



# “ORTHODOX 9” PARISHES BULLETIN

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN CANADA

Monthly Newsletter for the family of Orthodox Churches including:



**St. Mary’s (the Nativity of the Holy Virgin) - NISKU**

**Sts. Peter & Paul - BONNYVILLE**

**Holy Ascension - CALMAR**

**Whitsuntide (Holy Trinity) - THORSBY**

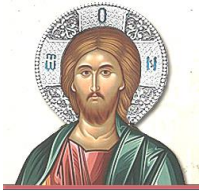
**St. John the Baptist - VEGREVILLE**

**St. John the Baptist - HOREN**

**St. Onuphrius - FOAM LAKE (SK)**

**Dormition of Theotokos -MACNUTT (SK)**

**Sts. Peter & Paul - INSINGER (SK)**



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## September the 21<sup>st</sup> – The Nativity of the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary

*Your birth, Oh Mother of God and Virgin Mary,  
has proclaimed joy to all the Universe!*

This is the first feast of the new church year and the first event in the blessed chain and harmony of events that recreate the humanity to be again the children of God!

This begins with the nativity of this blessed child, as the end of the shame of her parents as well as of all universe!

The fulfillment of the divine dispensation and the dwelling-place of Christ our God, she cared about Him as an Infant, nurtured Him, brought Him up into manhood. She was the first to kiss Him at birth, carefully she put into her heart the holy events of His life to share with the evangelists, and she was the last to see Him in death.

But today *She* is a child and, with an ineffable expectation of something even more great, we co-rejoice with her holy parents, with the profound gratitude for their long-suffering and faithfulness in both physical and spiritual temptations they had.

Let us cordially congratulate each other with our patronal feast of the Holy Nativity of the Mother of God!

Let us ask our Heavenly Intercessor of the good changes in favour of restoring our accordant prayers with the saving Communion of the Sacred Mysteries of Christ!

With the Patronal feast, dear brothers and sisters! May the Lord make this event the part and the revival of our life and the firm foundation and shelter from all the temptations of this world!

**Rejoice! O Virgin Theotokos! Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with you, and through you – with us! Amen!**



## ***The Beheading of the Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist John***

**Commemorated on September 11**



The Evangelists Matthew (Mt.14:1-12) and Mark (Mark 6:14-29) provide accounts about the martyric end of John the Baptist in the year 32 after the Birth of Christ.

Following the Baptism of the Lord, Saint John the Baptist was locked up in prison by Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch (ruler of one fourth of the Holy Land) and governor of Galilee. (After the death of king Herod the Great, the Romans divided the territory of Palestine into four parts, and put a governor in charge of each part. Herod Antipas received Galilee from the emperor Augustus).

The prophet of God John openly denounced Herod for having left his lawful wife, the daughter of the Arabian king Aretas, and then instead cohabiting with Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip (Luke 3:19-20). On his birthday, Herod made a feast for dignitaries, the elders and a thousand chief citizens. Salome, the daughter of Herod, danced before the guests and charmed Herod. In gratitude to the girl, he swore to give her whatever she would ask, up to half his kingdom.

The vile girl on the advice of her wicked mother Herodias asked that she be given the head of John the Baptist on a platter. Herod became apprehensive, for he feared the wrath of God for the murder of a prophet, whom earlier he had heeded. He also feared the people, who loved the holy Forerunner. But because of the guests and his careless oath, he gave orders to cut off the head of Saint John and to give it to Salome.

According to Tradition, the mouth of the dead preacher of repentance once more opened and proclaimed: "Herod, you should not have the wife of your brother Philip." Salome took the platter with the head of Saint John and gave it to her mother. The frenzied Herodias repeatedly stabbed the tongue of the prophet with a needle and buried his holy head in an unclean place. But the pious Joanna, wife of Herod's steward Chuza, buried the head of John the Baptist in an earthen vessel on the Mount of Olives, where Herod had a parcel of land. The holy body of John the Baptist was taken that night by his disciples and buried at Sebastia, there where the wicked deed had been done.

After the murder of Saint John the Baptist, Herod continued to govern for a certain time. Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea, later sent Jesus Christ to him, Whom he mocked (Luke 23:7-12).

The judgment of God came upon Herod, Herodias and Salome, even during their earthly life. Salome, crossing the River Sikoris in winter, fell through the ice. The ice gave way in such a way that her body was in the water, but her head was trapped above the ice. It was similar to how she once had danced with her feet upon the ground, but now she flailed helplessly in the icy water. Thus she was trapped until that time when the sharp ice cut through her neck.

Her corpse was not found, but they brought the head to Herod and Herodias, as once they had brought them the head of Saint John the Baptist. The Arab king Aretas, in revenge for the disrespect shown his daughter, made war against Herod. The defeated Herod suffered the wrath of the Roman emperor Caius Caligua (37-41) and was exiled with Herodias first to Gaul, and then to Spain.

The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist, a Feast day established by the Church, is also a strict fast day because of the grief of Christians at the violent death of the saint.



# Why Orthodox Christians celebrate the New Year on the first of September

*O Creator of the universe, / Thou didst appoint times by Thy power; / bless the crown of this year with Thy goodness, O Lord. / Preserve in safety Thy rulers and cities: / and through the intercessions of the Theotokos, save us! (Troparion — Tone 2)*

The first day of September is celebrated as the Ecclesiastical or Church New Year by Orthodox Christians.

## So this is the New Year?

The old Roman term for this day is *Indictio*, meaning “definition” or “order.” This was a day established as the beginning of a fifteen-year cycle, marking the redefinition of tax obligations for Roman citizens (especially since Roman soldiers served fifteen-year terms), likely from the time of Caesar Augustus.

One of the Emperor St. Justinian’s novellas (AD 537) decreed that all official documents of the Empire should include the indiction reference. When attempting to date manuscripts from this era, it can be helpful to know the year of the indiction (1–15), as exact dates or years are less commonly found. And when a date *is* found, it usually corresponds to *Anno Mundi* (Hebrew: לבריאת העולם) or “the year of the world” since the date of Creation.

*Anno Mundi* (AM) served as the beginning point for calendars until the modern era in many parts of the world, and is still a liturgical point of reference for both modern Judaism and Christians. (Jews also mark the New Year in September, but on a floating date.)

The date of the creation of the world—as discerned by a literal reading of the Patriarchal histories of the Greek Septuagint—was determined to be around 5500 BC on our modern calendar, with variations here and there. On the Julian calendar, the date of creation was said to be September 1, 5509 (BC), with the birth of Jesus Christ taking place in 5509 AM—that is, 5,509 years from the foundation of the world.

In 1597, Patriarch Theophanes I Karykes of Constantinople first utilized a date based on the *Christian Era*. Instead of marking dates based on the foundation of the world, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ became the crux of human history—and thus the distinction between BC (Before Christ) and AD (*Anno Domini* or “in the year of our Lord”). This became official in Constantinople in 1728 and in Russia (by Peter the Great) in 1700, with the Julian calendar still serving as the underlying reckoning of days and months.

While the *Anno Mundi* calendar is no longer mainstream (or part of the civil calendars of predominately Orthodox nations), it still serves as the basis of our liturgical calendar.

## Harvest, Thanksgiving, and Sowing



By marking the start of a new year in September, the Empire—and later, the Orthodox Church—was associating the new year with harvesting crops. As preparations for winter were being made, so too were preparations for the upcoming year.

For Christians, it was a time of thanksgiving, remembering the good weather and abundant rain the Lord provided for that year’s harvest—something we pray for at every Divine Liturgy.

This draws close parallels with the Feast of Trumpets for the pre-Incarnation people of God (Lev. 23:23–25):

*And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel, saying, ‘The seventh month, on the first of the month, rest will be yours, a memorial of trumpets; it will be a holy assembly to you. You will not perform any servile work, and you will bring a whole burnt offering to the Lord.’”*

As the *Synaxarion* notes, this was also the day Christ entered a synagogue and read from the scroll of Isaiah (Luke 4:16–30).

*So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. 17 And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:*



*18 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,  
Because He has anointed Me  
To preach the gospel to the poor;  
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,  
To proclaim liberty to the captives  
And recovery of sight to the blind,  
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;  
19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”  
20 Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the  
attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were  
in the synagogue were fixed on Him. 21 And He began  
to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your  
hearing.” 22 So all bore witness to Him, and marveled  
at the gracious words which proceeded out of His  
mouth. And they said, “Is this not Joseph’s son?”*

By marking the new year at harvest time, we remind ourselves annually of our dependence on both hard work and the blessings of God. Going beyond material blessings and healthy crops, this applied (as do many of our hymns) to Imperial concerns, including prayers for protection from our enemies:

*You who created all things in Your infinite wisdom, and set the times by Your own authority, grant Your Christian people victories. Blessing our comings and goings throughout this year, guide our works according to Your divine will.  
—Kontakion (Fourth Tone)*

And if one considers the increasing natural disasters, droughts, floods, wildfires (especially here in the Pacific Northwest), hurricanes, and famines, we should be all the more mindful in this modern era of technology and abundance to pray for such things—not less so.

We have not engineered our way out of dependence on God. If anything, the more our abilities increase, the more we have shown need for God’s favor and mercy.

## **Conclusion**

... our Church Year begins and ends with the life of Mary. The Nativity of Mary is the first Great Feast of the year, while her Dormition or “falling asleep” is the last.

In this cycle we see the Incarnation of the God-Man Jesus Christ at the heart of our story as God’s people. And in between those two reference points we have this feast that could, at first glance, seem a peculiar or even irrelevant holdover from the Roman Empire.

Rather, the Ecclesiastical New Year serves as the crux for our entire liturgical life each and every year.

We say goodbye to the old and welcome the new. We give thanks for what the Lord has done, and petition his lovingkindness and protection for the days yet to come. We take a moment to consider our impact on the world around us, and whether our actions proceed from hearts of selfishness or hearts of compassion.

*Based on:  
Vincent Gabriel*



## THE STORY OF THE BIRTH OF THE VIRGIN MARY FOR CHILDREN

(Read carefully and get ready to answer the questions)



The Most Holy Virgin Mary was born at a time when there was a lot of conflict and evil in the world and many persons did not truly know God. The Son of God chose to take on human nature for the salvation of human beings, and God chose Mary as His Mother. For that reason, the Nativity (birth) of the Theotokos, the Virgin Mary, is celebrated by the Orthodox Church as a day of joy.

Mary was born in the city of Nazareth. Her parents were Jewish: Joachim, a descendent of King David, and Anna, a descendent of the Old Testament Priest Aaron. The couple were sad because they had no children and they had become old. Their

neighbors were unkind to them because they thought that the reason they had no children was that God was punishing them for some sin. But they had faith that with God everything is possible. So, they prayed for a child and promised to dedicate the child to the service of God in the Temple.

On a feast day at the Temple, Joachim brought an offering, but the High Priest would not accept it, because he thought him to be unworthy since he had no children. So, Joachim went into the wilderness and prayed with tears to God for a child. Anna wept when she learned what had happened at the Temple, and she prayed also.

The Archangel Gabriel brought Joachim and Anna the message that their prayers would be fulfilled and that they would have a daughter, Mary, through whom would come the Salvation of the world.

Because the Virgin Mary was pure and virtuous, she was chosen to be the Mother of our God, Jesus Christ. The Orthodox Church teaches that the Nativity of the Theotokos marks the change in history when the promises of God for the salvation of the human race are about to be fulfilled. This event is the beginning of our celebration of the Incarnation of Christ, for through Mary, Christ was brought to earth to give everlasting life.

The Theotokos has been revealed to us as an Intercessor. An "Intercessor" is a saint who prays to God for us. By becoming the Mother of God, Mary became our greatest Intercessor, our heavenly Mother. When we are troubled or sick or worried, we can ask her: "**O Holy Theotokos, pray unto God for us.**"

### UNDERSTANDING THE WORDS

**NATIVITY** = "birth." We celebrate the birth of the Virgin Mary. We also celebrate the birth of other important Saints in the Church, such as the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist. Later in the church year, we celebrate the Nativity of Christ (Christmas).

**THEOTOKOS** = "Mother of God." The Virgin Mary was the Mother of Christ. Christ is called the "Second Person" of the Trinity, which is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, our God.

**BARREN** = "unable to or not having children."

**DEDICATE** = "to promise something for a purpose." In thankfulness for their answered prayers, Joachim and Anna promised God that they would dedicate their child to serve Him.

**TEMPLE** = "a place of worship." In the Old Testament, the people who believed in the true God were the Israelites (Jewish). Their places of worship were called Temples.

**UNWORTHY** = "not good enough." The people in ancient times were superstitious. They thought that not having children was a punishment from God. For that reason, even though Joachim and Anna were virtuous, their neighbors thought they were unworthy.

**SALVATION** = "being saved from something." When Christ came to earth, he brought the message that people who believe in Him can receive forgiveness instead of punishment for sins. In Old Testament times, people knew only about God's judgment.

**VIRTUOUS** = "doing only good things." When a person loves God and follows the 10 Commandments, the person is said to be virtuous. Being virtuous is the opposite of being evil or sinful.

**INCARNATION** = "in the flesh." Before the coming of Christ to earth, God was in heaven and not able to be seen. When Mary conceived and gave birth to Christ, God "took on flesh" as a perfect human being. The word "in-carna-tion" is from the root "carna" which means "flesh" (the human body).

**INTERCESSOR** = "someone who prays to God for us." In the Liturgy, we pray for other people. And in our private prayers we also pray for others, such as when we ask God to bless our parents, our family and other persons whom we care about. The Saints, who are already with God in heaven, care about us who are on earth, and they pray to God for His mercy and His help for us.

### THINK ABOUT IT AND CHOOSE THE RIHGT ANSWER

1. The parents of the Virgin Mary were named:

- A. Joachim and Martha
- B. Joachim and Ruth
- C. Joachim and Anna

2. Joachim was a descendent of (his ancestor was):

- A. Lazarus
- B. King David
- C. Joseph of Aramathea

3. Mary was born in the city of:

- A. Alexandria
- B. Nazareth
- C. Jerusalem

4. Mary's parents were:

- A. Old and had no children previously
- B. Young and just married
- C. Middle-aged and already had many children

5. When the High Priest refused to accept Joachim's offering, he:

- A. Went to another Temple to try again there

B. Went into the wilderness to pray to God

C. Became very angry and shouted at the Priest

6. Who came to tell Mary's parents that they would have a child?

- A. The High Priest of the Temple
- B. The Archangel Gabriel
- C. Joachim's neighbors

7. To thank God for allowing them to become Mary's parents, they:

- A. Fled to Egypt to be safe
- B. Promised to dedicate their child to serve God
- C. Built a Temple in their own garden

8. The Nativity of the Theotokos marks the change in history when:

- A. The Israelites ended 40 years wandering in the desert
- B. God's promises of salvation were about to be fulfilled
- C. People first began to build Temples for worship

9. An Intercessor is someone, usually a Saint, who:

- A. Prays to God for us
- B. Lives in the wilderness
- C. Establishes a monastery

Add colours to the icon!



# September 2019

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<p><u>6</u> 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy</p>	<p><u>7</u></p>	<p><u>8</u></p>	<p><u>9</u></p>	<p><u>10</u></p>	<p><u>11</u> <b>Beheading of John the Baptist</b></p> 	<p><u>12</u></p>
<p><u>13</u> 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy</p>	<p><u>14</u></p>	<p><u>15</u></p>	<p><u>16</u></p>	<p><u>17</u></p>	<p><u>18</u></p>	<p><u>19</u> 6:00 p.m. Vespers &amp; Matins</p>
<p><u>20</u> 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy &amp; Blessing of Water <b>Patronal Feast</b></p>	<p><u>21</u> <b>The Nativity of the Mother of God</b> 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy</p> 	<p><u>22</u></p>	<p><u>23</u></p>	<p><u>24</u></p>	<p><u>25</u></p>	<p><u>26</u> 9:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy – <b>Mac Nutt</b> – <b>Thanksgiving (and graveside) Service</b></p>
<p><u>27</u> <b>Elevation of the Holy Cross</b></p>  <p>10:00 a.m. – <b>Divine Liturgy</b></p>	<p>9:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy – <b>Foam Lake – Thanksgiving (and graveside) Service</b></p>	<p><u>28</u></p>	<p><u>29</u></p>	<p><u>30</u></p>		