

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

A PARISH OF THE DIOCESE OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY

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ORTHODOX CHURCH in AMERICA

Struggling to Believe

May 8 is the feast day of the Holy Apostle John the Theologian.

Saint John is given the title "Theologian" because his Gospel interprets events and words, delving into their meaning in the light of the divinity of Jesus Christ. Rather than just recording episodes, John (who, by tradition, was aided in his writing by Prochorus) sets them in the context of Jesus the Messiah's coming: "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God...(1:12).

In the first chapter, John names four people—John the Baptist, Andrew, Philip and Nathanael—who recognize Jesus as the Savior, the One who fulfills the promises of Moses and the prophets. It is clearly a struggle to believe at first, at least for Nathanael, but Jesus rewards their recognition by assuring them that they will see "...heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (1:51).

John had a special closeness to Jesus; as we know, he is referred to as the "beloved disciple," and he is the only one of the four Gospel writers who records two events involving Jesus' beloved Mother. The first is the wedding at Cana (2:1-11) at which Jesus responds to His Mother's concern for the bridegroom by changing water into wine.

The second is Jesus' direction to Mary, as He hangs on the cross, to take John as her son, and to John that he care for Mary as his mother (19: 26-27). This loving, familial gesture is quite a contrast to Luke's Gospel, for example. There, Jesus' only words from the cross addressed to mothers are these in 23:28-29: "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for

Intercessory Prayers

We pray for all our fellow parishioners, but we pray especially for those who are incapable of being with us in church. Among them are:

Michael, Mary and Max Bakaletz, Genevieve Bobenko, Pauline Bodnar, Nancy Filak, Mary Hadginske, Helen Kurnewitz, Margaret Lawler, Kathleen Lazorczyk, Emil Mikulik, MaryAnn Rabakozi, Anatoly & Anna Rozanovich, Nadia Sojka, Eva Stashitsky, Ann Velebir.

...yourselves and your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, "Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never gave suck!"

Despite his love for Jesus, John doesn't avoid writing about the hostility Jesus faced, and about the struggles of some to believe His words. John 6:35-44 is one of the readings for this day and the previous day, and in these verses Jesus tells the Jews, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever..."

The Jews "murmur" at this, wondering how He can claim to have come down from heaven when they know very well who His parents are. Their doubt is a bit like that of the Samaritan woman, who at first struggles to believe His claim that He has "living water" because He carries no vessel to draw from the well (4:11).

But the Samaritan woman did come to believe, as did many of the Jews. Struggle on the way to belief is no sin, and should come as no surprise. Jesus Christ warned us about it when He said, as John writes in 16:4, "I have said all this to you to keep you from falling away."



Announcements

◆ The **Food Pantry** is always in need of food items. Please keep those less fortunate in mind and help us to feed those in need. A basket is in the vestibule of the church for your convenience. St. Peter's Heaven informed us that now they are exceptionally low on cans of tuna fish, mashed potatoes and macaroni & cheese. May God bless you abundantly for your generosity.

◆ **Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors Program (DDB)**, entitled "A VISION FOR OUR FUTURE", was initiated by His Grace bishop Michael. By participation in this program, we can help our diocese in three very important initiatives each year: 1) support for the new mission parishes; 2) scholarships for our seminary students; 3) assistance for an established parish that may be struggling in these difficult economic times. To learn more about this Vision and the DDB Program, visit the diocesan website at www.nynjoca.org and proceed to the section designated for the program.

Birthday Greetings

Happy birthday to **Kathie Sudol**, who celebrates her birthday on May 7, and **Elena Nehrebecki**, who celebrates her birthday on May 8. May God grant both of you good health and happiness for Many Years! Mnogaya Leta!

Welcome Visitors

We welcome all visitors to our Divine Liturgy. It is our joy to have you with us today. If this is your first visit to our parish, we welcome you and invite you to return as often as you are able. While Holy Communion may only be received by prepared Orthodox Christians, our non-Orthodox guests are welcome to join us in venerating the Cross, receiving blessed bread at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, and for fellowship in our Church Hall after the service.



May 4, 2014

3RD SUNDAY OF PASCHA
Holy Myrrhbearing Women

- **9:00am** – Divine Liturgy
Epistle: Acts 6:1-7
Gospel: Mk. 15:43-16:8
- **Fellowship** – everyone is invited for Coffee Hour following the Divine Liturgy
- **3:30pm** – Holy Matrimony of Robert Michael Czech & Emily Smith McDonald

Schedule of Services

SATURDAY, MAY 10
5:30pm - Great Vespers

SUNDAY, MAY 11
9:00am - Divine Liturgy