

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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Department of
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A Hesitant Hero

September 26th is the feast day of Gideon, an Old Testament hero who is named and praised in Hebrews 11.

But Gideon's story is not altogether heroic. He first appears in Judges 6, which begins with a melancholy description. God has delivered faithless Israel into the hands of her enemies. Now, whenever the Israelites plant seed, the Midianites "encamp against them and destroy the produce of the land as far as the neighborhood of Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel, and no sheep or ox or ass" (6: 4). The Israelites have cried out to God to deliver them from the Midianites' ravages.

Gideon is humbly beating out wheat— doing it in the wine press to hide it from the Midianites — when the angel of the Lord appears to him and says, "The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor." Gideon isn't feeling valorous. He answers, "Pray, sir, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this befallen us? And where are all His wonderful deeds which our fathers recounted to us...?" When the angel tells Gideon that he will be the one to deliver Israel from Midian, Gideon replies doubtfully that he is the least of his small clan.

Yet when the angel asks Gideon to destroy his pagan family's idol and build an altar to the Lord, he readily does so, an indication that there is courage in him. He does it by night, however, fearing his family and the townsmen.

Gideon's hesitation continues. He asks God (named in 6:36) to produce dew on a fleece, leaving the ground around it dry, as proof that He has chosen Gideon to deliver Israel. Then he asks God to leave the fleece dry while wetting the surrounding ground. Father Eugen Pentiuic writes in "The Old Testament in Eastern Orthodox Tradition" (Oxford University Press 2014), that Gideon

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 Lazarczyk, Emil Mikulik, MaryAnn Rabakozi, Anatoly & Anna Rozanovich, Nadia Sojka, Eva Stashitsky, Ann Velebir.

is "...redundant and almost ridiculous in his request." Even so, God is patiently compassionate: "Instead of being indignant at Gideon's nagging tests, God responds without hesitation."

As Gideon's confidence grows, God requires him to act with greater faith. He radically reduces the size of Gideon's army (using some tests of His own to determine which soldiers are fit for battle) so that Israel must depend on Him and won't be able to boast that "my own hand has delivered me" (7:2).

God supports His successful warrior, whose stature becomes so great that the men of Israel ask him to become their king, because he has saved them from Midian. But Gideon's faith in God has also increased, and he tells them, "I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the Lord will rule over you" (8: 23).

But Gideon, like many Biblical heroes, succumbs to temptation, described in 8: 24-27. After he dies, the people again turn to pagan worship, forget God, and fail to show kindness to Gideon's family.

Israel will continue to test God's patience, and Gideon, like all the Old Testament personages listed in Hebrews 11, will have to wait for God to send salvation so that they can be "made perfect."



Announcements

◆ Next Sunday, September 28 is the **Diocesan Church Musician Appreciation Day**. Special prayers will be added during the Augmented Litany to honor our choir directors and singers and to offer our special thanks to them.

◆ A **Diocesan Girls Retreat** for those in grades 7-12 will take place at Saint Basil's Academy in Garrison NY from Friday-Sunday, November 14-16, 2014. For more information please go to our Diocesan website www.nynjoca.org.

Birthday Greetings

Happy birthday to **Ed Fedush**, who celebrates his birthday today. May God grant you good health and happiness for Many Years! Mnohaja Lita!

Memory Eternal

Our deepest sympathy to Fr. Sophrony Royer, former pastor of our parish on the repose of his father, **Mr. Wilfred Royer**, who fell asleep in the Lord on Saturday, September 13. May his Memory be Eternal! Vichnaya Pamiat!

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 after the service in our Church Hall in the school building next door.



September 21, 2014

15th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**Leavetaking of the Elevation of the Cross.
Sunday After the Elevation of the Cross.**

- **8:50am** – Hours
- **9:00am** – Divine Liturgy
Epistles: Gal. 2:16-20 (Sun. After)
2Cor. 4:6-15
Gospels: Mk. 8:34-9:1 (Sun. After)
Mt. 22:35-46
- **Fellowship** – everyone is invited for
Coffee Hour following the service.

Schedule of Services

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

5:30pm - Great Vespers

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

9:00am - Divine Liturgy