

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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Habakkuk Asks the Universal Question

The Old Testament prophet Habakkuk is remembered on December 2nd. His brief book poses deep questions about human life and suggests equally deep answers from God.

The opening verses express the prophet's suffering: "O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and Thou wilt not hear? Or cry to thee, 'Violence!' and Thou wilt not save? Why dost Thou make me see wrongs and look upon trouble?" He goes on to complain that God's unwillingness to hear means that the law becomes slack and ineffective, and justice never prevails.

God gives an answer that, at first glance, seems anything but merciful. He tells Habakkuk He is doing a work "that you would not believe if told." He says that He is using the Chaldeans, a dread and terrible people, as instruments of chastisement upon His still-beloved Israel.

But God's answer does not end with the terrifying Chaldeans. He instructs the prophet to "write the vision, make it plain upon tablets...For still the vision awaits its time; it hastens to the end, it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay" (2: 2-3). Then God promises that the righteous shall live by their faith; those who trust God will see the fulfillment of the vision, the saving plan He has for humankind. The prophet is satisfied by this promise, and at the end of his book he writes, "Though the fig tree does not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines...yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (2: 17-18). Saint Paul quotes Habakkuk in Romans 1:17, writing about the importance of keeping faith even in suffering and worldly oppression.



November 29, 2015

26th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
NATIVITY FAST

- 8:50am – Hours
- 9:00am – Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Eph. 5:9-19
Gospel: Lk. 13:10-17

- **Panikhida** – in memory of **Vasily Ochabruk**, on the 9th day of his repose, offered by Kseniuk family.
- **Coffee Hour** – everyone is invited for a fellowship following the service.

Schedule of Services

SATURDAY DECEMBER 5

5:00pm - Great Vespers with Litya

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6 - ST. NICHOLAS

9:00am - Divine Liturgy

Intercessory Prayers

We pray for all our fellow parishioners, and we pray especially for those who are incapable of being with us in church. Please keep in your prayers our Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

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

The fourth Ode of the Canon we sing at Pascha describes "the inspired prophet Habakkuk" who "stands with us in holy vigil" and "cries with a piercing voice: 'Today salvation has come to the world, for Christ is risen as all-powerful.'" This Ode tells us that the "vision" promised to Habakkuk has been fulfilled by Christ. Like the prophet, we can be sure that the even if the fulfillment "seems slow" we are right to "wait for it" because it does "surely come."

Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, the fourth-century Church Father, picks up on Habakkuk's declaration that he will "take my stand to watch, and station myself on the tower, and look forth to see what [God] will say to me" (2:1). In his Oration XLV Gregory writes, "Well, I have taken my stand and looked forth; and I behold a man riding on the clouds...His countenance is as the countenance of an angel, and his clothing as the brightness of piercing lightning; and he lifts his hand toward the East and cries with a loud voice...'Today is salvation come to the world.'"

For Habakkuk, for Saint Paul, and for Saint Gregory, the answer to the universal question is the same: it is the Risen Christ and His salvation.



Announcements

◆ Just a reminder: we are in **Nativity Fast**, and this is the time when each member of our parish community is encouraged to prayerfully prepare for, and then participate in the Sacrament of private Confession and Holy Communion. **Parish Confessions** will be offered on **Saturday, Dec. 19**, from 1:30pm to 3:00pm, right after the Healing service. If for any reason you cannot make it that day, you can have your Confession after any Vespers service or half-an-hour before the Divine Liturgy on Sundays, just let Fr. Igor know in advance.

◆ Save the date: **Saturday, December 19 at 1:00pm** in our church there will be a **Healing service** to the Mother of God in front of her icon "Queen of All". This service is open for everyone and is for the healing from any disease (this icon of Mother of God is especially known for the healings that occurred of those who suffered with cancer). At the service you will also be able to submit the names of those who need healing for commemoration.

◆ Please keep in mind that until the Daylight Saving Time starts on March 13, 2016, **ALL VESPERS services begin at 5:00pm.**

◆ The Sisterhood of St. Barbara of the Assumption Church in Clifton will be hosting **St. Nicholas Day Fish Dinner** on **Saturday, December 5th**. For tickets please call Olga Grib, 973-471-3678.

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.