

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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God Uses the Imperfect

July 15 is the feast day of Great Prince Vladimir, Equal to the Apostles and Enlightener of the Russian Lands.

Knowing about Saint Vladimir's great work of bringing the Russian lands to Orthodox Christianity gives us part of his story. But what adds to the story's significance is to discover the people and events that God used to enable him to do his great work.

Vladimir, born in 956, was not of illustrious birth; his mother was a pagan servant, and he himself was raised as a pagan. Most accounts say that he indulged in all the pleasures of pagan life without restraint, giving lavish parties, drinking and carousing with friends, and enjoying the attentions of several wives and concubines.

He was also a warrior, and fought in bloody battles. He had to fight his own two brothers for control of the divided empire, and once he achieved that control he expanded the empire by military conquests.

Some people look at Vladimir's important place in the history of Russian Orthodoxy and ask whether a person whose life has included so much licentious living and violence can ever rightly be declared a saint of the Church.

But even leaving aside the examples of Old Testament saints from similar backgrounds, we can see how God was preparing Vladimir. First there was the influence of his grandmother Olga, who was a Christian and a strong woman. Though she was never able to convert her pagan son, Vladimir was affected by her example.

Also, Christianity had quietly been spreading in the Russian lands ever since Sts. Cyril and Methodius converted the eastern Slavs years earlier. Though Vladimir continued to erect altars to the pagan gods and to follow pagan beliefs, he knew that some

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.

Christians were willing to witness decisively to their faith even when threatened. He was impressed enough by their example to investigate the teachings of Christianity, along with those of other faiths. The envoys he sent out came back with the definite opinion that Orthodoxy was the most appealing of them all, and that they "could not forget" the beauty of Orthodox worship.

In the year 988, Prince Vladimir proposed an alliance with the Byzantine emperor Basil, and asked to marry his sister Anna. Basil would not agree unless the pagan prince accepted baptism, which he did.

Back at home with his wife, Vladimir took his new life as a baptized Christian seriously, disciplining himself and giving his best efforts to the formation of "Orthodox Rus."

One of this day's readings is I Corinthians 1:1-9. Paul greets the Corinthian Christians lovingly, but in the very next verses he addresses serious problems that are already cropping up in this still-young church. The Corinthians, who were taught by Paul himself, are far from perfect, just as Saint Vladimir was.

But God could and did use them both for His highest purpose: to bring people to the truth of Christian faith, and the hope of the glorious life that will never end.



Announcements

◆ Save the date: **Annual Diocesan Church School Conference** for NJ Deanery is scheduled for Saturday, August 2. For more information please see a flyer at the bulletin board.

◆ Save the date: **Annual Diocesan Youth Day** at Six Flags Great Adventure is scheduled for Thursday, August 21, 2014. For more information please see a flyer at the bulletin board.

◆ **Enjoy your vacation** but remember to visit the Orthodox Church at your destination. To search for a local parish go to <http://orthodoxyinamerica.org> and enter your location in the search panel. If you plan to receive Holy Communion, be sure that the priest knows who you are before the Divine Liturgy. It is always good form to approach the Chalice knowing that the priest is informed about you. Have a wonderful and safe summer!

Birthday Greetings

Happy birthday to **Vladimir Nehrebecki**, who celebrates his birthday this Tuesday. May God grant you good health and happiness for Many Years! Mnohaja Lita!

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.



July 13, 2014

5th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Holy Fathers of the First Six Ecumenical Councils

- 8:50am – Hours
- 9:00am – Divine Liturgy
 - Epistle: Rom. 10:1-10
 - Heb. 13:7-16 (Fathers)
 - Gospel: Mt. 8:28-9:1
 - Jn. 17:1-13 (Fathers)
- Fellowship – everyone is invited for Coffee Hour following the service.

Schedule of Services

SATURDAY, JULY 19

5:30pm - Great Vespers

SUNDAY, JULY 20

9:00am - Divine Liturgy