

FEASTS OF THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

The Holy Mother of God serves as an excellent example of Christ's redemptive grace and is an inseparable part of Christ's dominical economy.

In the fifth century at the holy Ecumenical Council of Ephesus, where the Nestorian heresy was condemned, the Holy Mother's position as "Mother of God" and "Bearer of God" (Asdvadzadzin-Asdvadzamayr) was doctrinally established.

Only those aspects of St. Mary's life which are directly related to Christ or His dominical economy are mentioned in the Holy Gospels. The remainder of her biography is attributed to Holy Tradition which is common to all the ancient churches and which is covered in much of the most ancient of ecclesiastical literature.

Accordingly, St. Mary was of the house of David, daughter of Joachim and Anna of Nazareth (originally Bethlehem). Anna, being barren, prayed for a child and made special vows which were answered by the birth of her only child, a daughter whom she named Mariam (Mary). Although Mary was born naturally (having both a father and mother) she is considered morally pure and immaculate. It is for this reason that the Church not only celebrates her birth but also her conception which we and the Greek Orthodox celebrate on December 9 and the Roman Catholic Church on the 8th. The concept of her being morally immaculate later developed into the question of her Immaculate Conception (from Ann), a doctrine adopted by the Roman Catholic Church in 1854. Our Church, on the other hand, does not accept this, as it attributes to Mary that which belongs only to Christ; only Christ was immaculately conceived. Yet her purity is unquestioned. According to the teaching of the Armenian Church, at the time of the Annunciation when the Holy Spirit entered her she was cleansed of all sin (original sin) as she was to be the vessel in which God manifest was to be incarnated.

Feast of the Conception of St. Mary. Although chronologically the first in the events of the Holy Mother's life, this feast entered in the church calendar relatively late and has no specific hymn of its own.

Feast of the Birth of the Holy Mother of God. The second feast of the Holy Mother is her birth, which is non-variable and celebrated alike by all traditional churches on September 8. There is no information concerning her birth,

the place of her birth, whether Nazareth or Bethlehem; nor the date. Based on the Jewish tradition of that time, it is safe to say she was between 14 and 18 years of age when the Annunciation took place.

The Armenian Church celebrates eight feasts of the Holy Mother of God. They are:

- 1. Her Nativity
- 2. Her Presentation to the Temple
- 3. The Annunciation
- 4. The Conception of St. Anna with Mary
- 5. The Purification
- 6. The Assumption
- 7. Discovery of the Belt (girdle)
- 8. Discovery of the Box (chest)

Readings:

Annunciation - Luke 1:26-38

Nativity - Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 2:1-21

Visit to Elizabeth - Luke 1:39-56

Christ's Presentation to the Temple - Luke 2:22-40

Jesus as a Child is Lost - Luke 2:41-52

Wedding in Cana - John 2:1-11

Capernaum - John 2:12

At the Cross - John 19:25-28

After Ascension - Acts 1:14

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SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

Saturday, September 1

Council of Nicaea

Saturday, September 8

Feast of the Birth of St. Mary

Sunday, September 9

Paregentan of the Fast of the Holy Cross

Sunday, September 16

Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Sunday, September 23

Parengentan of the Fast of the Holy Cross of

Varak

Saturday, September 29

St. George the Captain

Sunday, September 30

Holy Cross of Varak; Enthronement of

Vasken I, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All

Armenians

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