

The Angel stated that John would be sanctified. He will drink no wine or strong drink. This means there is a close relationship between mortification and sanctification. The Angel goes on to say that John would be holy already in his mother's womb. This occurred when Our Lady visited Elizabeth, and the moment Mary's words sounded in Elizabeth's ears, the child in her womb stirred with joy because he was sanctified with the grace of God. Angels are primarily messengers of God's grace. They are the channels of God's grace. In the Church's tradition, we are told, God exercises his providence for us through them.

Gabriel continues that John already sanctified in his mother's womb, when he grows up, will convert many unbelieving and sinful Jews in Palestine. Angels are sent by God to bring back sinners and to convert stubborn unbelievers. We must listen to the message, we must have open ears, and unlike Zachary, we must believe. Once we believe, we must communicate it to others, as John, who was foretold to be the forerunner of Jesus. People must first be converted from sin and then their minds will be open to the revealed word of God. This is a profound and frightening lesson for us. Our minds will only be as open to God's word as our hearts are sinless.

Zachary heard with his ears, but did not believe. In fact, he objected. Gabriel is an angel who stands before the throne of God, foretelling that his wife would conceive, and he doubted the angels word. A heretic is one who denies what God has revealed, such as Christ's divinity, or the Real Presence, or the existence of heaven or hell. A heretic is also one who doubts what God has revealed. The world in which we are living, is a world of massive doubt. The result is a world of profound misery. Only the humble acceptance of God's word, only faith, brings peace to mind and joy to the heart. It is pride, and behind doubt and denial is always pride. In our lives, our own guardian spirits, are always communicating God's words to us. The secret is to believe what we are being told and you don't have to have a mystical experience. For those sincerely seeking to do God's will, they must trust that the idea in their minds, the impulses in their wills that bring them peace, is from God. Trust God. God is the God of Peace. The son of God who became man is the Prince of Peace. Only believers are at peace. Unbelievers are always troubled. Gabriel told Zachary that he was sent by God to bring the Good News. The good news is the Gospel. It was announced on Christmas morning to the shepherds that the Merciful has restored us to His friendship. The same archangel Gabriel whose words were doubted by Zachary, are believed by Mary, the mother of our Redeemer. Obtain for us Mary, some of your own deep faith of God's speaking to us, for you are the Queen of Angels.

******(excerpted from: therealpresence.org)

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Saint Gabriel the Archangel

Feast Day: March 24



***Blessed Saint Gabriel, Archangel
we beseech you to intercede for us at the throne of divine mercy:
As you announced the mystery of the Incarnation to Mary,
so through your prayers may we receive strength of faith
and courage of spirit, and thus find favor with God
and redemption through Christ our Lord.
May we sing the praise of God our Savior with
the angels and saints in heaven forever and ever.
Amen.***

St. Gabriel, the Archangel

*The name Gabriel means “man of God,” or “God has shown himself mighty.” His name appears four times in the Bible: In Daniel 8, he explains the vision of the horned ram as portending the destruction of the Persian Empire by the Macedonian Alexander the Great, after whose death the kingdom will be divided up among his generals, from one of whom will spring Antiochus Epiphanes. In chapter 9, after Daniel had prayed for Israel, we read that “the man Gabriel...flying swiftly touched me” and he communicated to him the mysterious prophecy of the “seventy weeks” of years which should elapse before the coming of Christ. In the New Testament he foretells to Zachary the birth of the Precursor, and to Mary that of the Savior.

* (excerpted from: www.new.advent.org)

**The focus of this essay will be the angel Gabriel appearing to Zachary, announcing the birth of John the Baptist. Angels play a prominent role in the Old Testament. It might even be said that the Old Testament is the Bible of the Angels. One ancient prophet after another was guided and directed by the angels of God. Behind this phenomenal multitude of Angels in the Old Testament was the preparation of the coming Messiah. Once we enter the New Testament, we can almost say that Angels are an essential part of the fulfillment of the messianic prophecies of the Old Law. Just as it was a fallen angel who first tempted our first parents, we should therefore expect the good Angels to bring comfort and consolation to the human race expecting its Redeemer. Our meditations will concentrate on the role of the angels in foretelling the coming of the Redeemer; the role of the angels in foretelling the conception of the son of God becoming man; the role of the angels when Christ was born in Bethlehem and the role of the angels during Christ's infancy. Then silence for 30 years, and no sooner does Christ begin his public ministry; then he is tempted by the evil spirits and is consoled by the good angels. During our Lord's public ministry of teaching the Gospel, angels fit in from beginning to end. During our Lord's passion, angels were there. Also at his resurrection and ascension into heaven, the angels were there. Finally, in chapter after chapter in the book of the Apocalypse, the foretelling of the role of the angels in the church established by Christ is detailed. With that as a background, we will focus on the one event by which we should both reflectively pray and prayerfully reflect. Significantly it was St. Luke, the Apostle who brought news of the angels in the Annunciation of Our Lady. It was St. Luke who is often called the evangelist of the angels.

What the angel Gabriel told Zachary, is now what is being duplicated and fulfilled, in the speech Raphael said to Tobias. St. Luke identifies the priest Zachary as doing his priestly work of offering sacrifice in the temple. He was a married man whose wife Elizabeth was childless. When Gabriel appears, Zachary is terrified but Gabriel assures him with the good news that his wife would bear a son and that his name would be "John" and he will be great before the Lord. He shall drink no wine or strong drink; he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb; he shall bring back to God many of the children of Israel; he shall himself go before the Lord in the desert; and in the power of Elijah, turn the house of father's to their children and the unbelieving to the wisdom of the just to prepare for the Lord a perfect people.

Zachary doubts what Gabriel is saying to him. He wonders how an aged woman beyond the childbearing years could conceive a child. Gabriel responds that he stands in the presence of God and because Zachary spoke this way he would be dumb and unable to speak until the day all of these things come to pass.

Let us reflect on what the angel is saying to Zachary. For many years Zachary and Elizabeth had been praying that God might bless them with an offspring. These prayers were finally being heard and the human reaction is that we doubt in God's providence. By divine providence we mean that God is constantly, every moment, providing for our needs, therefore why are we afraid? God knows best when and how to answer our prayers. There is no such thing as an unanswered prayer. The angel, promised Zachary a miracle. Should we not also expect miracles? Miracles give credibility to our faith. Total fidelity to Jesus will give us light for the mind and strength for the will. Gabriel was very specific that Elizabeth would bear a son and his name would be "John" which means "gift of God". Angels receive communication from God and direct what God tells them to tell us in very specific terms. This is part of the Spirituality in which we are reared. The word greatness consists in being chosen by God and being blessed with his grace. To be great is to have God's grace. Everyone else is not only, not great, **but** unimportant, and insignificant, grace depends on the grace we have received from God.