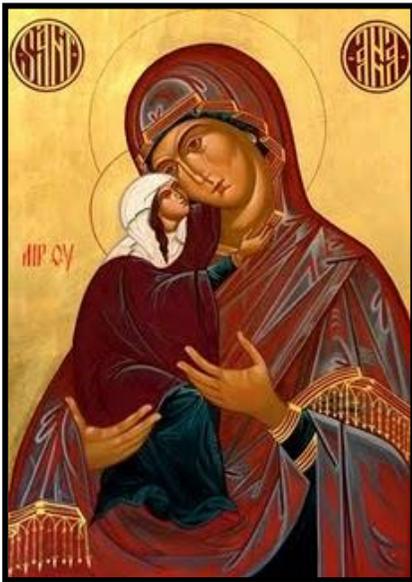


# The Feast of the Conception of Anne

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## December 9<sup>th</sup>



In the fullness of time God sent His Son, born of a virgin in a miraculous way. But long before the birth of Jesus, God prepared the way by making the Mother of God's birth miraculous as well. Anne, Mary's mother, was barren and advanced in years.

The Feast of the Conception of Anne is the day in the Church calendar when we remember how God intervened in the course of human relationships to create the perfect vessel to contain the Word of God — the New Ark of the Covenant, if you will.

God had sanctified Mary at the moment of her conception in His foreknowledge that the Blessed Virgin would consent to bear Christ. In other words, she too had been redeemed—her redemption had simply been accomplished at the moment of her conception, rather than (as with all other Christians) in baptism.

According to Tradition, the names of Mary's parents were Joachim and Anne. They were a devout, childless couple. Both these facts did not escape the attention of those around them, since infertility at that time was regarded as divine judgment. Most especially, they did not escape the attention of the Almighty.

When St. Anne conceived an infant, Joachim and Anne's joy was so great that they immediately dedicated the child to the service of God in the Temple. The child they had prayed and longed for all those years, with great spiritual courage they returned to God.

St. Anne had a remarkable job to do. It was her task to raise the woman who would become the Theotokos, the God-bearer. And hers was the task of relinquishing, little by little, all mothers hold most dear. At the age of three, Mary was brought to live in the Temple. A few years later, she returned home to prepare for her adult life ... and was soon found to be pregnant. No doubt this caused many a sleepless night for Mary's parents, just as it did for Mary's betrothed. And yet, ultimately they held on to the fact that they had offered Mary to God when she was young; whatever happened, she belonged to Him just as she belonged to them.

The Virgin Mary was always filled with every blessing and gift of the Holy Spirit in whose grace she certainly grew throughout her life. Though born without original sin, according to the view of the Eastern Fathers, she was not made exempt from the temporal penalties of Adam -- from sorrow, bodily infirmities, and death.

And so, on this day when we remember Mary's beginnings, we offer a prayer for our own children as well. No matter how our children came to us — through birth or adoption, or through simple association — they are not ours to possess. We are to take care of them and guide them as best we can for as long as they are with us. Ultimately they belong to God.