

# September 8

*The Nativity of our Most Holy Lady Theotokos and Ever-virgin Mary.*



On this day the Holy Church celebrates the most glorious nativity by Saints Joachim and Anna of the most-blessed Virgin Mary, chosen to be the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. On the father's side the Virgin Mary is descended from the generation of kings, on the mother's side from the generation of high priests, and thus she is crowned with glory and honor: with glory, coming from roots of kings, with honor, "as coming from a high priest's family". Mary is Hebrew for "Lady" and "hope", for she gave birth to the Lord, Who is the hope of the nations. Her birth was the fruit of the righteous, god-fearing, in the fear of God, and pleasing to God life of Saints Joachim and Anna (see Aug. 9), the fruit of their entire life of patience and prayers, their strong faith, the victoriously breaking of the very grievous heart undergoing trial, the fruit of the life in the hope in God and His almighty help. With light and joyful celebration the saintly parents have marked the birth of the Daughter given to them by God. Many sacrifices were brought to the Lord, given for a thanksgiving, as the expression of the feeling of piety and dedication to God, with which they lived and their heart breathed; generous in giving alms-to the poor and needy as a sign of their pleasure and joy, a plentiful meal was instituted for the priests and Levites, friends and acquaintances. But Saints Joachim and Anna were not given to see in this life all of the most heavenly glory of the divine gift of their Daughter. They only rejoiced and celebrated the removal of their shame from among the people, the wonderful elimination of their barrenness, and especially the birth of their Daughter through the grace of God and angelic annunciation. For us this blessedly significant day should especially be celebrated and is joyful, because that birth of the Daughter of the Saints Joachim and Anna is the birth of the Virgin chosen by God, which, agrees with the prediction of the Prophet Isaiah, that borne in a womb by the Holy Spirit without seed will be a Son, Emmanuel, who will save the human race from the burden of damnation and everlasting death over it, there is the dream of Jacob about the ladder (Gen 28:12) connecting Heaven with earth, the prophecy of Ezekiel of the closed door (Ezek. 44:2), through which the Lord God of Israel has passed to visit and to create deliverance for the people, the wisdom of God has created her house (Prov. 9:1), enlightens every man, was coming into the world (John. 1:9) and disperse the darkness of unbelief and errors. In a word, for us the Nativity of the Most-blessed Virgin Mary is the beginning of the fulfillment the divine promise for all, with which men lived and hoped for many millenniums, the appearance in this world of the mystery prepared from eternity for the salvation and glory of the fallen race of man.

That is why the present feast, as St. Andrew of Crete teaches, is "the beginning of feasts for it serves as the door to grace and truth".

In the words of St. John of Damascus "the day of the Nativity of the Theotokos is the feast of joy for the whole world, because through the Theotokos the entire human race was renewed and the grief of the first mother Eve was changed into joy".

Thus the Holy Church describes the importance and meaning of this feast in its hymns. Today "God prepares Himself a holy throne on the earth" and "from barren roots" "to grow His Mother for us". "Today the rod of Aaron from root of David has germinated, now the Pure Virgin arises". "Today at your birth Eve is loosed from her condemnation and loosed from barrenness; Adam also is loosed from the ancient curse": "The Mother of Life is born, dispelling darkness, she renews Adam, and Eve she recalls. She is the source of incorruption, the release from corruption", "the Mediatrix of our life, the annulment of the curse, the grant of the blessing". "For through her we are deified and delivered from death". Therefore the Holy Church "on the well celebrated day of the feast" of the Nativity of the Theotokos invites believers to sound out "with spiritual pipes" in honor of the Mother of God, to venerate "Her swaddling clothes" and to glorify the Lord "who opened birth to the one who was childless" and "granted fruit to the unfruitful one", "by it we now have been delivered from Adam's ancient curse", and "bowing down to Him in worship we hymn the Nativity of the All undefiled Virgin".

*Troparion, Tone 4*

**Your Nativity, O Virgin,  
Has proclaimed joy to the whole universe.  
The Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God,  
Has shone from you, O Theotokos.  
By annulling the curse, He bestowed a blessing.  
By destroying death, He has granted us eternal life.**

*(Text tr. 1967 OCA)*

*Kontakion, Tone 4.*

**By your Nativity, most pure Virgin,  
Joachim and Anna are freed from barrenness;  
Adam and Eve, from the corruption of death.  
And we, your people, freed from the guilt of sin,  
Celebrate and sing to You: //  
The barren woman gives birth to the Theotokos,  
The Nourisher of our life.**

*(Text tr.: 1967 OCA)*

## *The Magnification*

**We magnify,  
We magnify you,  
Most holy virgin.  
We honor your holy parents  
And we glorify your all-glorious Nativity.**

*(Text tr.: Holy Myrrh-bearing Women Monastery)*

**The Feast of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos is one of the Twelve Major Feasts. It has one day of Pre feast and four days of post feast. See July 8 for the Readings.**

**Note that the Kathisma at Vespers is not read because of the work of the Vigil; and so this applies to all feasts that require a Vigil. Note the chapters in the Typikon and Menaion: If the Nativity of the Theotokos falls on Sunday.**

**Note the chapters in the Typikon and Menaion: If the Post feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos falls on a Sunday.**

## *New Martyr Athanasius of Thessalonica*

Born in Thessalonica, in the Koliakia district, cursed for the acceptance of Islam, St. Athanasius firmly confessed his faith in Christ before the Moslem judges and for this he was hanged in city of Salonica in 1774.

## *Rest of the Venerable Lucian*

He was born in the city of Galich (Kostroma Government) and accepted monasticism in the Nativity of the Theotokos Monastery near Pereyaslavl Zalesk. Having come to the Alexandrovsky Village and found out that near it in the forest stood an empty decrepit church with a wonderworking icon of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos, whole and perfectly intact, the Venerable Lucian decided to settle near it. Soon, having heard about his holy solitary life, pious men began to flow to him and to accept tonsuring from him. With the increase in the number of brothers, the church was renewed and a monastery arose which exists to this day. Driven away from the monastery by the slander of his enemies, the Venerable Lucian was returned by the petition of a god-fearing benefactor, a stoker for the Tsar, Alexander Barkov. Besides the Nativity of the Theotokos Hermitage, St. Lucian founded the Dormition Women's Monastery.

In 1650 a priest's widow came to the Venerable Lucian and accepted tonsuring, and after she was tonsured she became a venerable woman. During the participation of the Venerable Lucian and with the approval of the Tsar Alexis Michaelovich near the Alexandrovsky Village there also was raised up the Dormition Women's Monastery, which was under the supervision of the Venerable One. In his life the Venerable Lucian endured much evil and suffering from his

malevolent ones. Besides his strict ascetic life, he was known for his touching gift of words and gift of insight. For two years he predicted a contagious plague epidemic, warning about the necessity for repentance. Having reached old age and feeling the enfeeblement before one's death, the Venerable Lucian asked that he be brought into the church, where he prayed for a long time before the wonderworking icon of the Mother of God, entrusting It to the protection of the monastery against enemies visible and invisible; then he was taken out of the temple, and, according to his wishes, he was laid on the grass; the brothers approached him for his blessing. The Venerable Lucian died in 1655. The monasteries founded by him still exist to this day (see Vladimir Diocese).

***The repose of the Venerable Serapion of the St Eleazar-Savior Monastery.***  
Today is the day of his repose (see May 15).

### ***The Isakov icon of the Mother of God***

This wonderworking icon representing the Nativity of the Theotokos appeared in 1659 near the village of Isakov (Yaroslavl Government). In 1662 the Isakov Monastery was built on the place of its appearance, where the icon is found even to this day (see Yaroslavl Diocese).

### ***The Pochaev Icon of the Mother of God***

This holy icon is found in the Pochaev Laura, Volhynia Diocese. Metropolitan Neophyte brought it from Constantinople in 1537 for the estate of Anna Goyskaya (in Volhynia). Passing through Volhynia, Metropolitan Neophyte stopped for a rest in the Orel (today Urel) Monastery, about 9 versts (6 miles) from the Monastery of Pochaev, Kremenets District. The owner of this estate, the Russian Orthodox landlady Anna Tikhonovna Goyskaya, invited the Metropolitan to visit. Having stayed there a few days, the Metropolitan, before his departure, blessed the hospitable host with the icon of the Mother of God. Goyskaya placed the icon in her home chapel. The first appearance of the miracle working power of the icon was manifested in the Goyskoy home, noticing the repeatedly unusual light around the icon. Soon even Goyskaya herself became a witness of a miracle, when, after praying before the icon, her natural brother, who was blind from birth, began to see it perfectly. Considering herself unworthy to have a wonderworking icon, Goyskaya in 1595 gave it to the Pochaev Monastery, where the sacred icon abides even to the present time (see Volhynia Diocese).

The icon is written in the Byzantine style on a lime board. With her right hand the Mother of God holds the God-child, Who has put His left arm on the right shoulder of the Immaculate One, and blesses with His right hand. The left arm of the Most Holy Virgin holds her mantle, wrapped around the foot and back of the Savior. Depictions of saints are placed around the icon: the Prophet Elijah and St. Minus - on the left side; the first martyr Archdeacon Stephen and Abramius --on

the right side; Saints Parasceve, Catherine and Irene - at the bottom of the icon; these names are written in Slavonic. In 1675 (July 20) prayers before this holy icon miraculously delivered the Pochaev Monastery from the Turks.

### *The Domnitsi Icon of the Mother of God*

It was discovered in 1696 on the shore of the river Domnitsi, Chernigov Government, 10 versts (6.6 miles) from the city of Berezna and today is in the Domnitsi monastery (see Chernigov Diocese).

### *The Kursk-Sign Icon of the Mother of God*

This holy icon was wonderfully found in 1295 at the root of a tree on the shore of the Tuskar River, Kursk Government. One of the inhabitants of the city of Rilsk, hunting in the forest, saw an icon at the root of a tree which was facing the ground, lifted it up and there it was, an icon of the Sign-Mother of God. In that place, where the icon lay, a spring of water immediately opened up. The news of the first miracle from the icon reached Prince Basil Shemiaka of Rilsk, who was disposed to bring the icon into the city of Rilsk, where all the inhabitants reverently met it, and only Shemiaka evaded the solemn meeting and was struck blind; he began to see clearly after repentance and prayer before the icon. In gratitude for so great a benefaction, he built a temple in Rilsk in honor of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos, where the icon was placed and then established the feast of the appearance of the Kursk icon on September 8. But the icon repeatedly came back to its former place in the wilderness at the root of a tree. The inhabitants of Rilsk built a chapel on this place and brought the appearing icon to it, and a priest was selected to serve the Divine Services in the chapel. In 1385 the Tatars burned the chapel, and the icon was cut down to the floor, but it again was undamaged. The Tsar Theodore Ivanovich heard about the wonderworking icon and he brought it to Moscow in 1597 and placed in the imperial palace. Being a beautiful wonderworking icon, the Tsar Theodore Ivanovich released it from Moscow to the Koren Hermitage "with the appropriate honor".

After returning the icon, a monastery was founded on the place of its appropriation. In 1603 the impostor Gregory Otrepiev took the holy icon for himself to the city of Putivl, and then to Moscow. It stayed in the Moscow palace until 1618, and then, because of the persistent requests of the curia, was, with the approval of the Tsar Michael Fedorovich, returned to Kursk and placed in the Znamenny Monastery.

In 1664 Grand Princes John Alekseevich and Peter Alekseevich sent a list with the wonderworking Icon of the Sign to the Koren Monastery, with an order to the boyars and voevody to carry this icon on their spears in their campaigns. In 1687 the wonderworking Icon of the Sign was carried out of the Kursk Znamenny Monastery on "a large shelf". In 1689 the spears with the wonderworking Icon of a Sign were removed from the shelf, and were sent off to the Crimean campaign.

Since 1726 the icon was in the Kursk Znamenny Monastery and only for two weeks was brought out to the Koren Hermitage. In 1806 the Highest Decree of the Sovereign ordered that the wonderworking icon from the Friday of the ninth week after Pascha up to September 12 is to be in the Koren Hermitage, and the rest of the time in the Kursk Znamenny Monastery (see Kursk Diocese). According to the place of its assignment the icon is referred to as the Koren, and according to the place of its finding the icon is referred to as the Kursk.

### ***The Siamsky Icon of the Mother of God***

This holy icon appeared in 1524 and is named by the place of its appearance in the village of Otvodno, Siamsky District, Vologda Government. The inhabitants of this district built a monastery for its temple icon and for the placement of the revealed icon (see Vologda Diocese). The holy icon represents the Nativity of the Theotokos.

***The Icon of Sophia, the Wisdom of God***, represents the Mother of God, who is subservient to the incarnation of the Son of God, or who incarnates the Wisdom of God through her. On this day the icon is commemorated in Kiev; in other places it is done on August 15.

*S. V. Bulgakov, Handbook for Church Servers, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1274 pp (Kharkov, 1900), pp. 319-21.  
Translated by Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris © 7/28/2008Rev.. All rights reserved.*