

# **SOPHIA!**

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*DID YOU KNOW . . . that, while Orthodox Christians celebrate the Conception of the Theotokos on December 9, the Roman Catholic Church celebrates the same “feast” on December 8, but call it the “Immaculate Conception”? In fact, the Roman church did not officially recognize this day until 1854 and teaches that the conception of Mary by Joachim and Anna was without original sin. In fact, many confuse the “Immaculate Conception” with the conception of our Lord Jesus Christ. Orthodox Christians have celebrated the Conception of our Most Holy Theotokos since the days of the Early Church and reject the dogma of the church in Rome.*

## **TOPIC OF THE MONTH . . . PRAYER PARTNERS**

As a follow-up to the last edition of Sophia where we discussed establishing a prayer life, we now move to the blessing of having a “Prayer Partner” to help us achieve the ultimate goal of *theosis*.

### **Discussion Topics:**

1. ***Why Should We Pray for One Another?*** SHOULD we pray for one another? Isn't it enough when we pray together in church? What are the reasons for prayer? Is it important that two or more people join together to approach the Father in prayer?
2. ***What is a “Prayer Partner?”*** While is both personal and private, we can ask others to assist us in our prayer lives. A Prayer Partner is designed to give you someone to pray with and for. The Prayer Partner also prays for YOU (and You for THEM). Through praying with another person, you can see God at work, and through prayer we can overcome a sinful world.
3. ***Who should I choose for a “Prayer Partner?”*** A Prayer Partner can be anyone in your life – a relative, friend, neighbor. Perhaps it's someone you just recently met at coffee hour, or it could be a spouse, sibling, or child. They can even live in a different city or state (or country!).
4. ***What do I have to do to be a “Prayer Partner?”*** As a Prayer Partner, you're telling someone, “I care for YOU!” Surveys have shown that the “average American” only spends approximately five minutes a day in prayer! You may say, “I don't have time to pray – for myself or for someone else.” But, as we saw in the last edition of Sophia, there are several prayers that you can say while performing other tasks. Also, the prayers are done on YOUR schedule – set a time of day and commit to it. There is no appointed length of prayer or number of prayers.
5. ***How do I get started?*** Again, you can pick someone you're close to – or someone that you've just recently met. For example, one woman began to call members of her Adult Sunday School Class and began praying for them. If they were absent from class (or even church), she called to check to see if they were okay (they appreciated it to know they were “missed”). She also asked, “How may I pray for you?” which led them to share their problems. Listen to them and pray for them. In fact, you should say, “I'll pray for you.”

**“Prayer Partners” in the Bible.** Pull out your Orthodox Study Bible and read the following passages: Matthew 6:8-13, 21:21-22, 10:8; Luke 18:11, 22:32; Acts 8:14-15, 10:30-31; and Colossians 1:3-9 and 4:3.

Points to Ponder.

“To pray is to pay attention to something or someone other than oneself. Whenever one so concentrates his attention on another’s problems, he completely forgets his own ego and desires, and he is praying.” (W. H. Auden, English-born author and poet)

“A simple grateful thought turned heavenwards is the most perfect prayer.” (Doris Lessing, writer)

“Prayer is not an old woman's idle amusement. Properly understood and applied, it is the most potent instrument of action.” (Mahatma Gandhi)

***SOME THOUGHTS ON CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS DIFFERENTLY***

As Orthodox Christian Women, we should understand the deeper meaning of the Feast of the Nativity, as the world pulls us away with its commercialism and materialism during this time of year.

The birth of Christ is a joy in our lives. God became man, so that we could become like God (“theosis”). While exchanging gifts, we should also exchange the gift of LOVE. Love shouldn’t be only offered in “gift” form with fancy wrapping paper and a bow. Offer the gift of LOVE by giving of YOURSELF.

Don’t let the world deceive you with its bright lights and decorations (and EARLY BIRD SALES!). Go deeply inside the spirit of Christmas to understand the TRUE meaning of exchanging gifts or bright lights. Unfortunately, the world has forgotten the true value of Christmas in the business and hubbub that surrounds this time of year.

While decorating your Christmas tree, remember to decorate your life with virtues. While lighting the tree, remember that Christ came to enlighten our path and was the light of the world. With each Christmas present you unwrap, remember to reach out to others as Christ offered himself to us.

Finally, remember the love of God for all of us that he sent His only begotten son to dwell among us and save us from our sins. THIS is the true meaning of how we should celebrate Christmas.

***WOMEN SAINTS – AND FEASTS – FOR NOVEMBER & DECEMBER***

***November***

- 1 St. Theodota, Martyr Cyrenia, St. Helen
- 2 Icon of Ozerianka
- 3 St. Anna of Kiev, Martyr Winefride
- 5 Martyr Episteme & her husband
- 7 Martyr Karina & her husband
- 9 Virgin Martyr Matrona
- 11 St. Militsa of Serbia
- 12 Icon of the Mother of God “Merciful”
- 13 Scheme-Nun Irene of Myrtidiotissa
- 14 St. Theodora
- 15 Icon of the Mother of God of Kupyatitich
- 16 Martyr Ephygenia
- 17 St. Hilda
- 19 Icon of Joy of All Who Sorrow
- 20 Forefeast of the Entry, Martyr Thekla,  
Martyr Anna
- 21 Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple
- 22 St. Apphia, Martyr Cecilia
- 24 Great Martyr Catherine, Martyr Mastridia
- 27 Icons of the Mother of God (2)
- 28 Martyr Anna, Seven Women Martyrs

***December***

- 1 Martyr Ananias
- 2 Martyr Myrope
- 4 Great Martyr Barbara, Martyr Juliana
- 5 St. Crispina
- 7 St. Philothea
- 8 Martyr Anthusa
- 9 Conception of the Theotokos, St. Hannah
- 10 St. Angelina
- 13 Martyr Lucia
- 15 Heiromartyr Eleutherius & His Mother
- 16 St. Sophia
- 17 Righteous Elizabeth, St. Judith, St. Miriam
- 18 Martyr Zoe
- 20 Icon
- 21 Martyr Juliana, 130 Women Martyrs
- 22 Great Martyr Anastasia, Martyr Theodota
- 24 Martyr Eugenia, Mary Hyacinthus
- 26 Synaxis of the Mother of God
- 28 Virgin Martyr Agape
- 30 Virgin Martyr Anysia, St. Theodora
- 31 St. Melania, St. Sabiana

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