

# ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

A PARISH OF THE DIOCESE OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY

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Department of  
**CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**  
ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

## What Kind of Conception?

On December 9<sup>th</sup>, the Orthodox Church celebrates a feast called, in its full formality, **The Conception by Righteous St. Anna of the Theotokos**. The festal icon shows Anna and her husband Joachim in a loving conjugal embrace.

This feast reveals one of the major differences between the teachings of the Orthodox Church and those of the Roman Catholic Church. In the Roman Church, the conception of Mary the Theotokos is called the Immaculate Conception. (Some people are not aware that this term refers to her conception rather than the conception of Jesus Christ.) The Roman Church teaches that Mary's conception was different from that of every other human being. Unlike the rest of us, she was born, through the intervention of God, without the stain of the Original Sin of Adam, which taints every human birth and which is transmitted through the act of sexual intercourse.

The Orthodox Church's teaching is that Mary was born just as the rest of us were; she is a human being and her conception was the same as ours. In Orthodox teaching we human beings do not bear guilt for a sin committed "in Adam." Nor is there any "stain" associated with the act of sexual intercourse which was, after all, created by God as the way for children to be born from the union of a man and a woman.

But Mary was a person with a special destiny, whose upbringing prepared her for a great place in God's plan. Her aged, childless parents had longed for a baby for many years. They prayed fervently, and Mary's conception was God's answer. As Father Thomas Hopko has written in his book *The Winter*

## Intercessory Prayers

We pray for all our fellow parishioners, and we pray especially for those who are incapable of being with us in church. Please keep in your prayers our Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Genevieve Bobenko, Mary Fechisin, Nancy Filak, Mary Hadginske, Helen Kurnewitz, Margaret Lawler, Kathleen Lazorczyk, Marian Nagel, MaryAnn Rabakozi, Anatoly & Anna Rozanovich, Nadia Sojka, Maryann Stagen, Eva Stashitsky, Ann Velebir.

*Pascha: "Mary is conceived in fulfillment of her parents' prayers in order to be formed in the womb, born on the earth, dedicated to the Lord, and nurtured in holiness to become by God's grace the mother of His Son the Messiah."*

The combination of Mary's unique destiny and her normal conception as a "mere human being" means a great deal for our lives. We can look to Mary as the model of Christian life, and it's a model to which we can actually aspire, since she is not separated from us by having a conception and birth totally unlike ours. Yet her pure life and obedience to God, and her resulting closeness to Christ, make her an intercessor like no other. As some of our prayers put it, "the entreaty of a mother has great power to win the favor of the Master." In fact, the word "immaculate" is sometimes used to describe the purity and loving obedience to the Lord that characterized the Theotokos' life. But this word should not be misunderstood as referring to her conception.

In the Theotokos we have a woman born like us, yet able to be a mother to the whole Church. The prayers of the day invite us to share the joy of Joachim and Anna in Mary's conception, "for she is the fruit of the grace of God."

## Heartfelt Greetings

Happy Birthday to **Greg Cahayla**, who celebrates his birthday today, **Effie Stankovci**, and **Georgiana Stankiewicz**, both celebrating tomorrow. Happy Name's day to **Nicholas Kovalycsik**, **Nicholas Silvestre**, and to all who bear name Nicholas. May God grant all of you good health and happiness for Many Years!

## Floral Offerings

Beautiful flowers for the Feast of St. Nicholas are offered in loving memory of John Stagen on Anniversary of his Repose by his daughter Maryann Stagen. Memory Eternal!

## Announcements

◆ 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. 19**, from 1:30pm to 3:00pm, right after the Healing service. 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 let Fr. Igor know in advance.

◆ Save the date: **Saturday, December 19 at 1:00pm** in our church there will be a **Healing service** 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 the names of those who need healing for commemoration.

◆ Please keep in mind that until the Daylight Saving Time starts on March 13, 2016, **ALL VESPERS services begin at 5:00pm**.



December 6, 2015

27<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST  
**ST. NICHOLAS THE WONDERWORKER,  
ARCHBISHOP OF MYRA IN LYCIA**  
NATIVITY FAST

- 8:50am – Hours
- 9:00am – Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Eph. 6:10-17  
Heb. 13:17-21 (Saint)

Gospel: Lk. 17:12-19  
Lk. 6:17-23 (Saint)

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

## Schedule of Services

**SATURDAY DECEMBER 12**  
5:00pm - Great Vespers

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13**  
9:00am - Divine Liturgy