

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

Christ is Born! Let Us Glorify Him!

Looking forward to the Mansion, While Living in Tents

Today the Church celebrates the memory of Saint Niphon, Bishop and Wonderworker.

Born in Paphlagonia, in the Asian part of modern Turkey, he had loving parents who took him to church and oversaw his education in Constantinople. The family was associated with the court of a military commander, so he knew the "proper" life of the court.

But as happens to some who are born with many advantages and little to strive for, Niphon was drawn to a life that was anything but proper. He indulged himself in all kinds of excess and vice. At times, when he remembered his upbringing, the ugliness of his life disgusted him. But the disgust only convinced him that he was a hopelessly lost soul. Feeling unable even to pray, he resigned himself to his vices.

A friend revealed the depth of Niphon's corruption to him in a startling way. He looked into Niphon's face for a long time with an expression of surprise and horror. When Niphon asked why he was staring so intently, the friend said, "Your face is completely changed. I have never seen it look like that before."

Niphon knew it was his sinfulness that gave his face its frightening appearance. Remembering again his early faith, he cried out to the Mother of God for help. He began to pray constantly for her intercession; sometimes he would see her

Birthday Greetings

Happy birthday to **Elizabeth Hook**, who celebrates her birthday this Thursday. May God grant you, and all who celebrate a birthday this week good health and happiness for Many Years!

smiling radiantly and other times – when he fell into sin again – he could not see her at all. But after years of struggle and prayer, he felt her guiding him toward monasticism, and was tonsured a monk.

His struggles did not end. He had visions of demons who continuously whispered, "There is no God! Why do you bother to strive so, when there is no God?"

But Niphon did strive, since he now knew he had something to strive for. He worked hard to purify his thoughts and to live in repentance. He was finally granted the ability to overcome the evil spirits that tormented him, and to confront the demons that he could see troubling other people.

Niphon was consecrated Bishop of Constantia, Cyprus when he was quite old, and served for just a short while. A young deacon who would become Saint Athanasius visited him before he died and reported that his face, that same face once distorted by sin, had shone like the sun.

Hebrews 11:9-10 describes Abraham looking forward to the eternal mansion of God "while living in tents" on this earth. Abraham believed God's promises when it would have been easy to conclude that God Himself had forgotten them and had left His people to wander in this earthly desert forever.

Saint Niphon, too, had to guard his faith when demons told him that no mansion awaits. His struggle and final victory, like Abraham's, remind us that the tents of the desert are not our everlasting home.

Schedule of Services

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TUESDAY, DECEMBER 25 – THE NATIVITY ACCORDING TO THE FLESH OF OUR LORD GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST
9:00am - Divine Liturgy, followed by the traditional Christmas Social & Children's Concert.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 26 – 2ND DAY OF THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY – SYNAXIS OF THE MOST-HOLY THEOTOKOS.
9:00am - Divine Liturgy

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 27 – 3RD DAY OF THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY – HOLY PROTOMARTYR AND ARCHDEACON STEPHEN
9:00am - Divine Liturgy

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 29
6:00pm - Great Vespers

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 30
9:00am - Divine Liturgy

Announcements

◆ On Christmas day this Tuesday, there will be a **Dessert Potluck** after the Divine Liturgy. Please feel free to bring any of your favorite desserts to share.

◆ Save the date: Join us for our first annual **Cookie Fest** next **Sunday, December 30**, after the Divine Liturgy. \$1 entitles you to 5 delicious, beautiful, home baked cookies. For a small happy donation to the Passaic "O" Club, any cookies left over will be placed in bags for you to take home for a joyous feast in the comfort of your home.

◆ **Wall Calendars for 2019** are available in the narthex. Please take one per household. Many thanks to the Bizub-Quinlan Funeral Home for sponsoring 2019 calendars.

◆ Just a reminder to the members of Passaic "O" Club: **FOCA dues** are due in January. Please see Betty Ann Fechisin.

◆ **House blessings** will start on the Feast of Theophany, Sunday January 6, 2019. A proposed schedule is included in "The Enlightener". Please let Fr. Igor know of any changes you would like to make.



December 23, 2018

30th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ
SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

- **8:45am** – Hours
- **9:00am** – Divine Liturgy
Epistle: Heb. 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40
Gospel: Mt. 1:1-25
- **Panikhida** – in memory of **Anna Cereques**, on the 40th anniversary of her repose, offered by Patricia Galley.
- **Coffee Hour** – everyone is invited for fellowship following the service.

Schedule of Services

MONDAY, DECEMBER 24

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

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