

The Annunciation in Art

The Annunciation has moved to Monday, April 4.

The Annunciation (April 4 this year due to Good Friday) is a poetic and highly mystical event in Salvation history, lending itself to a variety of artistic interpretations. Each of these interpretations has served to stress a different theological truth of the interaction between the Virgin Mary and the Angel Gabriel.



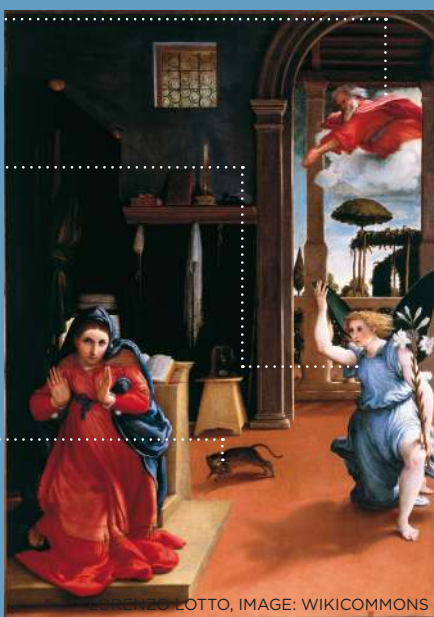
UNKNOWN ARTIST, IMAGE: WIKICOMMONS

Mary is sometimes shown holding a pitcher at a well. This alludes to Jacob's well in Gen. 29:1-25, which the Samaritan woman referenced when she spoke to Jesus in Jn. 4:6-15. The pitcher can be a symbol for the Madonna, who at the Annunciation prepares herself to be the "container" of Jesus.

God the Father is almost diving from Heaven toward Mary.

The angel Gabriel's posture is strong, as the Hebrew meaning of his name is "God is my strength". However, even he genuflects before the mystery of the Incarnation.

Cats were charged with negative symbolism during the Renaissance and Middle Ages. This cat, which represents the devil, is fleeing from the divine power.



BENVENUTO TASSO, IMAGE: WIKICOMMONS



FRA ANGELICO, IMAGE: WIKICOMMONS

Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden necessitated Christ's arrival and eventual Passion. The Holy Spirit, pictured here as a dove, lets out a ray of light that passes through the Garden of Eden before touching Mary.

Mary's posture and bare room are symbols of her humility.