

gladness and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great before God ; he shall drink no wine nor strong drink ; he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb, and he shall convert many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. And, in the spirit and power of Elias, he shall go before the Messiah who is to come, and shall prepare for the Lord, a perfect people. »

Zachary could not believe that such happiness would be his, and he doubted : « Whereby, he said, shall I know this ? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years. »

« Know, said the angel of God, that I am Gabriel, one of the seven spirits who stand before the throne of God. The Lord has sent me to announce these tidings. Because thou hast not believed my words, thou shalt be dumb and thou shalt not be able to speak until my prophecy be fulfilled. »

All these words of St. Gabriel were accomplished. John the Baptist was born, the old priest recovered his speech and, moved by gratitude, he intoned his sublime canticle, the *Benedictus*, to the glory of the Messiah and of His holy Precursor.

St. Gabriel's supreme glory consists in having been the messenger of God to the Blessed Virgin in the great matter of the incarnation of the Word. The Blessed Virgin, kneeling in her humble dwelling amidst the silence of the night, sighed for the coming of the Messiah, when suddenly she saw Gabriel, the angel of God, before her. The angel said : « Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee, Blessed art thou among women. » Seeing that these words greatly troubled her, the angel added : « Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David, his father, and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever. » The Virgin understood that the angel proposed to her to become the mother of the expected Savior, and remembering her vow of virginity, she asked : « How shall this be done, for I know not man ? » The divine messenger replied : « The holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee, and