

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

A Visit to the Home of an Ancient Saint

The Protomartyr Thekla (or Thecla), commemorated September 24, was a young woman whose life was changed when she sat for three nights by her open window and heard Saint Paul preach.

Thekla gave up her planned marriage, and accompanied Saint Paul as he traveled and preached. In later years she retreated from travel and lived a life of solitary prayer, escaping jealous pursuers by taking refuge in the opening in a rock that God provided for her.

A young Orthodox woman wrote about being part of a group that visited the cave in which Thekla lived. It is located in the desert village of Ma'aloula, Syria and is cared for by the nuns of the Monastery of Saint Thekla. Pilgrims constantly come to pray in the cave, and to drink from the spring that flows in it. It has been the site of numerous healings.

The young visitor describes her experience in this way:

"We had to climb up steps hewn into the mountain to get to the cave, which is somewhat like a large, three-sided room. In the deepest part, about twenty feet back from where the sunlight can reach, we saw a tree growing. Its branches hit the cave ceiling and ran towards the sunlight, all the way to the cave's opening. This was the tree we had seen as we approached the village in the minibus. It looked as though a beautiful hanging garden had been cultivated inside the cave. Nearby was the spring of holy water that God had provided for Thekla. This spring is still running

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

after all these centuries and has no source to replenish it other than the One who gave it. It is a sort of well now, and there is a metal cup so that people can drink from it. Like so many before us, we drank too..." (Hilary Chala, in "Encountering Women of Faith" Volume 2, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2011.)

At the further end of the cave is the chapel and the saint's tomb. Nearby is a stack of crutches and canes that pilgrims have discarded because they no longer needed them after receiving healing in this cave carved from the mountain.

Visitors can also go to the base of the mountain and walk into the opening that miraculously opened for Thekla, and make their way along a path, with water constantly flowing, inside the mountain. In places the path is wide enough for two to walk abreast; in others it is so narrow that a person is barely able to get through, face and body pressed against the stone. But the experience is an unforgettable one.

We can only pray that with the terrible carnage and upheaval that has Syria in its grip, Ma'aloula will one day again be a place where visitors can come so close to the life of a saint.

Heartfelt Greetings

Congratulation to **Chris and Sonya Finno**, who celebrated their wedding anniversary this passed Friday. May God grant both of you good health and happiness for Many Years! Mnohaja Lita!



Announcements

◆ On **Sunday, October 7**, is the **Diocesan Church Musician Appreciation Sunday**. We will honor our choir directors and singers with special prayers added during the Augmented Litany and with our special thanks to them.

◆ The **Annual Diocesan Assembly** is scheduled to be convened on **Tuesday, October 30 and Wednesday, October 31, 2018** at the Orthodox Church of the Holy Annunciation, 70 Van Zile Road, Brick, NJ 08724. The guest speaker is Archimandrite Sergius, Abbot of St. Tikhon's Monastery. The Hierarchical Divine Liturgy is on Tuesday, October 30 at 9:00am. The Assembly will begin at 1:00pm. The schedule for Wednesday will be published as it becomes available.

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.



September 23, 2018

17th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Conception of the Honorable Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John

• **9:00am** – Divine Liturgy

Epistles: 2Cor. 6:16-7:1

Gal. 4:22-31 (Forerunner)

Gospels: Lk. 5:1-11

Lk. 1:5-25 (Forerunner)

• **Coffee Hour** – everyone is invited for fellowship following the service

• **Trustees' Meeting** after the coffee hour

Schedule of Services

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

6:00pm - Great Vespers

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

9:00am - Divine Liturgy

12:30pm - Great Vespers for the Feast of Protection of the Most Holy Theotokos