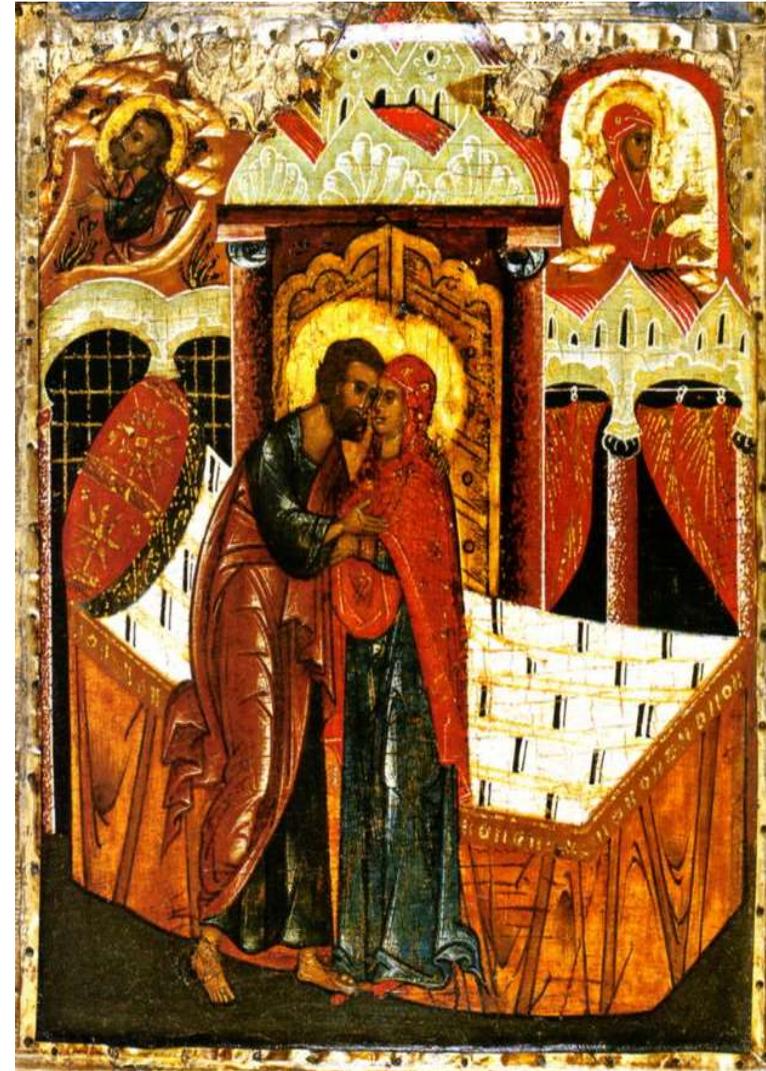


Prayers: Among your daily prayers, please remember the sick and shut-in of our Church and Parish: Fr. Yakiw Norton, Fr. Oleh Hucut, Tanya Antoniewicz, Richard Antoniuk, Bohdan Baranczyk, Madeline Chorney, John Chorney, Susan Cooke, Gloria Dunski, Joan Hepner, Jennie Kramer, Eva Lazor, Mary Maksymiak, Daniel Milinichek, Michael Onushko, Rosalie Onushko Mary Ellen Mackiewicz, Mary Radio, William Radio, Kathryn Solan, Michael and Elsie Moroz, Myroslav Kmet, Mariya Kmet, Andriy Kmet, Dan Gulack. Michael Lobus, Russel Haas; Rodney Townes, William Rosko, Karina Strashinsky; Greg and Tanya Chubenko, Katherine Cox



**The Feast of the Conception of the Mother of God by St. Anna -
December 9/22**

The very ancient and profound cult of the most holy mother of God, a characteristic Mark of the eastern church, is especially manifested in the great wealth of the feast of the Virgin Mary in the liturgical year. These feasts present to us the more important moments in the life of the mother of God from the moment of her conception to the moment of her glorious Dormition

and Assumption into heaven. The holy gospel does not give much information about the life of the most pure virgin Mary, hands, it is not strange that the feast of the Blessed mother do not generally have their bases in the events of the Gospels, but rather in Christian tradition and in the accounts given in the apocryphal books of the first centuries. One such feast is the conception of Saint Anna, which our church celebrates on December 9 or December 22 according to the Julian calendar.

THE FEAST IN THE EAST

First mention of this feast was made in the Typicon of St. Sabbas in the fifth century, but it did not begin to develop and spread until the eighth century. During this time, Saint Andrew of Crete composed a Liturgy for this feast. By the ninth century this feast had spread throughout the entire Byzantine Empire. The feast of the Conception of Saint Anna was known by several different names in ancient times. One of the oldest is the Conception of Holy Anna, when she conceived the Most Holy Mother of God. However today, it is generally known as the Conception of Saint Anna or the Conception of the Mother of God.

The main theme of the Liturgy of this feast was the miraculous event when Anna conceived the Most Holy Mother of God. The Liturgy describes the grief and distress Joachim and Anna experienced because of their childlessness, and presents the fervent prayer of Anna: "O Lord God of heavenly powers, you know the shame of barrenness, therefore, heal the pain of my heart and make this barren one fruitful." (Vespers for the Feast). In response to her fervent supplication, an Angel appears and announces the conception of the most pure Virgin Mary. The angel says to Anna, "Your supplication has reached the Lord. Do not be sad, and cease your weeping, for you shall become a fruitful olive tree, bringing forth a young shoot, a wonderful maiden, who will bring forth a flower, the Christ in the flesh, Who will grant great mercy to the world."

At the moment of her conception, the womb of Saint Anna became like a heaven. The Sessional Hymn (Sidalen or Kathisma) of Matins for the Feast states: "A new heaven is being formed in the womb of Anna at the command of the Almighty God; the never setting Sun shines forth from it, illuminating the whole universe with the rays of the divinity, with the great riches of goodness, the one and only Lover of Mankind."

Mary's parents, Joachim and Anna, rejoice over the wonderful conception of their child; the prophets rejoice; heaven and earth join in jubilation. The Church calls upon the Old and New Testaments to join in the celebration: Again at Matins, we hear: "Come, people of all classes and ages, let us celebrate with the angels the all glorious Conception of the Mother of God. Oh you prophets, praise her whom you preached; O you forefathers, praise your descendent the Mother of God; O you elderly, praise to her ancestor of God; O you faithful, praise the root of your faith; O you priests, praise the all holy temple of God; oh you choirs of saints, praise the reason for your assembly; Oh you armies of angels, praise the mother of the Lord of all creation, and the savior of our souls."

This feast is celebrated exactly one day short of nine months before the Birth of the Mother of God on 08 September or 21 September according to the Julian calendar.

THE FEAST IN THE WEST

Somewhere around the 10th century this feast of the Conception of the Mother of God spread from the east to western Europe and eventually all the way to England. In the west, the feast of the Conception of Saint Anna underwent a great evolution. Where rise in the east attention was directed mainly to the miraculous fact of the conception by old and barren parents, in the west, the feast began to stress not so much the fact as the manner of this conception. Thus, slowly emerged the idea of the immaculate conception of Mary, which teaches that from the very first moment of her conception, she was free from original sin. Many Western Roman Catholic theologians did not except this doctrine, among them Thomas Aquinas.

While the Orthodox Church excepts the miraculous conception and birth of the Virgin Mary of the aged parents, Joachim and Anna, it does not except the doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary. Therefore it retains the original celebration to this day as simply the Conception of the Mother of God, or the Conception of Saint Anna.

The classic icon of this feast shows Joachim and Anna meeting and embracing at the gates of the Temple in Jerusalem after having been visited by an angel who announced to them the Conception of Mary.