

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

A PARISH OF THE DIOCESE OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY

170 Lexington Avenue, Passaic, New Jersey, 07055

www.stjohnspassaic.org

REV. FR. IGOR KSENIUK, Rector

973-473-1928 (Phone/Fax)

646-387-5494 (cell)

fr.igorksn@gmail.com

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

Are Your Hearts Hardened?

On December 11th 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

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, Michael Bzik, Mary Fechisin, Andrew Fabian, Mary Hadginske, Barbara Kary, Helen Kurnewitz, Kathleen Lazarczyk, Marian Nagel, MaryAnn Rabakozi, Helen Rahnefeld, Anna Rozanovich, Maryann Stagen, Eva Stashitsky, Ann Velebir.

now they have only one loaf. They go on talking about this, even 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.

Memory Eternal

The deepest sympathies of all the clergy and the faithful of the Diocese are expressed to our beloved Archpastor, His Eminence, Archbishop Michael; his brother George and sister Barbara; and all their family, on the falling-asleep in the Lord of their mother, **+Ann Dahulich**, shortly after noon on Wednesday of December 6, 2017 at Mercy House in Endicott, NY. Services are scheduled at Saint Michael's Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Church, 296 Clinton St. Binghamton, NY 13905: **Monday, Dec. 11:** 4PM - 7PM Viewing; 7PM - Parastas (Panikhida). **Tuesday, Dec. 12:** 9AM - 10AM Viewing; 10AM - Divine Liturgy with Funeral Service. Burial will follow at Saint Michael's Cemetery. *Grant rest eternal in blessed repose with the Saints, O Lord, to the soul of Thy newly departed handmaiden, the ever-to-be-remembered +Ann, who has fallen asleep, and make her memory to be Eternal!*

Announcements

◆ Now we are in the **Nativity Fast** that will last until December 25 – the Feast of Nativity of Christ. As always, during this fasting time, each member of our parish community is encouraged to prayerfully and spiritually prepare for this joyous celebration. This coming **Saturday, December 16** at **2PM** there will be an **Akathist** (healing service) to the Mother of God in front of her icon "Queen of All", followed by **Parish Confessions**. Take this opportunity to rejuvenate your spiritual life as we prepare to celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord.

◆ **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.

December 10, 2017

27th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

- **8:45am** – Hours
- **9:00am** – Divine Liturgy
Epistle: Eph. 6:10-17
Gospel: Lk. 17:12-19
- **Coffee Hour** – everyone is invited for fellowship following the service

Schedule of Services

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16

2:00pm - Akathist (Healing Service) to the Mother of God, followed by Parish Confessions.

6:00pm - Great Vespers

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17

9:00am - Divine Liturgy