

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

A PARISH OF THE DIOCESE OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY

170 Lexington Avenue, Passaic, New Jersey, 07055
www.stjohnspassaic.org

REV. FR. IGOR KSENIUK, Rector 973-473-1928 (office)
646-387-5494 (cell)
fr.igorksn@gmail.com



December 28, 2014

29th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Sunday After the Nativity of Christ

The 20,000 Martyrs of Nicomedia

• 9:00am – Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Gal. 1:11-19 (Sun. After)

Gospel: Mt. 2:13-23 (Sun. After)

• **Panikhida** – in memory of newly departed Emil Mikulik, offered by Sonya & Chris Finno, and Effie & Barbara Stanovci.

• **Fellowship** – everyone is invited for Coffee Hour following the service.

Schedule of Services

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31

6:00pm - Great Vespers & Litya

THURSDAY, JAN. 1 – THE CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST. ST. BASIL THE GREAT

9:00am - Divine Liturgy & Molieben for the beginning of the New Year.

(continued on the next page)

CHRIST IS BORN! Glorify Him!

A Place Like No Other

On the last two days of the year, we read from Mark's Gospel, 11:11-26. The narrative begins with Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem.

The first place Jesus goes is the Temple. After He has "looked around at everything" there, He and the twelve apostles go off to Bethany as the day ends.

The next morning, they return to Jerusalem, and Mark records one of the most unsettling incidents in the Gospels. Jesus is hungry, and when He sees a fig tree from afar, He approaches it to look for fruit. The tree has leaves, but no figs. Jesus curses (meaning that He passes judgment on) the fig tree: "May no one ever eat fruit from you again."

This might seem to be an uncharacteristically harsh thing for the compassionate Lord to do, especially because the passage tells us that "it was not the season for figs." But fig trees grow in a certain way: the fruit usually appears before the leaves, so a tree with leaves could be expected to have fruit as well. Even a tree "out of season" might have fruit because fig trees often produce several crops each year.

Jesus was with His apostles, and the fig tree provided a lesson for them: the outward appearance of "fruitfulness" is not enough. All of us must produce real fruit, and take care not to look as though we are doing so when in fact our spiritual lives are barren.

Now Jesus is about to return to the place He went to first the day before, the place like no other—the Temple. There He will make it plain that Israel's way of worship has become barren and fruitless by driving out "those who bought and sold in the Temple." He accuses them of making a holy place into a "den of robbers." That phrase is from Jeremiah 7: 11, which means that

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, John Kary, Helen Kurnewitz, Margaret Lawler, Kathleen Lazarczyk, MaryAnn Rabakozi, Anatoly & Anna Rozanovich, Nadia Sojka, Maryann Stagen, Eva Stashitsky, Ann Velebir.

this isn't the first time the religious leaders have been warned that they are disrespecting God's house. Hearing His words, the current leaders don't take the lesson; instead they seek ways to destroy Him.

To emphasize that Jesus truly respects the Temple as a place like no other, Mark adds a detail that is found only in his Gospel, writing that Jesus "would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple." This greatest place of worship is not to be used as a convenient shortcut or a covered thoroughfare.

The morning after this momentous event, Jesus and the apostles pass the fig tree again. Peter exclaims, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away." The Lord's power is clearly real, and so is His warning about fruitlessness.

Jesus reminds the apostles, and us, to be prayerful. A faithful and believing person will receive a beneficial answer to prayer, and will be able to do great things, as they have seen Him do. He adds that as we pray we should forgive, if we have anything against anyone, so that the Father in heaven may also forgive us.

What good words with which to start the new year.

Schedule of Services

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SATURDAY, JANUARY 3

6:00pm - Great Vespers

SUNDAY, JANUARY 4

9:00am - Divine Liturgy

Birthday Greetings

Happy Birthday to **Stephen Fabian**, who celebrates his birthday this Saturday. May God grant you good health and happiness for Many Years! Mnohaja Lita!

Announcements

◆ Father Igor, Matushka Anna Maxim and Sofia would like to express their heartfelt Thank you to the Board of Trustees and to our parishioners for the wonderful gifts and cards during this Nativity Season. May the Lord's abundant blessings be also upon you, and upon your families throughout this Nativity Season and the upcoming New Year!

◆ Save the date: New Jersey Deanery is sponsoring a **bus trip to the "March For Life" in Washington, D.C. on Thursday, January 22, 2015.** The motor-coach bus will depart at 6:15am from Holy Assumption Church, 29 Huron Ave., Clifton NJ, and return to the church that evening at approximately 9:45pm. Clergy and faithful from throughout the diocese are invited to participate. Seat reservations may be made by contacting Fr. John Diamantis by phone at (609) 393-1234, or by email at frjohndiamantis@gmail.com. There is no charge for this trip. **The deadline for reservations is December 31, 2014.**

◆ The house blessing schedule was posted in the last issue of "The Enlightener". If you would like to make changes, or if you did not have your house blessing scheduled yet, please call Fr. Igor to arrange it.