This exhibit is dedicated to Images of the Virgin Mary; the paintings, woodcuts, engravings, and lithographs span from 1375 to modern day, and focus on certain important events described in the biblical narrative, including The Annunciation, The Nativity, and The Flight into Egypt. The Gospel that you’ve been reading for class – Mark – actually doesn’t narrate any of these events, it starts right off with Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. The two other synoptic Gospels, Luke and Matthew, are the narratives that are the basis for most of the artwork we see in these two rooms.

1. Take a look at the collection of woodcuts (a form of printmaking) done by Allan Rohan Crite, on the east wall of the first, larger room. Crite was a devout Episcopalian, and a number of his artworks (he did prints as well as paintings) have religious themes. These woodcuts, done in 1947, are a collection Crite called “The Five Joyful Mysteries,” because they depict happy events in the life of Jesus and Mary: the Annunciation, the meeting of Mary with Elizabeth, her cousin; the birth of Jesus, the presentation of Jesus at the Temple; the finding of Jesus at the Temple. What is one way that Crite identifies the figures of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph? In other words, how does he make it clear who they are, in every portrayal of them in these woodcuts?

2. Read, in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 1, vv. 26-38. Take a look at the woodcut, the first one on the left at the bottom, that depicts the story of the Annunciation. Notice that the angel Gabriel is pictured with a lily. Move on then to the next piece of artwork on the east wall, immediately to the right of Allan Rohan Crite’s work: another Annunciation, this time from the early 1700’s, a painting. Notice: once again, the angel is holding a lily! Then move onto the next work on that east wall, entitled “The Annunciation,” by a Dutch engraver by the name of Goltzius, done in 1594. Notice that here, too, the angel is carrying a lily! As a matter of fact, if you look around the room, you see lots of examples of either angels or Mary herself holding a lily. If this is such a common motif in Christian art, what is it supposed to mean?

3. Back to the Annunciation painting in the large room, on the east wall, the one by Nicholas Bertin; in this painting, we see a dove hovering. What is the dove supposed to symbolize (something that is mentioned in Luke 1:26-38)?

4. Go back to the Allan Rohan Crite woodcuts, and take a look at the one that depicts Jesus’ presentation in the Temple (the fourth one from the left). Read Luke 2:22-24. You can see, in the woodcut, the two turtledoves that are mentioned in Luke, the offering that will be presented.
“according to the law of Moses.” What covenant does this refer to, this reference to “law of Moses”?

5. In the south room, on the east wall, we have the first engraving of a very famous Renaissance engraver, a German, by the name of Albrecht Dürer. This engraving, called “The Nativity,” is depicting the story told in Luke, chapter 2, vv. 1-20. Go ahead and read that story. About this engraving – I just want you to notice how detailed it is – look at the feet of the man who is entering the manger, on the left, coming through the door. Dürer is using his own historical context, as many artists do: notice that the man (I think it is supposed to be Joseph) is wearing wooden clogs: these would have been the sort of thing you wore in Germany, in Dürer’s time, to avoid stepping in all the muck and sewage on the streets!

6. Right next to the Dürer we have a painting by someone who was in the school of Peter Paul Rubens, the well known Flemish (which means modern day Belgium/southern part of the Netherlands) painter who lived 1577-1640. This is another depiction of the same story, about the adoration of the shepherds. Notice the woman in the front, who is offering an egg to the baby Jesus: in Christian artwork, from very early on, the egg was the symbol for the resurrection – out of what seems lifeless, life emerges. So take a look at the painting, from Italy, to the right of this “after Peter Paul Rubens” painting – in this painting you see, again, a woman with a basket of eggs. Go now back into the front room, and take a look at the south wall in the front room, the wall where we find the elevator. You’ll find what is probably the most famous painting in the Haggerty collection (this one belongs to the Haggerty – some of the other artwork in this exhibit is borrowed from other collections), Salvador Dali’s “The Madonna of Port Ligat,” from 1949. Lots of symbolism in this painting! You have the egg, an old, old Christian symbol of resurrection – but what does the lemon mean? Or the fish?

7. Go back, now, into the smaller room, to the south of the larger exhibit room. On the south wall of this room, you’ll find a painting, French, from the 1600’s, on the Adoration of the Magi. This story isn’t in Luke (or in Mark or John); turn to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 2, vv. 1-12, and read those verses. Notice that no where in the biblical narrative does it say “three wise men,” or “three magi,” it just says “magi,” in some of your translations, “wise men.” So where does the ancient tradition that there were three of them come from? The answer is in the text! Very early on, the tradition developed that one of the magi came from Africa, one from Europe, and one from the Middle East, and they were even assigned names (Balthasar, Caspar, and Melchior). Back in your text: in v. 5, reference is made to “the Messiah” – what Jewish tradition/covenant does this draw on?

8. Right after this story, in Matthew, we find the story of the “Flight to Egypt.” Read Matthew 2:13-23. These verses lean heavily on Old Testament prophets – Micah, Jeremiah, Hosea. Two of the artworks in the smaller of the two galleries deal with the “Flight to Egypt” motif, one from Mexico, in the 18th century, and another Dürer engraving, from Germany in the 1500’s. How do both convey the idea that the Holy Family was journeying into warm climates? And how do both convey the idea that somehow God had a hand in this trip?