# ALL-THINGS-MARIAN-04-11-24

**Music:** [00:00:00] All Things Marian, a weekly program of information, research, and experience about the Virgin Mary, sponsored by the International Marian Research Institute of the University of Dayton. Now your host, Michele Foley.

**Michele Foley:** Hello, friends. Welcome to All Things Marian. Today, we have a very special guest, Father [00:01:00] Johann Roten. Father Roten is a Marianist priest. He has earned his Doctorate in Sacred Theology from the Marianist, International Marianist Research Institute in Dayton, Ohio. Today, his subject is the Annunciation, which is particularly important to our

faith life and to our relationship with the Eucharist. Today we have, again, a presenter who will give us much information, and I hope that you will listen to our podcast or go to the website of Radio Maria. Thank you, Father Roten, and welcome to our program, for which you are really the founder.

**Fr. Roten:** Thank you.

Thank you very much. And yes, indeed, [00:02:00] we'll talk about Mary, and in a special way, and in her relationship to the Annunciation. You know that we normally each year on March 25, we celebrate the solemnity and it's called indeed the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord.

Now, this year there was a little change. The 25th of March actually collided, if I may say, with Holy Week, and so the decision was made to give a special date, different date to the Annunciation, and that has happened the last Monday on April the 8th. We have celebrated

the solemnity of the Annunciation at that [00:03:00] particular time in order to highlight the importance of that solemnity. It is in a certain sense, you know, the beginning of Christianity. It is in a certain sense also the beginning of a spirituality, which we might call a, inter - national spirituality because it is incarnational.

And we'll highlight a little bit, you know, what the meaning of this incarnational spirituality is, and by therefore it is universal, itis international, if you may use that particular word. So what I'd like to do today is to give a little bit of a historical [00:04:00] backdrop to the solemnity of the Annunciation, and then go into a little bit further down and greater depth with regard to the

meaning of that feast with regard to the whole of the Salvation history, and specifically in order to highlight how between the Old Testament and the New Testament and shown in and through the Annunciation, we have a very strong connection. And the high similarity, similarity reduction goes to the following, that the Annunciation is the culmination.

It is the fulfillment of [00:05:00] a whole movement, already present in the Old Testament, and being, you know, already in the Old Testament being a promise but that promise came to fruition in the, in the solemnity of the Annunciation. So, when talking about the historical backdrop, I think it's interesting to note why this celebration of the conception of Jesus Christ is celebrated on the particular date of March 25th.

It is in the early third century. Yeah, that Tertullian, who died in [00:06:00] 220, if I remember correctly, he, man, this man Tertullian states in a very, I would say solemn way that Our Savior died on the cross on March 25.

And interesting enough this is, you know, confirmed by Hippolytus of Rome. He is of the same period. He died in 235. But also Saint Augustine, who died in 431, the same idea is being promoted. Saint Augustine does it in his treatise, De Trinitate, On the Trinity, and book four and chapter five and [00:07:00] very actually states that and I quote, Jesus died on the cross on March 25, the same day

of the year, as that on which he was conceived, unquote. So this date then became the starting point for the Christmas cycle. Since, you know, nine months from the Annunciation is the placement of the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day, and his circumcision follows on the eighth day, January 1st, and his presentation in the Temple, the 40th day after his birth at Bethlehem, and it is therefore placed then on February the 2nd, [00:08:00] so the birth of the foreigner of the Lord, St.

John the Baptist, therefore falls on June 24th since the angel told Mary at the Annunciation that Elizabeth your kinswoman has conceived a son in her old age and now is in her sixth month for nothing is impossible with God, as we read in the 1:36 to 37. So when we look at the Annunciation, the Annunciation has its main focus on the Incarnation.

God became man to save us. And the prayers of the Mass as well as the [00:09:00] preface stress at the same time, you know, the title of Virgin and when he talks about Mary and for the theme we find in the liturgy of this Solemnity is the first beginning of the Church as expressed in the prayer over the gifts and that actually, you know, leads to this kind of complex understanding of the beginning of the Church.

It is not specifically and exclusively, you know, due to the Pentecost event, but it began with the birth of Christ. Therefore, you know, the Incarnation is already a part of the formation of the Church. [00:10:00] And then, you know, again at the death of Christ, there you have the fulfillment of salvation, which is the essential reference to the Church and the mission of the Church.

And then of course, you know, Pentecost as the third element with the coming of the Holy Spirit to explain the notion, the beginning, the goal of the Church. Now, coming back to the Annunciation, you know, scripturally, both the Gospel of Saint Matthew in the first chapter of 18 to 25,

and that of St. Luke, and also the first chapter, but 26 to 38, [00:11:00] they provide, you know, explicit evidence for Mary's virginal conception of Jesus. The Church teaches that Mary was a virgin before, during, and after the birth of Christ. And Mary conceived Jesus in her womb by the power of the most high as Luke 1:35 tells us,

and without the loss of her virginity, as the Catechism in number 485, you know, confirms. So Mary, remained a virgin in giving birth to Jesus. his miraculous birth did not diminish her original integrity, but sanctified it. This [00:12:00] is also, in a very beautiful way, reconfirmed by the Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, we are all familiar with, but specifically, you know, on Article 57.

So, following the birth of Jesus, Mary remained a virgin the rest of her early life, until she was taken up body and soul into heaven, where she reigns as queen. And this again, we have it in *Lumen Gentium*, 59. But, on the other hand, you know, we have to say that Mary's virginity became the first problem of the Patristic age. St.

Justin the Martyr, we, well, we, we well know, we [00:13:00] know him very well. He died in 165. He points already to Isaiah 7:14. In his treatise against Trypho, quite well known. And pointing to 7:14, he actually says that, that particular name, Parthenos, is, has, should be read

as virginity, as virgin. However, you know, Trypho, he was of a different opinion, and he said, no, we should translate it as Almah, which means a young girl in the Septuagint, the translation of the sacred scripture, but [00:14:00] both Saint Ireneus of Lyons, who died in 202, and Tertullian agree with St.

Justin. And, in other words, that no, the meaning of that particular word is indeed virgin, and not simply a young woman. And Zeno of Verona, another early church father, who died in, I guess 372, was the first to refer, to refer to Mary's virginity in those Latin terms that are familiar to us.

Namely ante partum, in partu, post partum, meaning, [00:15:00] that is, before birth, during birth, and after birth. Now St. Ambrose of the Milan, he is, you know, in the fourth century, died in 397, along with Saint Jerome, a little bit later, 420, they defended the perpetual virginity of Mary against, in particular, you know, Jovinian and also, Helvetius, respectively. People who are known in order to contradict, if you want, the official teaching.

And so, you know, the two, Jovinian and Helvetius [00:16:00] and they stated and proclaimed it that Mary had other children, but the great Latin Doctor of the Church, St. Augustine, Bishop also of Hippo, supports the perpetual virginity of Mary and compares it to the resurrection of the Lord, who had the power and he formulates two paths

through closed doors, which for him actually meant he had the same power to pass through the womb of Mary, we know that the concern of Nicea in the year 325 approved the formula ex Maria virgine, meaning, [00:17:00] born of the Virgin Mary, and inserted that particular expression, ex Maria virgine, into the Creed.

And this was later confirmed by the Second Council of Constantinople in the year 553,

and also by the Non Ecumenical Lateran Council under Pope Saint Martin the first, which in, I guess it was in 649, promulgated the perpetual virginity of Mary. And it is finally, if you want, finally in the sense of conclusively with, sixth Ecumenical Council in Constantinople again.

And it is the third one. It actually happened in [00:18:00] 681, in this particular ecumenical council then accepted in its canon of different decisions and without question and thereby clearly confirmed, you know, the dogmatic character of the ex virgin, ex Maria virgine, in other words, her virginity before, during, and after giving birth to Christ.

Well, it is, you know, important to understand Mary's perpetual virginity in light of the mystery of Christ, the meaning of who Christ is, as we have it, for instance, in Ephesians. Beautiful text [00:19:00] in chapter 3, 4, and 11. And all of us are exhorted, you know, to imitate the great virtues of Mary. Her fidelity, her discipleship, her charity.

And also, you know, her purity, as *Lumen Gentium* in 63 and 64 says, however, you know, her perpetual virginity primarily and unmistakably points to the importance of the Incarnation and to the mystery of the Eternal Word becoming flesh in Mary's womb without the intervention of a human father and in a marriage of the human and divine, through the marvelous plan of God all [00:20:00] mighty.

And that should be enough for, let's say, a historical part on the Solemnity of the Annunciation. However, I think it would be important to keep in mind what St. Luke actually developed in his way of describing the Annunciation. It is very important because we find in Luke a beautiful way of connecting the Old Testament with the New Testament.

And in order to do that, he chooses a literary form, which is typical for the Old [00:21:00] Testament and in through which we do have in the Old Testament already, you know, the announcement of a miraculous birth, but also related to it, most of the time, the announcement of a particular vocation. And so Luke

takes that literary form and applies it to the Annunciation of the coming of Jesus Christ into the world, the world. You know, when we talk about this literary form, typical of the Old Testament, it's very easy, you know, to ascertain it. When you look at Isaac, at Samson, if you look at [00:22:00] Samuel, and if you look at Emmanuel, as he is presented in Isaiah 7:14,

these presentations, they usually start out with the situation of the person who is going to have the promise, then there is, you know, an apparition of either the angel or a prophet in order to, sent by God, in order to explain what this miraculous birth is all about.

And then, you know, we also have on a third level, the revelation of the birth, meaning it happens in and through a free intervention of God, [00:23:00] and at the same time also is given the name of the child. So the announcement of the revelation happens at this particular stage.

And then the next one is the astonishment. And the question of the people who had been approached, and that usually, you know, is then taken care of by a gift as a sign to the person who has been approached. And we actually find that, you know, in the promise of the birth of Isaac and Samson and the others that you have mentioned and it is used in the same way also with regard

to Mary. The situation of Mary in the beginning, [00:24:00] she's a virgin, she is a young woman, she is betrothed, and then the apparition of the angel who was sent by God, and then the revelation of what that is going to come, a revelation of the birth and that being, you know, the result of free intervention of God and the name that needs to be given to the child, then comes.

Also for Mary, the astonishment on her part. And at the same time also her questioning. And then, you know, the answer we are all familiar with. Mary says, I am the servant of the Lord, and puts into that sentence [00:25:00] the whole understanding of her own person and of her own life. And as a gift of confirmation, we have this promise of the angel, well, promise, reality, that yes, Joachim’s woman is already in her six months, and he had been qualified as being, you know, not able to give, you know, a child to her husband. In other words, this presentation of combination between the Old and the New Testament is a wonderful way of understanding that God makes promises, and he keeps them. He makes them in order to prepare [00:26:00] slowly but surely the mentality of the people, so they can be partial, they can be with regard

to a particular historical situation. But in the end, and that is indeed, you know, the case, with that announcement of the miraculous birth for Jesus Christ. That in that situation for that particular event, we use the name of culmination and fulfillment, of full realization of the promise made to Israel, to the People who were hungering for the presence [00:27:00] and the resolution of their difficulties.

So we do have, on the one hand, if you want, that messianic announcement and character, something is going to happen. What happens will be, you know, in and through Jesus, the saving Lord who intervenes. Yes, indeed. There is a messiahship that comes with Jesus. And that is the reason why he is called great meaning absolute in the sense of God's absolute character.

He is the son of the most highest. He is a throne of David. He is the holy one. Also, you know, to be [00:28:00] understood in terms of the absolute character of that, of that word, messianic aspect, the coming of the savior is at the same time, you know, also an eschatological reality, meaning it does not happen like in the case of Isaac or of Samson or Samuel, but it happens once and for all.

He is the ultimate savior, promised one, miraculous birth, and therefore, you know, the vocation that comes with it for Mary is a vocation of motherhood, and at the same time, also of [00:29:00] intimately participating in that salvation history, which finds its beginning and end, so to speak, only in one person, and that is Jesus Christ.

And I believe we have reached the halftime timer, so I turn the floor over to the studio, and we'll pick it up, you know, after the break.

**Michele Foley:** Yes and thank you Father. We now go to our break and we will see you or listen and be with you in a few moments. Please join us after the break and enjoy the beautiful music that Radio Maria, a Catholic voice in your home, brings to you with All Things Marian.

Thank you.

**Music:** [00:30:00] Immaculate

Mary, all praises we sing, You reign now in splendor with Jesus our King. Ave, ave, ave, Maria. Ave, ave, Maria. In heaven,

all blessed, your [00:31:00] glory proclaim. On earth we your children, invoke your sweet name. Ave, ave, ave, Maria. Ave, ave, Maria. We pray for the church, our true mother on earth, And beg you to watch over the land of our birth. Ave, ave, ave. You are listening to Radio Maria.[00:32:00]

A Catholic Voice in Your Home. We now return to our program, All Things Marian, brought to you by the International Marian Research Institute of the University of Dayton.

**Michele Foley:** Hello friends, and thank you for joining us today. We are just past the Easter season, and Father Roten, a Marianist priest who is here in Dayton with us, is speaking to us today and explaining the importance and significance of the Annunciation.

Thank you for joining us, Father, and please continue, and thank you to all of our listeners, wherever you are.

**Fr. Roten:** Thank you. Thank you again, Michele, and yes, [00:33:00] indeed, I would like to show how the reality of that feast, the Solemnity of the Annunciation, was actually received and became, you know,

concrete and specific among the believing people. You know, you have on the one hand, the abstract, if you want, doctrine, what it means, where it comes from, what its purpose is and how it got there. That is one level, but there should be another level.

There should be a deeper level, a more concrete and, I would say, local level, where some of these [00:34:00] villages, you know, truth, actually enter into the life of the Church, it is the Church made of people of course, concrete people. And we have, indeed, with regard to the Assumption, two interesting and very meaningful traditions.

One of them is more of the Eastern Church. The other one, more proper to the Western, the Latin Church, but most of them, you know are, in a certain sense, complementary because they highlight different aspects, one more liturgical, the other one more spiritual and apostolic, [00:35:00] a wonderful way, you know, of putting into practice, again and once more, what John Paul II actually told us, that the Church is breathing with two lungs.

And so the very first one of these traditions is what is known by most people, I guess the Akathist hymn, the Akathist hymn uh, actually means it is a song, it is a hymn that has to be sung people being standing up, akathist means standing. So it is already, if you want to name an expression of [00:36:00] special reverence,

special devotion, and we know that the Akathist hymn is an alphabetic acrostic of 24 strophes each of which is a letter of the Greek alphabet. That's the meaning of the acrostic and in which it was written follows the alphabet and since Greek was, you know, the language, so it follows the Greek alphabet.

So you do have twenty four of these strophes and the first twelve strophes actually sing of the gospel of the infancy narrative. And that means of the [00:37:00] Annunciation, the Incarnation, the Visitation the disturbance of Joseph, the visit of the shepherds and the magi, the flight into Egypt,

and the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple. That is the first of those twelve, you know, strophes. And then you have, those are the first part of the twenty four, the first twelve strophes. And then the second one simply talks about, you know, the mystery of the incarnation and of Mary's virginal

Motherhood. It's, if you want, a meditation on what had been said in the first twelve strophes. And when we look at that [00:38:00] prayer, because it is a prayer, but it's more than a simple prayer. It is a declaration, if you want, of love and of joy. And I will give you an example of that. But I think it would be important to keep in mind that we do not know exactly, you know, when it was actually, you know, put together.

Who did it? Quite a few people, and that sounds reasonable. I say that it was Saint Romanos the Melodist, who died in 556 at Constantinople. And, so you know, some of the historians actually tell us the Akathist was composed as a hymn of [00:39:00] thanksgiving after, you know, the government was able to keep in check, let's put it like that, some of the rebellious factions of that time and some of, you know, the attempts

to overrun, you know, the whole government and the whole city. So there is, let's say a date, that is generally given. And that's, you know, 626. And it's believed that during the siege of 626, in fact, in the year of Patriarch Sergius, consecrated his city to Mary making the Akathist hymn a chant of victory and [00:40:00] of thanksgiving.

There will be much you know, to be said about that. One important thing is that the Western Church adopted the Akathist, but in a different form. When we look at the litanies of Mary, and in particular, you know, the Litany of Loretto, but there were others before that, they had been up to a certain point you know a reworking, reforming of the Akathist hymn.

So there again, you have the connection between East and West, and I think it would be a good thing at this point to enjoy, at [00:41:00] least you know, the first of those strophes of the Akathist hymn in order to savor the joy that comes with the Incarnation of Christ. The Annunciation is not a solemnity for itself but for the birth of Christ.

But it is the same time, a wonderful expression of joy because, yes, in and through Mary, we receive the savior of humanity, yeah? And so, you know, the very first strophe goes like this, Rejoice, or hail, and then rejoice is addressed to Mary, yeah? Rejoice through you, joy rings out again. Rejoice through [00:42:00] you, sorrow is put

to flight. Rejoice a resurrection of fallen Adam. Rejoice, or redemption of the tears of Eve. Rejoice a sublime peak of human intellect. Rejoice, O profound abyss, even for angels’ eyes. Rejoice, for in you the king's throne was elevated. Rejoice, for you bear the one who sustains everything.

Rejoice, O star that go before the sun. Rejoice, O woman of the incarnate God. Rejoice, for through you all creation is renewed. Rejoice, for through you the [00:43:00] Creator became a baby. Rejoice, O Virgin, and bright. The language is typical, if you want of the liturgy. It is very, if you want, elevated,

solemn language and the whole of that particular song called the Akathist hymn is filled with uh, images, images that are taken from the Old Testament and which actually highlight if you want, the grandeur but also, you know, the sublimity of Mary's humility. Yeah. And so there you have, you know, one example, [00:44:00] it actually takes the Solemnity of the Annunciation and makes it into something that is practiced in a contemplative way, in a liturgical way, in a way which explains for the people what the Annunciation actually means.

So that is one example, but we do have another example and that takes us back to the Western Church. And there the annunciation has been made, if you want, more down to earth, more explicit, more conform to you know, certain pious mentality of the [00:45:00] people, in one word the same similar tradition in the

Western Church is the Angelus, and we know that in the Apostolic Constitution on the devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, which we call, we know, as Marialis Cultus, especially number 41. Pope Paul VI strongly recommended the preserving of the custom of reciting the Angelus three times a day. I don't know whether he was successful, but yes, he thought it would be a good thing.

And it's one of the [00:46:00] only specific prayers that he actually mentions in this wonderful document that talks about the Marian devotion, the Marialis Cultus, in order to highlight that he believes that the Incarnation actually should show it. Also in our behavior, and there is no more incarnate behavior than to sing, if you want to recite the prayer of the Angelus three times a day.

In other words, you know, its devotion consists of three Hail Marys with versicles and a concluding [00:47:00] prayer. And its name actually comes from the first word of the opening versicle in Latin, meaning the Angelus Domine, the Angel of God, and so you're probably familiar with it. The text is as follows. The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary, and she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

There you have the Angel, there you have Mary, and then follows the Hail Mary. And then the second, you know, commentary of the whole Annunciation. Behold the handmaid of the Lord, and be it done unto me, according to your word. Follows again Hail Mary, and then you have the [00:48:00] third,

you know, teaching. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. And there we continue with the Hail Mary, and then follows, if you want a concluding prayer. Pray for us Holy Mother of God that we may be worthy of the promises of Christ, and so we summarize in the concluding prayer.

Let us pray, pour forth we beg you, oh Lord your grace into our hearts that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ, your Son was made known by the message of an angel. May be his passion and cross be brought to the glory of his resurrection through [00:49:00] the same Christ our Lord.

And you know that this particular prayer actually is in a certain sense what we could call the vehicle of the Hail Mary. The Hail Mary was not that known, was not, you know, made into a prayer early on. It is actually, you know finally in the 16th century that the various devotions of the angels acquired, if you want some kind of a unitary form, the form that I just presented, and that was yes indeed in 1724 that

Pope Benedict XIV then definitively approved while prescribing that during Easter time, the [00:50:00] Angel of the Lord should be dropped and should be replaced by the Regina Caeli. We are simply, I believe, familiar with the Regina Caeli, which is one of these Eastern antiphons which are very beautiful and are quite frequently and generally sung by religious communities at the end of Vespers, but the important thing here is that it is actually in and through three stages that the Angelus became what it is now and it is again in and through Benedict XIV that the decision [00:51:00] was made as to the content of the prayer but also the three

times a day at which it should be said. The very first one in the morning, you know, six o'clock early, and then at noon a second time, and then at six o'clock in the evening. It all started with you know, the Franciscans as frequently is the case with these popular prayers. And it was in the beginning said in the evening then it was developed and that was the beginning of the 14th century

you know, to say it also in the morning. And it is in the 15th century that they came to the conclusion there [00:52:00] is another good time of doing it. And that will be you know, at noon. So you do have you know, here a second example of, let's say the practicality of the content of the Annunciation, and talking about, you know, practicality, you see the difference with the

East. In the East the Akathist hymn is a typically liturgical prayer, a prayer that is there in order to celebrate, in order to highlight, in order to glorify, in order to joy, to rejoice in the presence of that new and [00:53:00] definitive, you know, decision of Christ's coming, whereas in the West, it has a more Apostolic meaning.

More Apostolic because it actually uh, you know, highlights the whole day, and how the whole day should be also seen in light of the Resurrection, and specifically then if you want the pursuit and the practicality and you know, practical realization of the Incarnation.

It is in this particular prayer that we find a whole way of inviting us to be participants of Christ's coming [00:54:00] into the world. Not only then, not only in the past, but in the present and today. And I think that that should be concluding for today's meditation on the Incarnation, or specifically if you want the solemnity of the Annunciation.

Thank you.

**Michele Foley:** Thank you, Father. It was so beautiful and so meaningful to all of us. And I hope that those of you who are listening may, it may refresh you as it has us and that you will take up this beautiful prayer at least three times a day, or if not three, at least two. So thank you Father for this beautiful and very poignant as well as theologically correct reflection on [00:55:00] the Annunciation.

Thank you listeners and all who listened to us. Thank you. Radio Maria, a Christian Catholic Christian voice in your home brought to you today. And every Thursday, listen to us, All Things Marian, on Thursday, 1 o'clock Central, 2 o'clock Eastern. Thank you all for listening. God bless you and goodbye for now. [00:56:00]

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