

Nativity of the Theotokos

NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS AND PRESENTATION OF THE THEOTOKOS

Objectives:

1. Students should be able to tell the stories of these two great feasts.
2. Students should know the names of Joachim and Anna and Mary.

Possible Lesson Plan:

1. Open with prayer.

2. Read the story of the feasts:

There lived in the land of Israel a couple names Joachim and Anna. Joachim and Anna were Jews; God called the Jews His chosen, or special, people, and had given them His law and His prophets. Through the prophets, God had spoken to His special people, telling them that He would send His Son to be their king. And through the years, God had given the Jewish people many mighty and godly kings, like King David and King Solomon. Joachim and Anna were from the family of David. But, their own lives were sad because they had no children.

In those days, a family with no children was thought to be worthless. In church, Joachim and Anna could not give their gifts until all the families with children had finished worshipping. They were called cursed. Everyone thought that they must have done something very bad for God to punish them by not letting them have children. One day, when Joachim and Anna came to the temple to worship, a very cruel temple servant told them to go away and not to come back until all the people with children had finished!

Joachim and Anna left in silence. They were so sad. Anna went home, but Joachim went out to the desert mountains to pray and fast to the Lord. Anna stayed at home and also prayed and fasted. At the end of forty days, God sent an angel to Joachim as he prayed and one to Anna as she prayed. The angel told each of them something wonderful. God was going to give them a baby! Just like Sarah and Hannah, even though they were old, God was going to answer their prayers! Joachim hurried home to tell Anna the good news, but the angel had already told Anna. How happy they were! And, their baby would be the mother of the Messiah, the king that God had promised for hundreds of years.

What the angel had promised came true. Joachim and Anna, old as they were, did have a baby. They named their tiny girl Mary. She was truly beautiful. And they promised God that they would give her back to Him to serve Him.

Soon little Mary was three years old. She was traveling the long dusty road from her village of Nazareth to the gleaming city of Jerusalem. Her mother, Anna, and her father, Joachim, had promised her this journey as long as she could remember. It took five days to reach Jerusalem. Finally, instead of only dusty brown road, the travelers began to see the brightly-colored houses of Jerusalem. Then, as they came around the curve at the Mount of Olives, Mary saw the brilliant sun shining off the massive white and gold of the Temple. This was to be her home!

That very afternoon, Joachim and Anna dressed Mary in her very best clothes. They were happy, but sad, too. They would miss their little girl so much. But, a promise to God must be kept. Would Mary be lonely and afraid? They walked through the outer court of the temple, crowded with merchants, moneychangers, and sellers of all sorts of animals. As they reached the inner gate, Mary saw the temple virgins – young women dedicated to God – walking up the steps bearing torches of fire. This was truly her home! She left her parents and confidently climbed the same steps all by herself. The high priest gathered her in his arms and blessed her. Mary would stay there, living with the other girls, learning to fast and pray and to be pleasing to God. She was so happy!

The church celebrates the birthday of Mary on September 8. We celebrate her entrance into the temple on November 21.

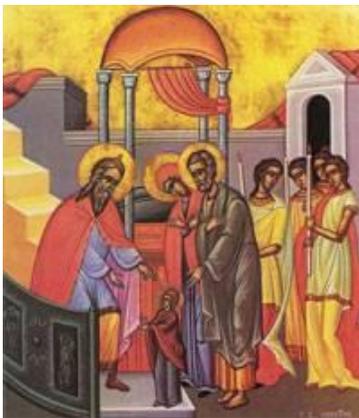
3. Feed the Elephant True/False Questions:

True	False
Mary's parents were Joachim & Anna	Mary's father was Noah.
Mary was born in Nazareth.	Mary was born in Jerusalem.
God sent an angel to Joachim & Anna.	God called Joachim on the telephone
Mary climbed the temple steps by herself.	Joachim carried Mary to the temple.

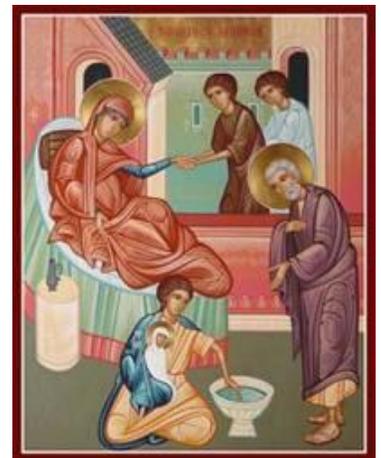
4. Review the story again, with the icons. Identify each figure. What was the role of each in the story? Ask the children: How did Joachim and Anna feel when they couldn't have a child? How do you feel when people say bad things about you? Is it good to say bad things about other people? How did Mary feel when saying good-bye to her parents? Why did she climb the steps to the temple? Would you be brave enough to do that?

5. Have a birthday cake for Mary, complete with candles and song. If you feel particularly adventuresome, what about the children writing new words from their story for the "Happy Birthday" song?

6. Make the "Steps of the Temple." Take a long piece of construction paper and fold like a fan into 15 steps (or fewer if it's too hard). Using the pictures on the next page, copy and cut out each figure for each child. Color the figures and glue or tape a Popsicle stick behind each to make a puppet. Re-enact Mary climbing the steps of the temple.



7. Close with prayer.



Entrance of Theotokos

Make copies of figures. Have children color them, cut them out on dotted lines and paste to popsicle sticks for puppets. From paper or cardboard, fold 15 steps. Act out the scene.



Fold like a fan.



