

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

From Slave to Bishop

On February 15 the Church remembers the Apostle Onesimus of the Seventy, who began life in Phrygia as the slave of a prominent Christian named Philemon.

Though we do not read Saint Paul's Letter to Philemon on this day, it is the source of some of our information about Onesimus, and about the way his life intertwined with Paul's. For one thing, Paul was acquainted with Philemon. But more importantly, Onesimus and Paul were imprisoned together.

Onesimus was not a very satisfactory slave. He had probably stolen from his master, as Paul indicates when he makes a generous offer to Philemon: "If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account" (v. 18). Paul also writes that he knows Onesimus was "useless" to Philemon. So probably the slave was a runaway, and ended up in a prison where he met Paul. Some scholars believe this was in Rome, but Paul endured imprisonments in other places, such as Ephesus. This would have been a more likely place for the fleeing Onesimus to reach than distant Rome.

But wherever it was that they were confined, the two men had plenty of time to talk with each other. Paul took a fatherly interest in Onesimus, who must have been fearful and wary, and shared the good news of the Gospel with him. Paul's teaching and his loving care had such a profound effect on Onesimus that finally he was baptized.

Many people believe that the main purpose of Paul's letter to Philemon was to encourage him to receive Onesimus back with compassion rather than anger. It's true that Paul asked Philemon to go far beyond the usual master-and-slave relationship, asking

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 Lazorczyk, Marian Nagel, MaryAnn Rabakozi, Helen Rahnefeld, Anna Rozanovich, Nadia Sojka, Maryann Stagen, Eva Stashitsky, Ann Velebir.

him to receive the runaway "no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother" (v. 16). Paul even says, "Receive him as you would receive me." He was asking Philemon to remember that all people have God as their common Master, and are equal in His sight.

But there was more to the letter. Paul was actually asking to have Onesimus back with him. While not directly asking Philemon to send him, Paul writes, "I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. I would have been glad to keep him with me..." (v. 12).

Onesimus was eventually reunited with Paul, continuing to work with him and learn from him. Later he became a bishop, and traveled to far countries to spread the Gospel, carrying on the work of the original apostles after they died.

The early Christians insisted that every person, no matter of what class or rank, was welcome to join the family of believers. Onesimus is proof of that, rising from powerless bondage to the rank of bishop. Even when condemned to death as a Christian, he was grateful to Saint Paul – another prisoner in miserable conditions, who still could convey the joy of Jesus Christ.

Birthday Greetings

Happy Birthday to **Chris Finno**, who celebrates his birthday this Tuesday. May God grant you good health and happiness for Many Years! Mnohaya Lita!



Announcements

◆ Today, following coffee hour, at approximately 11:30am, the Passaic "O" Club will be hosting a "**Pot Luck**" Lunch for all our parishioners and their families. Cost is \$5 for adults and free for children. During the lunch, a video presentation of church life at St. John's will be shown. For more information contact any "O" Club member.

◆ Our **Annual Parish Meeting** will be held next **Sunday, February 19** following the Divine Liturgy and coffee hour. Light Luncheon will be served. It is important that all parishioners attend, if possible, to help in the operation of our church.

◆ Save the date: the **New Jersey Deanery Appreciation Dinner** for the 2016 Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors of our Diocese will be held at the Holy Resurrection Church, 285 French Hill Road, Wayne, NJ 07470 on Sunday, February 19, at 5:00PM.

◆ **Winter weather alert:** in case of necessity to cancel or delay any particular service at the church due to weather conditions, the information about cancellation will be posted on the parish website as well as on Facebook page at least 1 hour before the scheduled time. If the weather is bad and you are not sure if the service will be served, please call rectory to verify.

◆ **House blessings** are in progress. The schedule was posted in the last issue of "*The Enlightener*". If you would like to make changes, or if you are not included in the schedule but would like to have your house blessed this year, please call Fr. Igor to arrange or rearrange it.



February 12, 2017

34th Sunday After Pentecost
Sunday of the Prodigal Son

- **9:00am** – Divine Liturgy
Epistle: 1 Cor. 6:12-20
Gospel: Lk. 15:11-32
- **Coffee Hour**, followed by a "**Pot Luck**" Luncheon, hosted by Passaic "O" Club - all are invited for delicious food and wonderful fellowship.

Schedule of Services

SATURDAY, FEB. 18 - MEMORIAL SATURDAY

- 9:00am - Divine Liturgy & Panikhida
- 5:30pm - Panikhida in memory of **Deborah Ann Kovalycsik**, on the 40th day of her Repose, offered by Nick & Peggy Kovalycsik
- 6:00pm - Great Vespers

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 19

- 9:00am - Divine Liturgy followed by the Annual Parish Meeting