

# A HYMN on the ANNUNCIATION

*from the Syriac Christian Tradition*



The Father wrote out a letter  
and sent it, at the hands of a Watcher, to Nazareth,  
to a virgin, Mary, in whom He was well-pleased  
and so chose her to become mother to His Only-Begotten  
when He descended to deliver all worlds.

*Blessed is that mouth which announced to Mary!*

From amidst the fiery legions,  
from the thousands and myriads who stand ready,  
from the choirs of fire, the ranks of flame,  
was Gabriel sent  
to the Virgin, to announce that she was to conceive.

*Blessed is that mouth which announced to Mary!*

God gave Gabriel the command  
and he flew down amidst great commotion,  
bearing that letter full of fair tidings,  
to bring peace to those in a state of wrath,  
seeing that reconciliation had taken place  
between God and the world.

*Blessed is that mouth which announced to Mary!*

The messenger learnt the secret  
and fluttered down, arriving at Nazareth.  
As he beheld the Virgin, he bowed down in reverence,  
then stretched out his hand and gave her the letter of peace  
that had been sent from above.

*Blessed is that mouth which announced to Mary!*

'Peace be with you, O daughter of humanity,  
for you have been chosen to become the tabernacle  
to the Lord of Majesty who is coming down from on high  
to visit the depth below  
and to raise Adam up to the Garden.

*Blessed is that mouth which announced to Mary!*

'Salutation to you, who are filled with grace,  
my Lord is with you, O palace of the Most High,  
for in you will the King reside,  
and in you shall the Light shine out.  
From you there shall come forth into creation  
that Hero who will deliver the world:

*Blessed is that mouth which announced to Mary!*

The maiden heard this salutation  
from the man of fire who announced  
her senses were perturbed her thoughts were dismayed  
she stood there in amazement  
and said secretly to herself,

*Blessed is that mouth which announced to Mary!*

‘Whence comes this man of fire?  
Why should a spiritual being come to visit me?  
Who is he? To what place does he belong?  
Who is “his Lord”; that he said to me,  
“My Lord is with you”? He has upset and perturbed me.

*Blessed is that mouth which announced to Mary!*

The Watcher spoke to the maiden,  
‘Do not be upset, Mary; salutation to you,  
for you shall conceive and give birth to the Wonderful;  
from your womb the Sun shall shine forth  
and He will drive out the world’s darkness:

*Blessed is that mouth which announced to Mary!*

Mary says to the angel,  
‘Explain to me, O fiery being, what you mean.  
Your appearance is weighty, your raiment is of flame,  
your lips are fire as they utter.  
Who is able to speak with you?

*Blessed is that mouth which announced to Mary!*

‘Your exalted manner of speech belongs elsewhere:  
why do you speak like us and with us?  
Your appearance is exalted and not of this earth;  
if there is some race of fiery beings  
then it is to it that you belong, O fearsome hero.

*Blessed is that mouth which announced to Mary!*

‘O offspring of flame, explain to me  
the matter concerning which you speak,  
for you have announced a birth — yet I have known no man.  
Your message is fearsome, like yourself:  
your voice and your words are just like your appearance.

*Blessed is that mouth which announced to Mary!*

‘How can there be a conception without a man?  
How can a virgin give birth?  
Who has ever beheld a crop without any seed?  
Explain to me what it is you are saying,  
how all this can possibly take place.’

*Blessed is that mouth which announced to Mary!*

The Watcher replied, ‘It is the Holy Spirit  
who will come to you and make holy your womb;  
then the Power of the Most High shall descend and reside in you.  
From your womb shall Riches shine out  
— to pay all your debts of the world.’

*Blessed is that mouth which announced to Mary!*

## FOR REFLECTION:

1. Read the account of the Annunciation in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 1:26 - 38). Which references to the scripture passage do you recognize in the hymn? Are there other references to scripture aside from the account of the Annunciation?
2. What titles of the Mother of God are found in this hymn? Are any of them new to you?
3. Think about the ways that St. Gabriel is referred to in this hymn, and then consider the icon of the Annunciation. How are these characteristics portrayed in his depiction in the icon?
4. What is it that St. Gabriel says at the conclusion of the hymn that resolves Mary’s qualms about what he is telling her?
5. This hymn was meant to be sung! Try chanting it with any melody you are familiar with from church, or on one note. What difference does singing it versus reading it make to you?