

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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A Wise Man Writes About Despondency

During the week of May 24, the Church commemorates two women who had reason to know about despondency.

Saint Theodosia (May 29) is known for courageously approaching and standing with a large group of bound Christian prisoners. She encouraged them and kept them from falling into despondency as their martyrdom became imminent. Her own martyrdom followed, and she faced it with courage and good cheer.

Saint Macrina the Elder (May 30) was the grandmother of Saint Basil the Great. She lived during the persecutions of the emperor Diocletian. To avoid imprisonment and to protect their family from suffering on their behalf because they were prominent Christians, she and her husband Basil "disappeared." They spent years hiding in a forest, while everything they had owned was confiscated and despoiled. A life so different from the norm, and in isolation from her children and relatives, could easily have led to despondency. Yet Macrina and Basil died peacefully and grateful to God for the blessing of life.

"Despondency: The Spiritual Teaching of Evagrius Ponticus on Acedia" by Gabriel Bunge (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2013) acknowledges that Christians, like everyone else, and whether lay or monastic, can be tempted by acedia, which the author translates as "despondency." The book is a collection of, and reflections on the subject in the writings of Evagrius Ponticus, who lived in the fourth century.

One of the ways we become despondent, Evagrius writes, is by letting Satan stir up in us dissatisfaction with the place we're in and the thing we're doing. He gives an example that sounds painfully contemporary:

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.

"If the despondent one reads, then he yawns a great deal...he rubs his eyes, and stretches out his hands, and while his eyes wander from the book, he stares at the wall, then he turns away again, and reads a little, and when he leafs through the book...he counts the pages, and determines the number of sheets, finds fault with the writing and design, and in the end he snaps the book shut." Everyone, Evagrius notes, is assaulted by harmful thoughts, and their source is always love of self, which may take the forms of gluttony, avarice or vainglory. But even though these thoughts disturb the soul, we can refuse to consent to them.

The remedy to self-love is real love, Evagrius writes. That love can be expressed in work, because the devil loves idleness. Prayerful tears, as an expression of one's hard-heartedness and the need for God's salvation, are another remedy. So is a brief prayer, said consistently, as a kind of counter-statement to the devil's promptings.

Gabriel Bunge writes, "...the specific remedies which Evagrius prescribes are reduced basically to one: sheer persevering!" This is a conscious waiting for God, in inner silence and without distractions. It is not easy to reach that level of patient waiting, but it leads to our becoming like the Prodigal Son "on the way to his father, who then meets him, not in the father's house, but beyond expectation, while he is still on the way."

Birthday Greetings

Happy birthday to **Dorothy Fabian**, who celebrates her birthday today, and to **Richard Paul Rahnefeld**, this Wednesday. May God grant both of you good health and happiness for Many Years! Mnohaja Lita!



Announcements

◆ **The 90th Anniversary of our parish** is coming up! Please reserve the weekend of **June 13-14, 2015**, when our beloved Hierarch Archbishop Michael will join us in celebrating this milestone. **Great Vespers** will be served on **Saturday at 6:00pm**, followed by **Panikhida for all departed parishioners**. On **Sunday**, the **Hierarchical Divine Liturgy** will start at **9:00am**, followed by a **banquet at The Brownstone** in Paterson, NJ at 1:00pm. Don't miss this wonderful occasion. For reservations, please contact Robert or Betty Czech by June 1. For more details please see a flyer at the bulletin board.

◆ **A new set of Icons** will be blessed today at the end of the Divine Liturgy. The Icons are offered in loving memory of John and Anna Bzik by all their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. The Kiot is offered by Peter Czech in loving memory of Emil Hreno, on the 15th Anniversary of his repose. May the Lord bless you abundantly for your generosity, and may He rest in peace the souls of your departed loved ones. Memory Eternal!

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 24, 2015

7th SUNDAY OF PASCHA

Holy Fathers

of the 1st Ecumenical Council
Afterfeast of the Ascension

• **9:00am** – Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Acts 20:16-18, 26-36

Gospel: Jn. 17:1-13

• **Panikhida** - in memory of **Archpriest Peter Kohanik**, and for all the departed soldiers and veterans of our parish.

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

Schedule of Services

SATURDAY, MAY 30 - MEMORIAL SATURDAY

5:30pm - Panikhida

6:00pm - Great Vespers with Litya

SUNDAY, MAY 31 - HOLY PENTECOST

9:00am - Divine Liturgy & Vespers with kneeling prayers