

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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ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

Violence in the Service of God

On February 20 the Church celebrates the memory of a saint known for compassion and love toward for the poor. Yet he is also associated with a shocking act of violence. He is Saint Leo of Catania, in Sicily.

Born in 709 in the northern Italian town of Ravenna, Leo became a Benedictine monk at a young age. He spent the next years in Reggio Calabria, at the southern tip of Italy and close to Sicily. Destitute families in the area soon learned that the young monk was a reliable helper, giving them food and money, and encouraging them through his example of prayer and trust in God.

When Catania needed a bishop, the people and the nearby bishops immediately thought of Leo. He was consecrated, and continued his work among people in need. But poverty was not the only problem he faced—the island of Sicily and the neighboring parts of Italy were strongly influenced by sorcery, magic and witchcraft. As bishop, he spent many hours working to keep people from placing their hope in these things instead of God.

Among the sorcerers in the area was a man named Heliodorus, who could speak convincingly and had a striking appearance. He loved attention; in fact he hoped to dazzle people. There seemed to be no way of doing this in his position as a deacon in the Church, so he took up sorcery, and became highly skilled at doing magic tricks that made crowds gasp in amazement. He also claimed that he knew how to cast spells, which inspired fearful admiration in the gullible.

Saint Leo attempted with gentle persuasion to turn Heliodorus away from magic and back to faith. He failed, partly because Heliodorus resented his rise to the rank of bishop. As a native of

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.

Catania, Heliodorus felt that he should have been the one chosen—why should a "foreigner" be brought in as bishop, leaving him still a deacon?

Heliodorus tried more and more boldly to challenge Saint Leo with his sorcery. Finally one Sunday he interrupted the Liturgy, shouting and flashing his magic tricks to divert people from the service. Saint Leo, for all his patience and compassion, couldn't allow this. He finished the service, and took Heliodorus outside, challenging him to prove his power. Then he built a fire and dragged the magician into it with him.

When the fire died down, Leo was unharmed; Heliodorus had been burned to ashes.

The Old Testament (1 Kings 18) contains a famous story of similar violence, in which the prophet Elijah destroys the prophets of Baal. Such stories are disturbing, but their point is that God will not permit false teachers to entice people away from Him. He will not let them confuse His people, trying to show that He is not God.

When those teachers refuse to repent, as Heliodorus did, God may carry out His warning to destroy their earthly lives so that they can no longer destroy the lives of others with falsehood.

Heartfelt Greetings

Our best wishes to **Vladimir & Elena Nehrebecki**, who celebrate their Wedding Anniversary this Friday. May God grant both of you good health and happiness for Many Years! Многая Лета!



Announcements

◆ Our heartfelt thank you to "O" Club members for hosting a wonderful Pot Luck luncheon last Sunday. And a very special thank you to Betty Czech for an amazing video that she made of our church activities for the last four years. Great job! May God grant all of you Many Years for your hard work and dedication. Mnogaya Leta!

◆ Next **Sunday, February 26** is the Cheesefare Sunday. It is the last day when we are allowed to have dairy products and eggs before Pascha. After the Divine Liturgy we will have **Maslenitsa** in our church hall, followed by the Forgiveness Vespers. During Maslenitsa, a video lecture with a title "**Lent: Our Personal Journey**" by Metropolitan Kallistos Ware will be shown. Everyone is invited. Let us together celebrate the beginning of our Lenten journey.

◆ This year, Great Lent starts on Monday, February 27. As it was in the past, we will have Great Canon of St. Andrew read during the first four days of the Fast. His Eminence, Archbishop Michael will visit us and will lead us in prayer for the second day of the Canon - on Tuesday, February 28 at 6:00PM. The detailed information about lenten services will be in the next bulletin.

◆ **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.



February 19, 2017

SUNDAY OF MEATFARE

Sunday of the Last Judgment

- **8:45am** – Hours
- **9:00am** – Divine Liturgy
Epistle: 1Cor. 8:8-9:2
Gospel: Mt. 25:31-46
- **Coffee Hour** – everyone is invited for a fellowship following the service.
- **Annual Parish Meeting** – a light lunch will be served.

Schedule of Services

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25

6:00pm - Great Vespers

SUNDAY, FEB. 26 - CHEESEFARE SUNDAY

9:00am - Divine Liturgy followed by
Maslenitsa & Forgiveness Vespers