

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

Are Your Hearts Hardened?

On December 14th we read Mark 8:11-21, in which the Pharisees come to Jesus and ask Him for a sign from heaven. Their aim, as it is so often, is to test Him..

Considering all that Jesus has already done—healings, miracles, loving acts toward all kinds of people—it's a curious request that the Pharisees are making. They certainly are aware of these things He has done, and also of the miraculous feeding of several thousand people, described in the verses just before these.

Mark uses some striking words to describe Jesus' reaction to their questioning. He says that the Lord "sighed deeply in His spirit." It profoundly grieved Him to encounter the obstinate refusal of some people to acknowledge Him, because it was a rejection of His love and of His desire to give them salvation.

In the Old Testament we have, long before the Incarnation of Christ, an example of God's interest in those who grieve over the sins of others. God asks His servant to "go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed there" (Ezekiel 9:4). Centuries later, in the letter Saint Paul writes to the Romans, he expresses a similar grief. He writes that because of the unbelief of the people of Israel, "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart" (Romans 9:2).

The Pharisees were not the only ones who grieved the heart of Jesus. In the passage from Mark, the disciples are in a boat with Him, and discover that they have forgotten to bring bread, and now they have only one loaf. They go on talking about this, even

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.

as He tries to warn them about other, serious things. He urges them to remember how He provided bread for the crowds, and then asks, "Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember?"

Jesus Himself is the Living Bread that the disciples need, but they are too preoccupied with fretting about their "bread problem" to understand. The Pharisees have seen many signs, but they want more, or a different kind. They are too preoccupied with their expectations to understand.

What about us? Will we demand some "sign" that specifically suits our expectations, and waver in our belief in Him if we don't get that very specific sign? Will we forget the wonder of having a God who feeds us and is present with us, as we fret about the needs of our daily life?

He asks, "Are your hearts hardened?" How good for us if we can offer Him not hardened hearts but soft ones, "broken and contrite" ones that grieve over our sins and the sins of others, and are open to His healing love.

Memorial Offering

Beautiful wooden stand and a kiot (frame) for the Icon of the Mother of God "Queen of All" was made and donated by John Palubniak in loving memory of his wife, Mary. May the Lord rest her soul in His Heavenly Kingdom. Memory Eternal!



Announcements

◆ 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 next **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.

◆ Next **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.

◆ If you would like to share some **information**, like announcements, Anniversaries/Birthdays/events etc. **in the weekly bulletin**, please call the Rectory or email it by Tuesday of the week that you would like to have it printed to fr.igorksn@gmail.com

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



December 13, 2015

**28th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
SUNDAY OF THE FOREFATHERS
REPOSE OF VEN. HERMAN OF ALASKA,
WONDERWORKER OF ALL AMERICA**

• **9:00am** – Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Col. 3:4-11 (Forefathers)

Gal. 5:22-6:2 (Saint)

Gospel: Lk. 14:16-24

Lk. 6:17-23 (Saint)

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

Schedule of Services

SATURDAY DECEMBER 19

1:00pm - Akathist (Healing Service)

1:30pm - 3:00pm - Parish Confessions

5:00pm - Great Vespers

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20

9:00am - Divine Liturgy