

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

A PARISH OF THE DIOCESE OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY

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Department of
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

The Annunciation

March 25 is the Feast of the Annunciation, the visit of the archangel Gabriel to Mary, proclaiming God's plan that she would give birth to His Son.

We read the story of the Annunciation on this day, in Luke 1: 24-38. It begins with Gabriel saluting Mary with "Hail," which can be translated as "rejoice." One of the recurring phrases with which Mary is addressed in Orthodox worship is, "Rejoice, O unwedded bride." Origen wrote that a salutation like this is never "addressed to a man; such a special greeting was reserved only for Mary."

Gabriel tells Mary, "The Lord is with you." These words alert us that God is going to do something extraordinary with the person to whom they are addressed. In the Old Testament, Nathan says the words to King David when David plans to build a temple for the Lord (2 Samuel 7:3). In Judges 6:12 the angel of the Lord comes to encourage Gideon to fight the Midianites, and says, "The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor" (Judges 6:12).

Mary is understandably troubled by Gabriel's words, and by his formal greeting. She is, after all, just a young girl. In answer to her question of how the birth will take place, Gabriel says, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you." His words tell us that this is a uniquely miraculous birth, far beyond any other, including the birth of John the Baptizer which Gabriel also has foretold.

Once again, similar words occur in the Old Testament, describing something important. In Isaiah 32:15-20 we read about the future transformation of everything in creation, when "the Spirit is [will be] poured upon us from on high."

Luke uses words that tie Christ's birth to the Old Testament,

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:

Genevieve Bobenko, Nancy Filak, Mary Hadginske, Helen Kurnewitz, Margaret Lawler, Kathleen Lazarczyk, MaryAnn Rabakozi, Anatoly & Anna Rozanovich, Nadia Sojka, Maryann Stagen, Eva Stashitsky, Ann Velebir.

the preparation for His coming, to remind us that God always prepares us for things. But then he makes it clear that this birth, the coming of Christ, is the end and fulfillment of all that preparation. Gabriel says: "...and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Young Mary stands in the presence of this imposing celestial being. She hears these life-changing words. She knows that Gabriel is waiting for her response. Without equivocation, without any more questions, she calmly says, "Let it be to me according to your word."

Her decision will be costly – Simeon will soon tell her of the sword that is to pierce her soul. But she trusts that agreeing to be "the handmaid of the Lord" is the right thing. A reading for this day, Hebrews 2:14, tells us that it is indeed the right thing for our salvation: "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he [Christ] himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage." Mary is the one through whom this deliverance took place.

Schedule of Services

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SATURDAY, MARCH 28 - SATURDAY OF THE AKATHIST

9:00am - Divine Liturgy

1:30pm - 3:00pm – Parish Confessions

6:00pm - Great Vespers

SUNDAY, MARCH 29 - ST. MARY OF EGYPT

9:00am - Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great

Birthday Greetings

Happy Birthday to **Genevieve Bobenko**, who celebrates her birthday today, and **Chris Bzik**, this Saturday. May God grant both of you good health and happiness for Many Years! Mnohaja Lita!

Announcements

◆ The best way Orthodox Christians prepare for Christ's Holy Resurrection is by having **Private Confession** during Great Lent. It is heard after any Vespers or Akathist service. It can also be heard before the Sunday Divine Liturgy from 8:30 to 8:50am; however, if you plan to come then, let Father Igor know the day before. Parish Confessions is scheduled for this **Sat. March 28** from **1:30 to 3:00p.m.** Please arrive by 2:30 p.m.

◆ Tonight **Deanery Mission Vespers** (4:00pm) will be at St. John the Baptist Church, Alpha, NJ

◆ On **Tuesday, Mar. 31 at 7:00pm** the **Sacrament of Holy Unction** will be served at the Holy Transfiguration Church, 35 Sickletown Rd, Pearl River, NY.

◆ The **Gifts of Love** collection this Palm Sunday will be for St. Vladimir's Camp & Retreat Center in Ohio (stvladimirscampohio.com). The camp hosts two weeks of Ohio District Camp and the week-long National Junior Summer Sports Tournament (Junior Olympics). Last year marked the 50th Anniversary of the Ohio District Camping Program, so the collection will be given in honor of that milestone. Your donation will be greatly appreciated.



March 22, 2015

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT
St. John of The Ladder (Climacus)

• **9:00am** – Divine Liturgy of St. Basil

Epistle: Heb. 6:13-20

Eh. 5:9-19 (Saint)

Gospel: Mk. 9:17-31

Mt. 4:25-5:12 (Saint)

• **Panikhida** – in memory of **Pauline Bodnar**, on the 40th day of her Repose

• **Fellowship** – everyone is invited for Coffee Hour following the Divine Liturgy

Schedule of Services

TUESDAY, MARCH 24

6:00pm - Great Compline with Litya

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25 - ANNUNCIATION

9:00am - Divine Liturgy

FRIDAY, MARCH 20

6:00pm - Akathist to the Theotokos

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