

Orthodox Liturgical Tradition Values Life in the Womb

Dear Parish Faithful & Friends in Christ,



Today, September 23, we commemorate the *Conception of St. John the Forerunner and Baptist of the Lord*. St. John is the only figure in the New Testament besides Christ whose conception and nativity are related in detail (Lk. 1). This indicates the importance of St. John in the work of salvation in the world. He is the true "friend of the bridegroom."

A point concerning this commemoration is that a new, unique and unrepeatable human person began to exist precisely at the moment of his conception. Human life - the psychosomatic unity of soul and body - is a continuum that starts at conception and continues through the grave and beyond into the Kingdom of God.

The Scriptures reveal that life begins at conception when it tells us that the unborn John "leaped for joy" in the womb of his mother Elizabeth when the Theotokos visited her six months into her childbearing (Luke 1:39-45). St. John's destiny and vocation were chosen by God prior to his

conception and started when he was conceived. He needed the time and nurturing to grow into that destiny and vocation.

The beginning of human life at conception is a truth that demands recognition in a world and society that has legalized abortion. (It is also a truth that has received absolute affirmation within the scientific community). We employ the fallible logic that declares that if something is legal then it must be legally right.

The higher moral law declares that life is sacred. The Church witnesses to this truth to a world that has lost its moral and ethical bearings about this most basic fact of life. Every child ever conceived is a child of God with a purpose and destiny decreed for him or her by God.

The celebration of the *Conception of St. John the Forerunner and Baptist of the Lord* (September 23); the *Conception of the Theotokos* (December 9); and the *Incarnation of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* (March 25), remind us about the sanctity of life. Thus, it is our liturgical tradition that firmly values life in the womb. These festal commemorations declare that life is from God and they compel us to stand firmly in defense of the goodness and sanctity of life.

The conception of St. John is related in the Gospel According to St. Luke (1:5-25). This passage can be found on our parish webpage, together with other readings appointed for today:

<https://www.christthesavioroca.org/todaysreadingssaints>

There is also a summary from the OCA's webpage:

<https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2020/09/23/102703-conception-of-the-honorable-glorious-prophet-forerunner-and-bapt>