

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

Using the Gift of Speech

On January 9 and 10 we read from the letter of James (3:1-4:6), who writes about the gift of speech. He describes the power speech can have for good or evil, depending on how we use it. Though the tongue is a very small instrument, he writes, it is a fire, and even a huge forest can be set ablaze by a tiny fire.

James strikingly contrasts the two ways we can use our tongues to speak: "With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water? Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, yield olives, or a grapevine yield figs? No more can salt water yield fresh" (3:9-12).

But it is not only the way we speak that's important. We also need to be sure that the particular words we choose are meaningful, and faithful to the truth. Empty words, meaningless chattering words, are a waste of the gift of speech, and lies of course are violations of the purpose of speech. On the 13th of January we remember a saint who wrote about the need for meaningful and truthful words. He is Hilary of Poitiers.

Born in Poitiers, France, Hilary had an excellent education which included Greek – unusual for a fourth-century Western European. Married and a father, he was so admired in Poitiers that he was elected bishop in about 353. But only three years later he was banished to Phrygia for several years. This was the result of his arguments against heretical Arian teachings. His writings,

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 Fehisin, Andrew & Dorothy Fabian, Mary Hadginske, Barbara Kary, Helen Kurnewitz, Kathleen Lazorzcyk, Dennis Maixner, Marian Nagel, MaryAnn Rabakozi, Helen Rahnefeld, Anna Rozanovich, Maryann Stagen, Eva Stashitsky, Ann Velebir.

and his defense of Saint Athanasius, were so compelling that he is sometimes called the "Athanasius of the West." But the emperor was not pleased, and allowed Hilary's enemies to banish him.

Even in exile, Hilary continued to govern his diocese in France. It was during this time that he studied some of the Eastern Fathers' writings, and deepened his understanding of the Church's teachings about the Trinity. This enabled him to write about the importance of using the right words, both meaningful and true, to speak about the Three Divine Persons: "For one to attempt to speak of God in terms more precise than He Himself has used – to undertake such a thing is to embark upon the boundless, to dare the incomprehensible. He fixed the names of His nature: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Whatever is sought over and above this is beyond the limits of perception, beyond the embrace of understanding."

Saint Hilary would object to the modern effort to find words other than Father, Son and Holy Spirit to identify the Persons of the Trinity. He would agree with James that words and speech are important, because both have been given to us by God.

Birthday Greetings

Happy birthday to our President of the Board of Trustees, **Robert Czech**, who celebrates his birthday tomorrow; **Helen Rahnefeld**, this Thursday; and **Joseph Pecoraro**, this Saturday. May God grant all of you, and all who celebrate a birthday this week good health and happiness for Many Years! Mnohaja Lita!



Announcements

- ◆ House blessings are in progress. If your name was not included in the schedule but you would like to have your house blessed this year, please contact Fr. Igor or use a sign-up sheet in the church vestibule.
- ◆ Father Igor, Matushka Anna, Maxim, and Sofia wholeheartedly thank the Board of Trustees, and all parishioners of St. John's for the generous and beautiful gifts, lovely cards, and warm wishes during this Nativity season. May the Lord bless all of you and all your loved ones abundantly with all His earthly and heavenly blessings throughout this New 2018 Year!
- ◆ Thank you to all those who in any possible way participated in preparation, beautification and clean-up of the services and social events in our parish during this Nativity season. May the blessing of the Lord be upon you for Many blessed Years!

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.



January 7, 2018

31st SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Afterfeast of the Theophany
Sunday After the Theophany
Synaxis of St. John the Baptist

- 8:50am – Hours
- 9:00am – Divine Liturgy
Epistles: Eph. 4:7-13 (Sunday After)
Acts 19:1-8 (Forerunner)
Gospels: Mt. 4:12-17 (Sunday After)
Jn. 1:29-34 (Forerunner)
- Coffee Hour – everyone is invited for fellowship following the service

Schedule of Services

SATURDAY, JANUARY 13

6:00pm - Great Vespers followed by
General Confession

SUNDAY, JANUARY 14

9:00am - Divine Liturgy