



# SAINTS PETER AND PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

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## Most Holy Mother of God, Save Us!

<b>September 8, 2013</b>	<b>The Nativity of the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary</b>	Liturgy	9:30 am
September 14	Saturday <b>Elevation of the Holy Life-Giving Cross</b>	Divine Liturgy	9:30 am
September 14	Saturday	Great Vespers	4:00 pm
September 15	12 <sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost	Divine Liturgy	9:30 am

**Saints of the Day:** New Martyr Priest Demetrius (1937). Saint Ioane (Maisuradze) (1957) and Saint Giorgi-Ioane (Mkheidze) (1960), Confessors, of Georgia. New Martyr Alexander Jacobson at Solovki (1930). Venerable Monk Serapion of Spaso-Eleazar Monastery (1480). Venerable Abbot Lucian of Alexandrov (1654). Venerable Abbot Arsenius of Konevits (1447). King Ina of Wessex and Queen Ethelburga (8th c.). New Martyr Athanasius of Thessalonica (1774). Saint Sophronius Bishop of Achtealea in Georgia (1803). Martyrs Rufus and Rufianus Martyrs Severus and Artemidorus Saint Kinemark, disciple of Saint Dyfrig. Translation of the relics of Saint Grimald, Abbot of Winchester.

**Please remember in your prayers:** The Suffering Christians of Egypt, Syria and the Middle East, Bishop JOHN, Bishop PAUL. Archimandrites Alexander, Athanasy, Isidore, Nectarios, Pachomy. Archpriests Jason, John, Vincent. Priests Bohdan, Sergius, Jacobus, Andrij, Vasil, Vasil. Deacon Philip. Mother Raphaela, Dimitri, Nina, Daniel, Catherine, Helen, Anna, Peter, Helen, Michael, Stephanie, Zara, Nolan, Emelie, Connie, Michael, Ed, Maria, Michael, John, James, Nancy, Susan, Daniel, Aaron, Mark, Jennifer, Nina, Nadine, Michael, Anna, Gregory, Marianna, Mykola, Helen, Isaiah, Albert, Kevin, Robert, Robert, Andrew, David, Warren.

**God Grant Many Years!** Prayers for the health of newly-baptized Avery Grace Buttino, her father Aaron and mother Ashley Buttino, Godparents Phillip Wacker and Jessica Nuzum and all her family and friends were offered at Liturgy and Moleben September 1, at the request of grandmother Sonia Buttino.

**God Grant Many Years!** Prayers for the health of Samuel Uzawa, Michael and Linda Zaugg, and Justin Mitchell were offered at Liturgy and Moleben today at the request of Father John Udics.

**Memory Eternal.** Prayers for the repose of the souls of Hieromonk Roman (Serdinsky), Archpriest John Skvir Tom Ketzak and aunt Mary Kushner were offered at Liturgy and Litiya today requested by Father John Udics.

**Memory Eternal.** Prayers for the repose of Sava Chlus were offered at Liturgy and Litiya today at the request of the "Memory Eternal Requiem Service Fund."

### FOR YOUR CALENDARS:

**TODAY, September 8: Saint Anna's Sisterhood** will hold a meeting at Coffee Hour.

### THE NATIVITY OF OUR MOST HOLY LADY THE MOTHER OF GOD, EVER-VIRGIN MARY

The Most Holy Virgin Mary was born at a time when people had reached such a degree of moral decay that it seemed altogether impossible to restore them. People often said that God must come into the world to restore faith and not permit the ruin of mankind. The Son of God chose to take on human nature for the salvation of mankind, and chose as His Mother the All-Pure Virgin Mary, who alone was worthy to give birth to the Source of purity and holiness.

The Nativity of Our Most Holy Lady Mother of God and Ever Virgin Mary is celebrated by the Church as a day of universal joy. Within the context of the Old and the New Testaments, the Most Blessed Virgin Mary was born on this radiant day, having been chosen before the ages by Divine Providence to bring about the Mystery of the Incarnation of the Word of God. She is revealed as the Mother of the Savior of the World, Our Lord Jesus Christ. The Most Holy Virgin Mary was born in the small city of Galilee, Nazareth. Her parents were Righteous Joachim of the tribe of the Prophet-King David, and Anna from the tribe of the First Priest Aaron. The couple was without child, since Saint Anna was barren.

Having reached old age, Joachim and Anna did not lose hope in God's mercy. They had strong faith that for God everything is possible, and that He would be able to overcome the barrenness of Anna even in her old age, as He had once overcome the barrenness of Sarah, spouse of the Patriarch Abraham. Saints Joachim and Anna vowed to dedicate the child which the Lord might give them, to the service of God in the Temple.

Childlessness was considered among the Hebrew nation as a Divine punishment for sin, and therefore the righteous Saints Joachim and Anna had to endure abuse from their own countrymen. On one of the feastdays at the Temple in Jerusalem the elderly Joachim brought his sacrifice to offer to God, but the High Priest would not accept it, considering him to be unworthy since he was childless.

Saint Joachim in deep grief went into the wilderness, and there he prayed with tears to the Lord for a child. Saint Anna wept bitterly when she learned what had happened at the Jerusalem Temple. Never once did she complain against the Lord, but rather she prayed to ask God's mercy on her family.

The Lord fulfilled her petitions when the pious couple had attained to extreme old age and prepared themselves by virtuous life for a sublime calling: to be the parents of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, the future Mother of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Archangel Gabriel brought Joachim and Anna the joyous message that their prayers were heard by God, and of them would be born a most blessed daughter Mary, through Whom would come the Salvation of all the World.

The Most Holy Virgin Mary surpassed in purity and virtue not only all mankind, but also the angels. She was manifest as the living Temple of God, so the Church sings in its festal hymns: "the East Gate... bringing Christ into the world for the salvation of our souls" (2nd Stikhera on "Lord, I Have Cried", Tone 6).

The Nativity of the Birthgiver of God marks the change of the times when the great and comforting promises of God for the salvation of the human race from slavery to the devil are about to be fulfilled. This event has brought to earth the grace of the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom of Truth, piety, virtue and everlasting life. The Birthgiver of God is revealed to all of us by grace as a merciful Intercessor and Mother, to Whom we have recourse with filial devotion.

### **THE NATIVITY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD (SEPTEMBER 8)**

The Church's veneration of Mary has always been rooted in her obedience to God, her willing choice to accept a humanly impossible calling. The Orthodox Church has always emphasized Mary's connection to humanity and delighted in her as the best, purest, most sublime fruition of human history and of man's quest for God, for ultimate meaning, for the ultimate content of human life. If in Western Christianity veneration of Mary was centered upon her perpetual virginity, the heart of the Orthodox Christian East's devotion, contemplation, and joyful delight in Mary has always been her Motherhood, her flesh and blood connection to Jesus Christ. The East rejoices that the human role in the divine plan is pivotal.

The Son of God comes to earth, God appears in order to redeem the world, He becomes human to incorporate man into His Divine vocation, but humanity takes part in this. If it is understood that Christ's "co-nature" with us is Christianity's greatest joy and depth, that He is a genuine human being and not some phantom or bodiless apparition, that He is one of us and forever united to us through his humanity, then devotion to Mary also becomes understandable, for she is the one who gave Him His human nature, His flesh and blood. She is the one through whom Christ can always call Himself "The Son of Man."

Son of God, Son of Man... God descending and becoming man so that man could become divine, could become a partaker of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4), or as the teachers of the Church expressed it, "deified." Precisely here, in this extraordinary revelation of man's authentic nature and calling, is the source of that gratitude and tenderness which cherishes Mary as our link to Christ and, in Him, to God. And nowhere is this reflected more clearly than in the Nativity of the Mother of God. Nothing about this event is mentioned anywhere in the Holy Scriptures. But why should there be? Is there anything remarkable, anything especially unique about the normal birth of a child, a birth like any other? And if the Church began to commemorate the event with a special feast it was not because the birth was somehow unique or miraculous or out of the ordinary; but because on the contrary, the very fact that it is routine discloses something fresh and radiant about everything we call "routine" and ordinary, it gives new depth to the "unremarkable" details of human life. What do we see in the icon of the feast when we look at it with our spiritual eyes? There on a bed lies a woman, Anna, according to Church tradition, who has just given birth to a daughter. Next to her is the child's father, Joachim according to the same tradition. A few women stand by the bed washing the newborn baby for the first time. The most routine, unremarkable event. Or is it? Could it be that the Church is telling us through this icon that every birth, every entrance of a new human being into the world and life is a miracle of miracles, a miracle that explodes all routine, for it marks the start of something unending, the start of a unique, unrepeatable human life, the beginning of a new person. And with each birth the world is itself in some sense created anew and given as a gift to this new human being to be his life, his path, his creation.

This feast therefore is first a general celebration of Man's birth, and we no longer remember the anguish, as the Gospel says, "for joy that a human being is born into the world" (Jn 16:21). Secondly, we now know whose particular birth, whose coming we celebrate: Mary's. We know the uniqueness, the beauty, the grace of precisely this child, her destiny, her meaning for us and for the whole world. And thirdly, we celebrate all who prepared the way for Mary, who contributed to her inheritance of grace and beauty. Today, many people speak of heredity, but only in a negative, enslaving and deterministic sense. The Church believes also in a positive spiritual heredity. How much faith, how much goodness, how many generations of people striving to live by what is high and holy were needed before the tree of human history could bring forth such an exquisite and fragrant flower-the most pure Virgin and All Holy Mother! And therefore the feast of her Nativity is also a celebration of human history, a celebration of faith in man, a celebration of man. Sadly, the inheritance of evil is far more visible and better known. There is so much evil around us that this faith in man, in his freedom, in the possibility of handing down a radiant inheritance of goodness has almost evaporated and been replaced by cynicism and suspicion... This hostile cynicism and discouraging suspicion are precisely what seduce us to distance ourselves from the Church when it celebrates with such joy and faith this birth of a little girl in whom are concentrated all the goodness, spiritual beauty, harmony and perfection that are the elements of genuine human nature. In and through this newborn girl, Christ-our gift from God, our meeting and encounter with Him-comes to embrace the world. Thus, in celebrating Mary's birth we find ourselves already on the road to Bethlehem, moving toward to the joyful mystery of Mary as the Mother to God.

[Taken from, "Celebration of Faith" Sermons, Vol. 3, "The Virgin Mary," by +Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann, 1995.]