

# ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

A PARISH OF THE DIOCESE OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY

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## Three Mothers

**On December 9 we celebrate "Righteous Saint Anna's Conception of the Mother of God." This lengthy, explicit title offers some important insights into Orthodox theology.**

First, it tells us that Mary the Mother of God was conceived through the union of two human parents, like any other person born in the world. Many icons of her conception clearly show her parents, Joachim and Anna, standing together in a loving embrace, with a bed behind or near them.

It is noteworthy that the day before this feast is, in the Western Church, the feast day of the Immaculate Conception. This refers to the way Mary (not Jesus Christ) was conceived. The Roman Catholic teaching is that God intervened at the moment of Mary's conception to remove the stain of original sin, which is transmitted by the act of human reproduction. This stain marks us all from the day we are born. So, since God removed that stain from Mary, she is different from every other human being.

Father Thomas Hopko, in his book "The Winter Pascha," writes that Orthodoxy does not go along with this teaching because our Church does not believe that such a stain exists. Father Thomas writes that all of us, including the Theotokos, "are born into a fallen, death-bound, demon-riddled world... We are all born mortal and tending toward sin. But we are not born guilty of any personal sin, certainly not one allegedly committed "in Adam."

The title of the Feast also tells us that the baby girl Anna conceived was indeed the one who would become the God-bearer, or Theotokos. God honors the act of human reproduction by using it to bring forth the woman who will have the most exalted privilege of any human being who ever lived. Not only

## Intercessory Prayers

We pray for all our fellow parishioners, but we pray especially for those who are incapable of being with us in church. Among them are:

Genevieve Bobenko, Pauline Bodnar, Nancy Filak, Mary Hadginske, John Kary, Helen Kurnewitz, Margaret Lawler, Kathleen Lazorczyk, Emil Mikulik, MaryAnn Rabakozi, Anatoly & Anna Rozanovich, Nadia Sojka, Maryann Stagen, Eva Stashitsky, Ann Velebir.

that, but He leaves her free to say "no" to His plan for her if she so chooses.

We honor Mary's agreement to God's plan because it is basic to our salvation. That she is born into the world the same way we are, with no special intervention by God, means that she can be a truly human example of holiness, one that we are able to follow.

Another mother is remembered by the Church on this day—Hannah, the mother of Samuel. Like Anna, she had to wait a very long time to have a child. During those years of waiting, she was "broken-hearted and wept and did not eat" (1 Samuel/1 Kingdoms 1: 7). Joachim and Anna suffered too. Joachim was humiliated by being turned away from the Temple as he attempted to offer his sacrifice; being a childless man he was not considered worthy to do so.

All three mothers suffered, especially the Theotokos who saw her Son unjustly crucified. But their joy later on would be great, and hers would be greatest of all. That is why the Church sings to her at Pascha: "Be radiant, O Pure Theotokos, in the Resurrection of Your Son!"

We welcome all visitors to our Divine Liturgy. It is our joy to have you with us today. If this is your first visit to our parish, we welcome you and invite you to return as often as you are able. While Holy Communion may only be received by prepared Orthodox Christians, our non-Orthodox guests are welcome to join us in venerating the Cross, receiving blessed bread at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, and for fellowship in our Church Hall after the service.



## Announcements

◆ Save the date: **Saturday, December 20 at 1:00pm** in our church there will be a **Healing service** (Akathist) to the Mother of God in front of her icon "Queen of All". This service is open for everyone and is for the healing from any disease (this icon of Mother of God is especially known for the healings that occurred of those who suffered with cancer). At the service you will also be able to submit for commemoration the names of those who need healing.

◆ Just a reminder: we are in **Nativity Fast**, and this is the time when each member of our parish community is encouraged to prayerfully prepare for, and then participate in the Sacrament of private Confession and Holy Communion. **Parish Confessions** will be offered on **Saturday, Dec. 20** right after the Healing service, from 1:30pm to 3:00pm. If for any reason you cannot make it that day, you can have your Confession after any Vespers service or half-an-hour before the Divine Liturgy on Sundays, just please let Father Igor know in advance.

## Birthday Greetings

Happy Birthday to **Effie Stankovci** and **Georgiana Stankiewicz**, who celebrate their birthdays today. May God grant both of you good health and happiness for Many Years! Mnohaja Lita!

## Floral Offerings

Beautiful floral arrangements for the feast of St. Nicholas were given by Maryann Stagen in memory of her father John, on the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of his Repose. Memory Eternal!



December 7, 2014

26<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan.

- **8:50am** – Hours
- **9:00am** – Divine Liturgy & Blessing of a new Icon of the Mother of God "Queen of All"

Epistle: Eph. 5:9-19

Gospel: Lk. 17:12-19

- **Fellowship** – everyone is invited for Coffee Hour following the service.

## Schedule of Services

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13**

6:00pm - Vespers

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14**

9:00am - Divine Liturgy