

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

To Hear the Word and Keep It

On Thursday of this week we celebrate the Nativity of the Theotokos, and we read one of Jesus Christ's most meaningful statements about who His true followers are.

It comes in a reading for the day, from Luke 11:27-28: "A woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts that You sucked!' But He said, 'Blessed rather are those hear the word of God and keep it!'"

This passage has been interpreted in diverse ways. Some Biblical interpreters see it as a rebuke to Mary, in which Christ denies any special place to her as His biological mother and says it is only by keeping God's word that a person is blessed.

But the Orthodox Church has a different view, as did the early Church. That view is expressed in the ancient phrase, "The Virgin conceived through her ear." This is not a fundamental misunderstanding of how the process of human conception works, though some modern commentators seem to see it that way. It is a reflection of the way the Church understands the passage from Luke's Gospel. Jesus is not rebuffing His mother; rather He is pointing out that she is more than His biological parent – she is the great example of one who heard the word and kept it. She heard God's word for her at the angel Gabriel's visit, celebrated as the Annunciation. She was willing to keep, or carry out, God's word that she was to be the mother of His Son. It's in this way that she "conceived through her ear" – by agreeing to the word she heard, and bearing the Son of God.

The day after we celebrate the Nativity of the Virgin, we remember her parents Joachim and Anna. Like other Biblical

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, Andrew Fabian, Edward Fedush, Mary Hadginske, Helen Kurnewitz, Margaret Lawler, Kathleen Lazorzcyk, Marian Nagel, MaryAnn Rabakozi, Helen Rahnefeld, Anna Rozanovich, Nadia Sojka, Maryann Stagen, Eva Stashitsky, Ann Velebir.

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couples before them, Joachim and Anna were aging and childless. As it was for those other couples, childlessness was a great heartache for these two. In fact, it brought them not only sadness but also humiliation. It's traditionally understood that Joachim was turned away when he came to offer prayers because he had no children. Anna's sorrow must have been even deeper because of her husband's experience.

Joachim and Anna's longing for a child was fulfilled. The Church's placing of their commemoration on the day after the feast of that child's nativity reminds us that Mary's birth was a normal human one. She was not immaculately conceived, and she was not born to eminent people. Yet she would become the Mother of God, the most exalted example of one who receives God's grace having heard and kept His word.

In Orthodox worship we are constantly offered the chance to hear words of Scripture. Beautiful melodies entice our ears to pay attention to the hymns with their rich theology. So our hearing of the word is helped along in many ways. The keeping of the word, though, is entirely up to us.



Announcements

◆ Prayer request: please remember in your prayers Fr. James and Matushka Pat Mason. Fr. James, former pastor of our parish, had an open-heart surgery last Wednesday, and is recovering now. Get-well cards can be sent to 653 Biltmore Ave., Easton, PA 18040.

◆ Save the date: on **Friday, Sept. 23, and Saturday, Sept. 24 at 7:00pm** at the Holy Assumption Church in Clifton the youth of our Diocese will perform "Godspell", a musical based on the Gospel of Matthew. For more information please see a flyer at the bulletin board.

◆ Save the date: on **Sunday, October 2**, we are going to Hunterdon Hills Playhouse to see "Squabbles," a comedy about a young couple with live-in in-laws. Tickets are still available and cost \$61.50 per person (choose from 7 entrees). For more information and tickets, see Kathy Petrow, or call her at 201-796-6958. Dinner starts at 2:00pm.

◆ Save the date: **Orthodox Education Day** at St. Vladimir's Seminary this year is **October 1**. The theme is "Celebrating Mary," centering on the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. The day begins with the Divine Liturgy at 8:00am.

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.



September 4, 2016

11th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

- **8:50am** – Hours
- **9:00am** – Divine Liturgy
Epistle: 1Cor. 9:2-12
Gospel: Mt. 18:23-35
- **Coffee Hour** – everyone is invited for a fellowship following the service.

Schedule of Services

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7

6:00pm - Great Vespers with Litya

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8 - NATIVITY OF THE MOST-HOLY THEOTOKOS

9:00am - Divine Liturgy

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

6:00pm - Great Vespers, followed by general confession

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

9:00am - Divine Liturgy