

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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Saint Sebastian of Rome

On Friday December 18th we commemorate a martyr-saint we have in common with the Western Church. Most tourists in Rome, especially religious pilgrims, will visit a church or basilica named for Saint Sebastian, either the one on the Palatine Hill or the earlier fourth-century one built outside the Aurelian Walls.

Sebastian, raised in Milan, was an ardent Christian from an early age. Though completely disinclined to military life, he knew that Christians were being persecuted, especially those in military service. He joined the army in about the year 283, intending to comfort and encourage his brothers in the faith.

His help was soon needed by two brothers, Marcus and Marcellianus, who had been sentenced to death. Their faith was wavering, both from fear and because of the tearful pleadings of friends that they should not squander their lives.

Sebastian urged them, gently but eloquently, not to exchange heavenly crowns for a longer earthly life. He spoke so powerfully that the jailer and many others were converted. The Roman governor heard of this and also heard that a man had been cured of gout while being instructed and prepared for baptism. The governor, who suffered greatly from gout, humbly asked the saint to cure him as well. After receiving healing and

Christian instruction he not only was baptized with his son Tiburtius, but liberated the Christian prisoners, freed his own slaves and gave up his government position.

In the year 286 persecutions intensified. Marcus and Marcellianus, their father Tranquillinus, and Zoe, a woman healed by Sebastian, all were martyred, along with many others. Sebastian stayed with the rest of his spiritual children in the city, rather than hiding out in remote places where he would have



December 18, 2016

25th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
Holy Forefathers

- 8:50am – Hours
- 9:00am – Divine Liturgy & Blessing of the new Processional Candles.

Epistle: Heb. 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40
Gospel: Mt. 1:1-25

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

Schedule of Services

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24

EVE OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST
4:30pm - Great Compline & Matins

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25

THE NATIVITY ACCORDING TO THE FLESH OF
OUR LORD GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

9:00am - Divine Liturgy, followed by the traditional Christmas Social.

(continued on the next page)

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 Rabakozzi, Helen Rahnefeld, Anna Rozanovich, Nadia Sojka, Maryann Stagen, Eva Stashitsky, Ann Velebir.

been safe, and was arrested.

Not everyone showed integrity in these difficult days. Young Tiburtius was betrayed to the authorities, and beheaded. Sebastian, who was considered the most dangerous of the Christians, was sentenced by Emperor Diocletian to be killed by being shot with arrows.

The emperor's Mauretanian archers left Sebastian for dead, but other Christians found him and helped him recover. He still wouldn't hide, but publicly reproached the emperor for cruelty. Furious at seeing him alive, Diocletian ordered him beaten to death with cudgels. Later, his abandoned body was secretly buried in catacombs, over which a church would one day be built.

Saint Sebastian's story, with its elements of fear and betrayal, reminds us that Christians are often imperfect. We read on this day that the apostles, asked by Jesus what they had been talking about, were embarrassed to tell Him that they had been discussing "who was the greatest" (Mark 9:34). Yet we are not all required to have grand martyrdoms. In today's reading we also find these simple words of Christ: "For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ, will by no means lose his reward" (Mark 9: 41).

Schedule of Services

(continued from previous page)

MONDAY, DECEMBER 26 – 2ND DAY OF THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY – SYNAXIS OF THE MOST-HOLY THEOTOKOS. Holy Righteous Ones: Joseph the Betrothed, David the King, and James, the Brother of the Lord
9:00am - Divine Liturgy

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 27 – 3RD DAY OF THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY – HOLY PROTOMARTYR AND ARCHDEACON STEPHEN
9:00am - Divine Liturgy

Memorial Offerings

A new set of Processional Candles that was blessed at the end of the Liturgy today was generously donated by:

- Barbara Kary, in memory of Maria (Mae) Pasterick
- Vladimir and Elena Nehrebecki, in honor of Elena's parents Angelina and Vladimir Aphanasyev
- Son Michael and grandchildren Christopher and Joanna Bzik, in memory of John and Anna Bzik
- Czech family, in memory of Michael and Helen Fechisin
- Czech family, in memory of Walter and Mary Czech
- George Hook, in memory of his wife Elizabeth (Betty) Hook. May God bless you for your generosity!



Announcements

- ◆ Please note: due to inclement weather the Healing Service was postponed to Saturday, January 14, 2017.
- ◆ Envelopes for 2017 are available in the candle room. Please pick up your set and continue to support our parish, that does rely on your support! May the Lord bless you hundredfold for your generosity!