

Mary, Elizabeth favored

Joe Sarnicola/Contributing writer

God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to look for a woman named Mary who was engaged to a man named Joseph. When Gabriel found Mary, he said to her, "Hail favored one! The Lord is with you." Mary was afraid. She had never seen an angel before, and she wondered if she had done something to anger God. Gabriel sensed Mary's fear, and he tried to reassure her.

"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. You will bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be called the Son of the Most High." Then the angel gave Mary another message. "Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age; for nothing will be impossible with God."

Although Mary was amazed at the words of the angel, she was no longer afraid. She said to him, "I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done according to your word." And the angel was gone from Mary's presence. Mary packed her belongings and went to Judah to tell Elizabeth what had happened. When Elizabeth answered the door, she was filled with the Holy Spirit as soon as she saw Mary.

Practically shouting with excitement, Elizabeth said to Mary, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

How does this happen to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? At the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy."

Then Mary, too, was filled with the Holy Spirit. She replied, almost in song, "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, for he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness. His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him. He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, according to his promise to our fathers."

Mary and Elizabeth eagerly awaited the births of their children. When Elizabeth had her baby, a boy, she said, "He will be called John." Mary had her son in Bethlehem, where she had gone with Joseph to be counted in the census. They had to sleep in a stable, because all of the inns were full of travelers. She called her son Jesus, as the angel had told her.



Illustration by Linda Jeanne Rivers



Shepherds from nearby and Magi from far away came to see the baby Jesus.

READ MORE ABOUT IT:

Luke 1

Q&A

1. Who gave a special message to Mary from God?
2. What happened when Elizabeth heard Mary's voice?

BIBLE ACCENT

Angels prophesied the births of other children in the Bible besides Jesus, including Isaac and John the Baptist.

Some astronomers believe the star that led the Magi to Bethlehem was actually the combined brightness of Mars, Saturn and Jupiter, which had aligned in the sky. Exchanging gifts on Christmas is based in part on the Magi's gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

The shepherds saw the sky above their fields filled with angels. The message of one of the angels was given not only to the shepherds, but to all of us: "Peace on Earth."

ST. PETER FOURIER

Peter Fourier enrolled in a Jesuit university in 1580, when he was 15. After graduation he operated a school from his home.

A few years later he joined the Canons Regular of St. Augustine. He continued with his academic studies until he received his doctorate degree.

Peter was appointed as procurator and vicar of an abbey parish. He eventually opened a school where he could educate people the way he believed they should be.

Peter's success led to an assignment to visit the monasteries of the region to improve discipline and unity among the clerics. He died as a convent chaplain and a school teacher in 1640. We honor him on Dec. 9.



Kids' Club

You can win a \$50 savings bond by writing an essay (200 or fewer words) in response to **Why do you think the church considers Easter even more important than Christmas?** Send your essay — including name, home address, telephone number, school and grade — to *Catholic Courier*, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, NY 14624. Deadline for entries is Dec. 18. The winner will be notified by phone. The winner's essay will be published in an upcoming issue of *Kids' Chronicle*.

Last month's winner was Ryann Sypniewski, a sixth-grader at Christ the King School in Irondequoit. In response to **What are the qualities you think a good leader should have?** she wrote, "I think a leader should have the qualities of courage, knowledge and faith. Courage, because leaders need to stand up for that they believe in. They shouldn't be afraid what others think of them for doing something right. They should do the right thing instead of doing the easy thing. They should stand up for their beliefs whether they are religious or political.

"A leader should have knowledge because leaders have to be wise. They have to understand things that are very important in our society. They also need common sense. Leaders don't have to be Einstein, but they need to know about matters that are in our lives from day to day.

"I think a leader should have faith because, if they have faith, it shows that they know that things happen for a reason. Also, it shows that they believe in goodness in our world. They shouldn't just have faith in their God, but they should have faith in themselves. If they have faith in themselves, they will succeed more in life and live happier lives."

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Puzzle

Unscramble the following words to find a hidden message.

Answer on page 4.

1. i p s d c i l e

2. s t r i p e

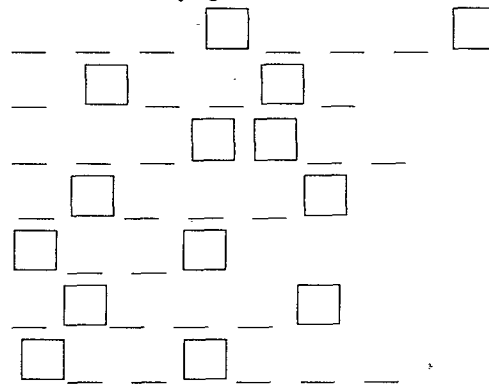
3. l a p e t s o

4. m o w d i s

5. y o h l

6. y a p e r r

7. r i c e l a m



Hidden message: