

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 Mockery to Martyrdom

December 19th is the feast day of two saints, the patrician Roman woman Aglaida and her male slave Boniface, who lived in the fourth century. (Another Boniface, who lived in sixth-century Italy, is commemorated on this same day.)

Aglaida and her slave lived together as lovers. He was known as a genial person, willing to help anyone in need, but he was often drunk. She, the daughter of a Roman senator, had been raised with a strong attachment to luxury and ease and was accustomed to having her own way. As pagans, they had little use for the morality of the Christian faith.

But Aglaida began to have pangs of conscience about the life she shared with Boniface. She had heard about Christians, who were said to live admirable lives, and she had also heard that some people kept relics of Christian martyrs in their homes as a way of helping themselves to become more virtuous. She sent Boniface, with some companion slaves and supplied with gold, to the area east of Rome where Christians were suffering terrible persecution, and instructed him to bring back relics.

Though ready to do as his mistress wished, Boniface couldn't help joking about the whole enterprise. He said lightly to Aglaida, "Suppose I cannot find any martyrs or relics, and instead I bring back my own martyred body to you. Will you honor me as a saint?"

Arriving in Tarsus, Boniface left his companions at the inn where they were staying and set off to the center of town. Since this was the place where they were torturing Christians, he thought it would also be a good place to find some relics. But he was completely

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

unprepared for what he would see, and for his own reaction.

The savagery of the persecution was gruesomely fascinating to watch. Yet what riveted his gaze was not the torture, but the luminous, serene faces of the praying martyrs. Boniface knew that such radiant composure and bravery in suffering could only be inspired by the true God. He ran to kiss the martyrs' feet, and begged to be allowed to suffer with them. It wasn't long before he was bound, tortured, and finally beheaded.

Meanwhile, his companions began wondering where he was. They assumed he had gotten drunk as usual, but began to fear that he might be in trouble. Going to look for him, they were astonished to meet a witness who told them that he had died a martyr with a group of Christians. The man led them to Boniface's decapitated body, which they took back to Rome.

Aglaida received the new martyr with solemn reverence. She built a church to honor him, sold her possessions, and lived the rest of her life in quiet repentance in a monastery. In an angelic vision she was assured that through the prayers and blood of her martyred slave, now a brother to the angels, her own sins had been washed away.



Announcements

◆ We are getting closer to the end of the **Nativity Fast**. If for any reason you did not have a chance yet to have your private confession, please speak to Fr. Igor. Confessions can be done after any Vespers service, or by appointment at other times. Take this opportunity to rejuvenate your spiritual life as we prepare to celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord.

◆ An **Akathist to St. Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow, and Enlightener of North America** for our deanery clergy and faithful will take place today, **Sunday, December 17 at 4:00pm at Christ the Saviour Church in Paramus**. His Eminence, Archbishop Michael will preside. The Akathist is to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the restoration of the Patriarchate of Moscow, and the election of Metropolitan Tikhon, the former Archbishop of New York who served in America from 1898-1907, to the office of Patriarch. Everyone is invited.

◆ Please note: next Sunday, December 24, those attending **Nativity Vigil at 4:30pm** will be anointed with the Holy Myrrh that was brought by His Eminence Archbishop Michael from the place where Christ was born – **Basilica of the Nativity of Christ in Bethlehem**.

◆ **Wall Calendars for 2018** are available in the narthex. Please take one per household.

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.



December 17, 2017

28th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**Sunday of the Holy Forefathers
Prophet Daniel & the Three
Holy Youths**

- **8:45am** – Hours
- **9:00am** – Divine Liturgy
Epistle: Col. 3:4-11 (Forefathers)
Gospel: Lk. 14:16-24 (Forefathers)
- **Coffee Hour** – everyone is invited for fellowship following the service

Schedule of Services

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23

6:00pm - Great Vespers

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24

9:00am - Divine Liturgy

4:30pm - **Nativity Vigil** & Anointing with Holy Myrrh from Basilica of Nativity of Christ in Bethlehem.