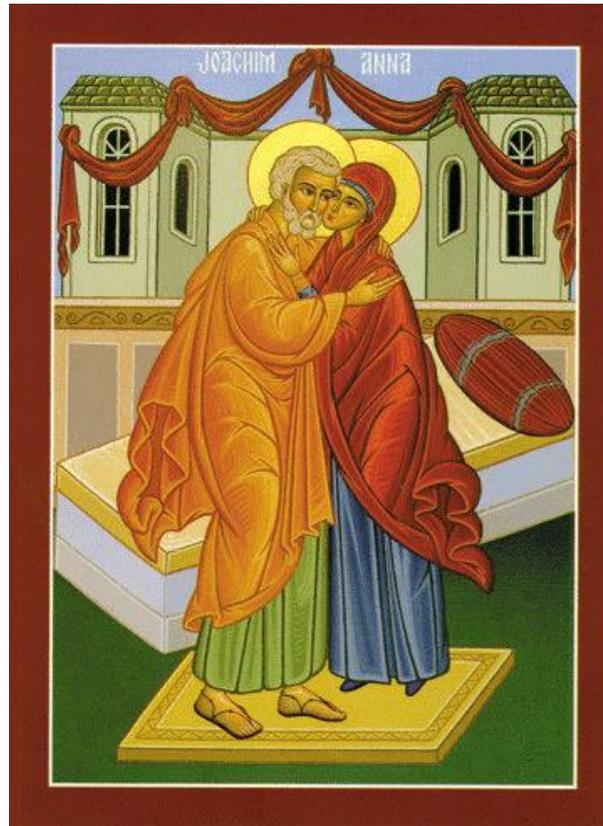


The Cycle of the  
Whole Christian Life –  
From the Miracle of  
Conception to Blessed  
Repose

Orthodox Christians believe that a person's life begins at the miraculous moment of conception.



This is an iconographic image of Joachim and Anna, the parents of the Most Holy Theotokos, the Virgin Mary, embracing before their marital bed. This is a feast day that we commemorate in the Church each year on December 9.

When a baby is about 40 days old, he or she is brought to Church to be Baptized, Chrismated and receive Holy Communion for the First Time.



Here is Fr. John baptizing a baby in our parish.

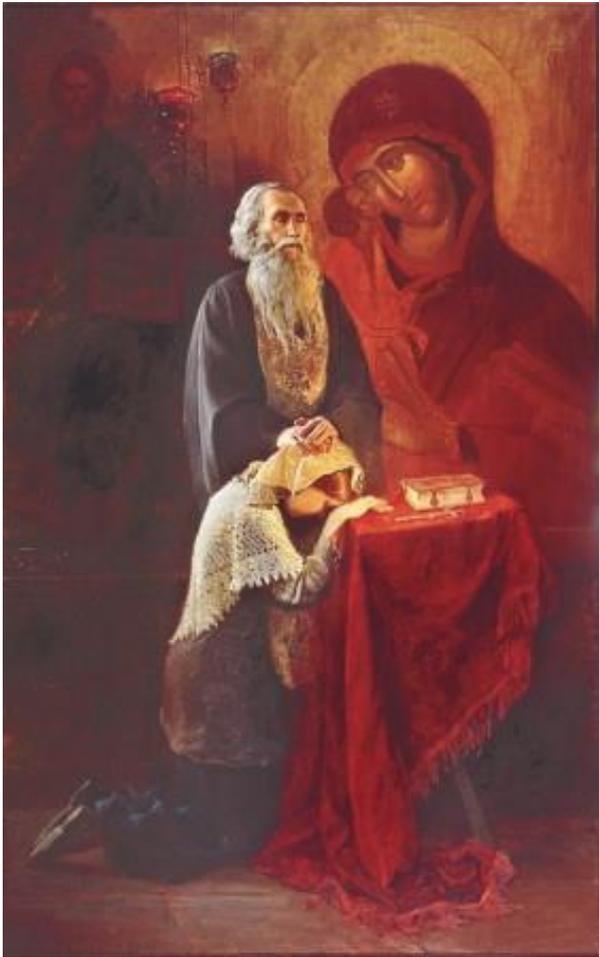
Baptism is the Sacrament of the Church by which a human person, who has come to believe in Christ, by being immersed three times in water in the Name of the Holy Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), is cleansed through Divine Grace of all sins (Original Sin and personal sins) and is reborn into a new holy, and spiritual life.

After a person is Baptized they are Chrismated—that is, anointed with Holy Chrism, a special oil prepared by the bishops of the Church.





Throughout a Christian's Life he or she participates in the Sacraments of Confession and Communion.



Any Christian regularly receiving  
Holy Communion should be  
regularly participating in the  
Sacrament of Confession.

There are two primary ways that a Christian can live out his or her life.

The first is consecrated celibacy.

In the Orthodox Church we call that Monasticism – that is, living as a monk or nun.



The second, and more common,  
Christian manner of consecrated life  
is marriage.



In the Orthodox Church marriage is meant to be further expressed by the conception, birth and raising up of Godly children.



Our Lord received and blessed children during his earthly ministry.

Some, but not all Christians, have an additional calling in the Church beyond that of being a baptized Christian.

Thus some Christians are set apart as clergy, who are given the ministry of leading the Christian people in their efforts to be Christ's disciples.



Here we see, from left to right, a priest, a bishop and a deacon. These are the three “major orders” of the Church’s clergy.



This is a deacon being ordained to the priesthood in a church in Russia. He kneels at the corner of the altar table as the bishop prays over him.

Sometimes in a Christian's life, he or she becomes so sick that the Church offers him or her the Sacrament of Holy Unction—Anointing with special sacramental oil.



Here we see the ingredients of this special oil being mixed by the bishop at the beginning of the Service of the Sacrament of Holy Unction.

We should remind ourselves that there are a least four kinds of anointing with oil in the present practice of the Orthodox Church.

Holy Chrism is the special oil of the Sacrament of Chrismation—the “seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit”, with which each of us is anointed only once during our lifetime, when we are enrolled as members of the Church.

Holy Unction is the special sacramental oil with which we are blessed when sick and suffering and in need of healing.

In modern times this sacramental oil is often offered to all Orthodox Christians during Great Lent or Holy Week, not just the gravely ill, or those close to death.

During the Vigil Services before some feast days, oil is blessed together with loaves, wheat, and wine. This is not a sacramental blessing, but a special liturgical blessing connected with the celebration of the feast.



The Blessing of Loaves, Wheat, Wine and Oil at a Festal Vigil Service.

It is also the custom in the Church to bless the faithful people with the miraculous oil, often called “myrrh”, that has been known to emerge miraculously from certain icons or the relics of the saints.

Sometimes, we are blessed, also, with oil from oil lamps that burn before the icons or relics of certain saints.



This is a picture of a miraculous myrrh-streaming icon of the Virgin Mary with Christ.

The last phase of a Christian's life on this earth is death, which we—in the case of faithful Christians—refer to as “entry into blessed repose.”



This is a picture of Fr. Thomas Hopko being carried to his place of burial by his faithful grandsons.

When Orthodox Christians consider death we  
always remember two things:

First, that Our Lord, Jesus Christ, is victorious  
over the very real and awful tragedy that is  
death.

And, second, that death for a Christian is the  
moment of entrance into the Kingdom of  
Heaven.



This is an iconographic image of Jesus Christ in Heaven with all the saints, all those who have been found worthy, by Christ's Grace and Love, of eternal and heavenly life—the life that is promised to all faithful Christian people.

# The End

Glory be to God!