

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

(301) 638-5035 Church

4419 Leonardtown Road

Waldorf, MD 20601

Rev. Father Joseph Edgington, Pastor

(703) 532-8017

fredgington@gmail.com

www.apostlethomas.org

American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Wed: Moleben to the Theotokos 6:00 AM

Friday: Moleben to the Cross 6:00 AM

Saturday: Confession 5:00 PM

Great Vespers 5:30 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Sunday School 9:30 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM

December 9, 2018 – 28th Sunday After Pentecost

Conception by Righteous Anna of the Theotokos

Saint Anna, the mother of the Virgin Mary, was the youngest daughter of the priest Nathan from Bethlehem, descended from the tribe of Levi. She married Saint Joachim (September 9), who was a native of Galilee.

For a long time Saint Anna was childless, but after twenty years, through the fervent prayer of both spouses, an angel of the Lord announced to them that they would be the parents of a daughter, Who would bring blessings to the whole human race.

The Orthodox Church does not accept the teaching that the Mother of God was exempted from the consequences of ancestral sin (death, corruption, sin, etc.) at the moment of her conception by virtue of the future merits of Her Son. Only Christ was born perfectly holy and sinless, as Saint Ambrose of Milan teaches in Chapter Two of his Commentary on Luke. The Holy Virgin was like everyone else in Her mortality, and in being subject to temptation, although She committed no personal sins. She was not a deified creature removed from the rest of humanity. If this were the case, She would not have been truly human, and the nature that Christ



took from Her would not have been truly human either. If Christ does not truly share our human nature, then the possibility of our salvation is in doubt. The Conception of the Virgin Mary by Saint Anna took place at Jerusalem.

The many icons depicting the Conception by Saint Anna show the Most Holy Theotokos trampling the serpent underfoot. In the icon Saints Joachim and Anna are usually depicted with hands folded in prayer; their eyes are also directed upward and they contemplate the Mother of God, Who stands in the air with outstretched hands; under Her feet is an orb encircled by a serpent (symbolizing the devil), which strives to conquer all the universe by its power. There are also icons in which Saint Anna holds the Most Holy Virgin on her left arm as an infant. On Saint Anna's face is a look of reverence. A large ancient icon, painted on canvas, is located in the village of Minkovetsa in the Dubensk district of Volhynia diocese. From ancient times this Feast was especially venerated by pregnant women in Russia. (*from oca.org*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians 1:12-18

Brethren, we give thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 17:12-19

At that time, as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up *their* voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" So when He saw *them*, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on *his* face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where *are* the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well."

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Joachim and Anna were the parents of Mary. Joachim kept as strict a watch over his thoughts as a shepherd over his flock, having them entirely under his control. For the Lord God led him as a sheep, and he wanted for none of the best things. When I say best, let no one think I mean what is commonly acceptable to the multitude, that upon which greedy minds are fixed, the pleasures of life that can neither endure nor make their possessors better, nor confer real strength. They follow the downward course of human life and cease all in a moment, even if they abounded before. Far be it from us to cherish these things, nor is this the portion of those who fear God. But the good things which are a matter of desire to those who possess true knowledge, delighting God, and fruitful to their possessors, namely, virtues, bearing fruit in due season, that is, in eternity, will reward with eternal life those who have labored worthily and have persevered in their acquisition as far as possible. The labor goes before, eternal happiness follows. Joachim ever shepherded his thoughts. In the place of pastures, dwelling by contemplation on the words of sacred Scripture, made glad on the restful waters of divine grace, withdrawn from foolishness, he walked in the path of justice. And Ana, whose name means grace, was no less a companion to him in her life than a wife, blessed with all good gifts, though afflicted for a mystical reason with sterility. Grace in very truth remained sterile, not being able to produce fruit in the souls of men. Therefore, men declined from good and degenerated; there was not one of understanding nor one who sought after God. Then His divine goodness, taking pity on the work of His hands, and wishing to save it, put an end to that mystical barrenness, that of holy Anna, I mean, and she gave birth to a child, whose equal had never been created and never can be. The end of barrenness proved clearly that the world's sterility would cease and that the withered trunk would be crowned with vigorous and mystical life. Hence the Mother of our Lord is announced. An angel foretells her birth. It was fitting that in this, too, she, who was to be the human Mother of the one true and living God, should be marked out above everyone else.

– St. John of Damascus, from *Three Homilies on the Dormition of the Theotokos*

The memory of death. Who would not place it among the beneficial things? Especially when it seems that we are standing far from death, when nothing yet terrible troubles the body, when nothing reminds us of the end, neither some fever nor some malady, conditions by which death is often foretold - for it is only then that we recognize that our nature is mortal, perishable, and entirely fleeting. Because of all this, devising something wise in preparation for death is indeed

absolutely expedient. And we could devise something wise if we arrange our own matters well, while our mind is still virile and strong and our tongue is not yet liable to slip, and before death might stand against us, before he might fall upon us like a thief and unsettle us. ...It is to (my parents) that I also owe my turn toward this wedded life, even though I always desired the most pure and unwedded one; while I was inclined toward the latter, I exchanged that superior one for the former and I served the flesh due to the will of my parents. I regarded my disobedience toward them to be equal to the disobedience toward God and a violation of divine law. What also led me to this life were my own innate modesty and most ineffable affection for my emperor parents. And what strengthened me further were the sacrifice of Isaac, who submitted to his father, and the paternal blessing of Jacob, who readily obeyed his father. Is there something more honorable than the father's blessing? Is there something more blessed than the mother's wish? Especially, when they have been so great and distinguished in virtue, such that not even the world itself was worthy of them.

But I would not blame even marriage for keeping me apart from my dear unweddedness. Because of marriage, all the best things happened to me: a man, better and more divine than all men under the sun brought forth since ancient time, a man extremely fortunate in both body and soul, in both family lineage and virtue, the Caesar Nikephoros, fastening the link of his lineage to the Bryennios family; then, most beautiful and perfect children of both sexes, of whom some have exchanged their perishable life (this was God's will) and some are still alive. May, O Christ my king, they remain alive along with their father and deliver me first into earth. May I not witness, O sun, the... - oh, how shall I even utter that terrible and absurd word - ...neither of my lord caesar nor of any of my sons.... I return my words to (my parents) again. Everything that is mine, my breath, my life, my coming to being, in both body and soul, stem from them.

— Anna Comnena, *Preface to Will and Testament*

Also Commemorated Today: Prophetess Hannah the mother of the Prophet Samuel

The Holy Prophetess Hannah dwelt in marriage with Elkanah, but she was childless. Elkanah took to himself another wife, Phennena, who bore him children. Hannah grieved strongly over her misfortune, and every day she prayed for an end to her barrenness, and vowed to dedicate her child to God. Once, as she prayed fervently in the Temple, the priest Eli (or Heli) thought that she was drunk, and he began to reproach her. But the saint poured out her grief, and after she received a blessing, she returned home. After this Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son, whom she named Samuel (which means “Asked from God”). When the child

reached the age of boyhood, the mother herself presented him to the priest Heli, and Samuel remained with him to serve before the Tabernacle (1 Kings/1 Samuel 2: 1-21). *(from oca.org)*

Follow Our Diocese On-Line

Diocesan Website: <http://www.acrod.org>

Camp Nazareth: <http://www.campnazareth.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/acroddiocese>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/acrodnews>

You Tube: <https://youtube.com/acroddiocese>

In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Presbytera Katie Baker and family, Santiago Alzugaray, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana and Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Luke Cooper, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Tucker Karl and family, Robert & Pam Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Westin Perry & Parents, John Reece, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore and Christina Ristas, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Alexander Shostko, Bernie Takabayashi & family, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Subdcn. Nectarios and Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)