distracted by them or knocking them over). They can take them from your desk before they leave. You may want to put a name tag on each pot if the class is large.

Opening prayer: O Lord, who wills that which is good, and who is the director of the will, let me not follow the temptations of my selfishness, but lead me to live always the way you want me to live. Have mercy upon your creatures and on me, a person who sins often. (St. Nersess—adapted) (15 min.)

2. Ask: "If we take care of our plants properly, what will happen to them?" (They will grow and blossom.)

"What must we do to take care of these plants properly?" (Give them water, care, attention, etc.)

"If we don't take care of them, can we expect them to grow and flower?" (No.)

"The same thing is true about people. If children are raised in a home with care and attention and love, they will grow into good adults. Today's story is about a girl who was raised in such a home. Her parents gave her love, took care of her, made sure she was well-fed and educated. But they also made sure she knew about God. They made sure she knew that God's will was greater than hers or anyone else's.

"In the Lord's Prayer we say, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' What does that mean?" (Discuss, if children can give explanations.)

"In the Lord's Prayer we are saying that we want to do God's will on earth as the angels do God's will in heaven. What does God want us to do?" (Obey him, live according to his plan, be happy, love each other, etc.) "Can we make that happen?" (Yes.) "Who will help us accomplish it?" (God, our parents, our Sunday School teachers, our priest.)

"In our opening prayer, we asked God to help us to do his will and not follow the temptations of our selfishness. When we are selfish, we think only of ourselves. God wants us to think of ourselves, but to think of him and other people too. Suppose your parents give you money to put in your envelope for church; you might be tempted to keep part of the money for yourself. That would be selfish. There are many times when people forget about God and other people and think only of themselves. But today's

story is about a girl who did not forget about God or other people.”

Read together. Then continue:

“Mary’s childhood, being raised by people who loved her and loved God, taught her to be obedient to God. She knew she must choose God’s will over her own selfishness. Seeds of faith, belief, and trust in God were planted in her by those she loved and trusted and believed, her parents.

You are being raised by parents you love and trust and believe. They help you love God by being good examples for you, by having you baptized, by bringing you to church and Sunday School. They are planting seeds in you that will grow and grow to help you be able to say yes to God always.

“As you watch seeds you planted today grow, think of Mary and how she said yes to God. Think of ways you can show your love for God by being obedient to his will.” (30 min.)

3. Have students do the “My Seeds Grow” activity on page 169. (15 min.)

4. *Homework:* Taking care of plants and reporting next week on their progress.

Closing prayer: God, help us always to choose you. Help us to say yes to you. Amen.

### Extending the lesson

Review the Ten Commandments and the golden rule as ways you can be obedient to God’s will.

Make up a prayer to Mary, the Mother of God, asking her to help you know God’s will.

Plant left-over flower seeds about the church grounds.

*Note:* This session may be shorter than previous ones so that you can spend time reviewing the year’s course or catching up on lessons that had to be omitted for some reason over the year.

## Session 3—At the Temple

### Key Concepts

1. When Jesus stayed at the temple to talk to elder priests, he was starting to fulfill his role as teacher.
2. In this way Jesus was answering his calling to respond to God and the people.
3. We are called to live the way God wants us to live as stated in the Great Commandment.

### Objectives

Students will

1. Read the story of Jesus at the temple.
2. Define the term *calling*.
3. Relate the Great Commandment to the Golden

Rule in Matthew, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy.

4. Make a poster of the Golden Rule.

### Background for Teacher

The Bible tells us very little about Jesus’ boyhood, but we suppose that he learned to read at the village school (probably the synagogue). The lessons were on thick rolls of paper on which sections of the Old Testament were written. In addition he went with Joseph twice a week to the synagogue and heard the Old Testament read and explained. Jewish boys at that time were taught to know almost the whole of the Old Testament by heart.

At least once every year, at the feast of the Passover, it was the custom of the Jews to go to Jerusalem to worship. When Jesus was a boy of 12, he went with his family to the feast of Passover. Jesus must have been impressed at the sight of the temple there, the altar, the priests in their white robes. Though still young, he knew he was the son of God and this was his Father’s house.

When it was time to leave, Jesus chose to stay behind and to talk with the elders to teach them what he knew and start fulfilling his role as teacher. He stayed to talk about how to live in a God-pleasing way and the elders chose to stay and learn from him.

When Mary and Joseph realized he was not with the group of people they were traveling with, they worked their way back against the departing crowds constantly searching for their child until they reentered Jerusalem. Finally they went back to the temple in the hope of finding him. There he was surrounded by the elders who were listening intently to him and asking him questions. Everyone was amazed at his depth of knowledge of the word of the Lord.

By choosing to stay behind at the temple, Jesus was responding to God’s gift of love by starting to fulfill his role as teacher. He was aware of his duty to “be about his Father’s business.”

Although our students are young, they can also respond to God’s gift of love by choosing to live according to his will. We can start by reviewing the Great Commandment as well as the Ten Commandments and deciding to try to live by these rules. If we do, we are saying yes to God.

Today’s lesson tells the story of Jesus at the temple and provides the opportunity to learn the Great Commandment.

### Materials Needed

- Poster strips
- Paints, crayons or markers (the children might enjoy using lettering stencils to make their posters)
- A scroll—two dowels with a roll of paper around them
- Shelf paper works nicely with 1” diameter wooden dowels cut 1 ft. long.