

Pylypiwka - The Pre Christmas Fast Week #4

A Journey of Expectation, Preparation and Fulfilment

The Feast of the Conception of Saint Anna

December 9



In the fullness of time God sent His Son, born of a virgin in a miraculous way. But long before the Nativity God prepared the way by making the mother of God's birth miraculous as well. Anna, Mary's mother, was barren and advanced in years, but God intervened to prepare the way for the incarnation.

Our journey to the feast of the birth of Christ is an orderly progression during the fall. We see Mary born on September 8. She enters the temple on November 21 and Christ is born on December 25. Just before the Nativity we are reminded of the special way that Mary was born to prepare us for the even more miraculous birth of Jesus. The other pattern of time we see is the nine month cycle from conception to birth. Jesus is God incarnate, a perfect man. He is born exactly nine months after conception. But Mary is still human; she is born one day less than nine months later.

Mary is of the created earth, but she is the perfect vessel of creation. We link her to the temple, God's dwelling place, since she carried God in her womb. The Church sees creation gone wrong in Adam and Eve while Jesus becomes the new Adam and Mary the new Eve to show us the way to God's salvation.

Adapted from The Winter Pascha bulletin series week 2 by Steve Puluka

Theology of the Incarnation

Throughout history, the Eastern Christian Church has maintained the body of teaching and presented it consistently under the inspiration and protection of the Holy Spirit. This is our comfort and our strength. The linchpin of this teaching is the Incarnation.

Two Mysteries

The Trinity: One of the basic truths and mysteries of Christianity is that of the Holy Trinity. In as much as we can grasp this mystery, we can perceive that these three persons of God are united in a dynamic communion of love. God wants to share this relationship with his favoured creatures that daily spurn his attention and have done so since they were created.

The Incarnation: Salvation history reinforces the concept that mankind has never been left totally to its own devices. God has always been with His people. Time after time, God has intervened to save His people. Each of these interventions was prophetic of the actual entering of God into Time and History. Here we see a paradox: God is totally other yet God becomes one of us.

Even in light of this event, we can only *approach* an understanding of God and His ways. That which we can begin to understand is only by the grace of God's Self-revelation. God and his nature will always be a Mystery. It is only in Mystery that we see a relational God reaching out to His people by entering time and history as one of their own, our Lord, God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. As Christians we are called to believe in this Mystery which is the Incarnation.

Who is Jesus?

Many deeply spiritual and learned people have studied the nature and place of Jesus in history and time. No other aspect of the Christian faith has been subject to the development of more heresies than that of the incarnation of Jesus Christ and the resultant dogma: that He is one Person with two natures - fully God and fully man. The Fathers of the Church while refuting the heresies that arose developed the understanding of what Christians are called to believe.

We believe that the pre-existent Word becomes the Word incarnate. Jesus "emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men." Jesus did not cease to be God during His earthly ministry.

But He did set aside His heavenly glory of a face-to-face relationship with God. He also set aside His independent authority. During His earthly ministry, Christ completely submitted Himself to the will of the Father. Jesus added to Himself a human nature and humbled Himself. Jesus went from being the glory of glories in Heaven to being a human being who was put to death on the cross.

Because of Jesus fully emptying himself in obedience upon the cross, he restored the image of God in us. This enables us, by our cooperation with the grace of the Holy Spirit, to empty ourselves and grow more and more into the likeness of God. This activity of grace is called deification.

We see that incarnation goes beyond the Word of God becoming flesh: His conception and birth from a woman, His life as a human, His bodily death, bodily resurrection and ascension. Our Lord Jesus Christ desires to be bodily and sacramentally incarnate in us in the Eucharist. The Word became flesh and *made his dwelling among us* (Jn 1:14).

*Adapted from Christ is Born: A Journey of Expectation, Preparation, and Fulfillment; Office of Religious Education, Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, 2005: **pages 34-42***



Resources:

The Winter Pascha bulletin series by Steve Puluka: <http://puluka.com/home/index.php?id=81>

Christ is Born: A Journey of Expectation, Preparation, and Fulfillment;

Office of Religious Education, Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, 2005

Copies of the book are available from:

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