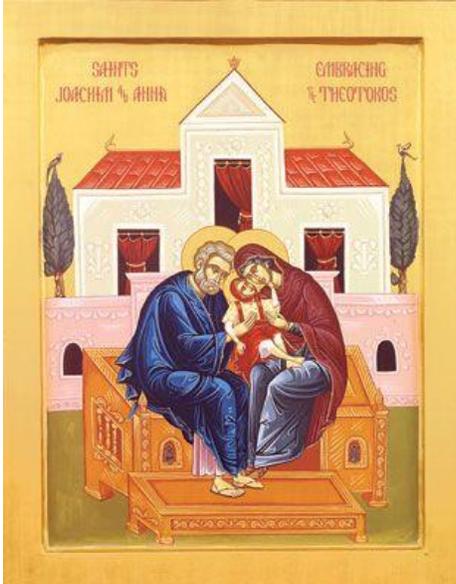


**December 22, 2019 27th Sunday after Pentecost
The Conception by St. Anna of the Most Holy Theotokos**



They lived devoutly and quietly, and of all their income they spent one third on themselves, distributed one third to the poor and gave the other third to the Temple, and they were well provided for. Once when in their old age they came to Jerusalem to offer a sacrifice to God, the high priest Issachar reprimanded Joachim, saying: "You are not worthy that a gift is accepted from your hands, for you are childless." Others, who had children, pushed Joachim behind them as one unworthy. This greatly grieved these two aged souls and they returned home in great sorrow.



Saint Anna was the youngest daughter of the priest Nathan from Bethlehem, descended from the tribe of Levi. She married Saint Joachim who was a native of Galilee. St. Joachim was of the lineage of Judah and a descendant of King David. Nathan had three daughters: Mary, Sophia, and Anna. Mary married, lived in Bethlehem, and gave birth to Salome; Sophia married, also lived in Bethlehem, and gave birth to Elizabeth, the mother of St. John the Forerunner; Anna married Joachim in Nazareth. Joachim and Anna had lived together in marriage for fifty years and yet had remained barren.

Therefore, sorrowing over their childlessness, they besought God with a promise that, if He were to grant them the fruit of the womb, they would offer their offspring to Him as a gift. And God, hearkening to their supplication, informed them through the Archangel Gabriel appeared to each one of them separately, telling them that God had heard their prayers and that they would give birth to a daughter, Mary. Then St. Anna conceived by her husband and after nine months bore a daughter blessed by God and by all generations of men: the Most-holy Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, who would bring blessings to the whole human race. And thus, through God's promise, Anna conceived according to the laws of nature, and was deemed worthy to become the mother of the Mother of our Lord.

There are some 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.

EPISTLE: Ephesians 6:10-17

¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

¹⁴ Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God

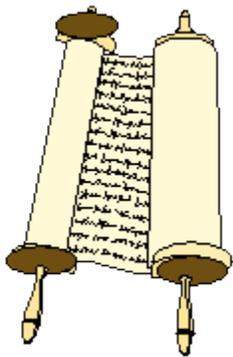
Galatians 4: 22-31

²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. ²³ But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, ²⁴ which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar— ²⁵ for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children— ²⁶ but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. ²⁷ For it is written:

“Rejoice, O barren,
You who do not bear!
Break forth and shout,
You who are not in labour!
For the desolate has many more children
Than she who has a husband.”

²⁸ Now we, brethren, as Isaac *was*, are children of promise. ²⁹ But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him *who was born* according to the Spirit, even so *it is* now.

³⁰ Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.” ³¹ So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.



Who Were The Galatians?

Galatians is one of the shorter books of the Bible (only 6 chapters), but the epistle contains much important information about the state of the early church in that region during that period of time. It was written sometime between 55 to 60, about 30 years after the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The Galatian churches may have been existence 10 to 15 years prior to the writing of the book.

Galatians opens with our learning that the Christians there were having some difficulty: "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are

turning to a different gospel - which is really no gospel at all." (Galatians 1:6-7 *New International Version*). After starting out on solid ground, having been taught the truth by the apostle Paul himself, the Galatians had been led seriously astray: "Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the Gospel of Christ." (Galatians 1:7)

It wasn't necessarily that the Galatians were turning away from the true God to paganism or idolatry, but in terms of their Christianity, after having taken one big figurative step forward, they were being led into taking two steps back by their Jewish teachers who, while themselves perhaps sincerely claiming to be Christian, did not yet fully understand the significance of Christ's sacrifice.

Who were the Galatians?

The precise location of the Galatian churches is not recorded, which over time has resulted in some confusion. "Galatia" as a region of the Roman empire at that time covered a fairly extensive area in Asia Minor. Today, we would refer to the Biblical area of the Galatians as being in central Turkey, south of the Black Sea, most likely centered around what is today the country's capital, Ankara. The region was a natural part of the missionary route from the land of Israel to what was then the wilds of Europe.

The Galatians themselves were Gentiles, originally thought to be a small separated branch of the Gauls (hence their name). From their earliest settlements in extreme western Asia, north of the Black Sea, the Galatians settled in Biblical Galatia, while the larger body gradually migrated westward until settling in what is today France (France was known in ancient times as "Gallia" or "Gaul.")

<http://www.keyway.ca/htm2002/galatian.htm>

GOSPEL

Luke 17: 12-10

¹² Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. ¹³ And they lifted up *their* voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, ¹⁶ and fell down on *his* face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan.

¹⁷ So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where *are* the nine? ¹⁸ Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹ And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well."

Luke 8:16-21

The Parable of the Revealed Light

¹⁶ "No one, when he has lit a lamp, covers it with a vessel or puts *it* under a bed, but sets *it* on a lampstand, that those who enter may see the light. ¹⁷ For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor *anything* hidden that will not be known and come to light. ¹⁸ Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him *more* will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him."

Jesus' Mother and Brothers Come to Him

¹⁹ Then His mother and brothers came to Him, and could not approach Him because of the crowd. ²⁰ And it was told Him *by some*, who said, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see You."

²¹ But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."



Why did Christ Speak in Parables? Notes from the Orthodox Study Bible

Orthodox Study Bible: "**Luke 8:18**: Taking heed to hear Jesus, the Word of God, brings light (vv. 16, 17) within the soul. It must not be covered but allowed to shine forth. The more one permits God's light to shine, the more light is given." p. 158

"Parables are stories in word-pictures, revealing spiritual truth. The Scriptures, especially the Gospels, are filled with parables-- images drawn from daily life in the world to represent and communicate the

deep things of God." Parables give us glimpses of Him whose thoughts are not our thoughts and whose ways are not our ways (Is. 55:8, 9).

The truth communicated by Jesus' parables, however, is not evident to all who hear them. One must have spiritual eyes to see and spiritual ears to hear, and even then there are degrees of understanding of the parables."

"Parables challenge the hearer and call for faith to perceive the mysteries of the Kingdom. Insight into God's Kingdom does not come simply through an intellectual understanding of the parables. Spiritual enlightenment is communicated through faith in the Person, words, and deeds of the Lord Jesus Christ." "In opening to us the door to the Kingdom of Heaven, the parables help us to love God and to know Him, to understand and believe His grace, mercy and forgiveness, and to order our lives according to His Holy Word."