

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

Two Brothers on Different Paths

January 31 is the feast day of Saints Cyrus and John, who belong to the group of saints known as "Unmercenary" because they used their healing skills to help people and did not take payment.

They were not blood brothers. Cyrus lived in Egypt and later became a monk in Arabia, while John was an officer of the Roman Army serving in what is now Turkey.

John heard of the things Cyrus had done, not only curing people's physical ailments with his medical ability, but urging them to pray and to repent of their sins so that both their bodies and souls could be healed.. John was intrigued, and traveled to Arabia to meet Cyrus. In the words of Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, the two became "brothers in spirit." They served together as doctors and spiritual fathers to countless people. Both being outspoken Christians, they faced torture and martyrdom together, too, and were killed in the year 311.

Christopher Hitchens, an outspoken opponent of Christianity and all religions, recently died of cancer. Hitchens was an articulate and well-educated man who appeared often on television and wrote for national magazines. He was one of two brothers – actual blood brothers – and the two men diverged very widely in their attitudes toward the Christian faith. Christopher wrote a book called "God is not Great" in which he argued that religion, and particularly Christianity, has had a harmful effect on the world. Peter Hitchens, his brother, is the author of "The Rage against God" in which he tells how "atheism led me to faith" and lays out the reasons why he strongly disagrees with his brother, and is a practicing Christian.

In our society, such atheists as Christopher Hitchens 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, Mary Fechisin, Andrew Fabian, Edward Fedush, Mary Hadginske, Helen Kurnewitz, Margaret Lawler, Kathleen Lazarczyk, Marian Nagel, MaryAnn Rabakozi, Helen Rahnefeld, Anna Rozanovich, Nadia Sojka, Maryann Stagen, Eva Stashitsky, Ann Velebir.

Richard Dawkins receive considerable media attention, and influence some people to question their faith. So Peter Hitchens' book is a helpful one, because he argues effectively against his brother's assertions, specifically in a section of the book entitled "Addressing the Three Failed Arguments of Atheism."

He takes issue, for example, with Christopher's statement that "the order to 'love thy neighbor as thyself' is too extreme and too strenuous to be obeyed." Peter refutes this idea by offering examples of people risking their lives, health or safety for others. He acknowledges that living as a Christian is difficult, especially in a culture that places little value on selflessness, but insists that "we are far better for trying than for not trying."

Peter Hitchens published his book before his brother died. Despite his profound disagreement with Christopher, he doesn't condemn him. Instead he hopes for his brother's conversion, or that at least he will discover that "belief in God is not a character fault." His compassion is an example of what is called for in one of today's readings, I Peter 3:15: "Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence."

Schedule of Services

(continued from the previous page)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4

6:00pm - Great Vespers

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5

9:00am - Divine Liturgy

Birthday Greetings

Happy Birthday to **Stacy Baron Anderson**, who celebrates her birthday this Thursday. May God grant you good health and happiness for Many Years! Mnohaya Lita!

Announcements

◆ Today, at the end of the Divine Liturgy, a **collection** will be taken to help the faithful of Bodružal, Slovakia to build a **new Orthodox church** in their village. The goal of this Diocesan fundraiser is \$15,000. For more information and to see a picture of the proposed temple structure, please see a flyer at the bulletin board.

◆ Save the date: on **Sunday, February 12**, the Passaic "O" Club will be hosting a "**Pot Luck**" Lunch for all our parishioners and their families at approximately 11:30am following coffee hour. Cost is \$5 for adults and free for children. During the lunch, a video presentation of church life at St. John's will be shown. For information contact any "O" Club member.

◆ Our **Annual Parish Meeting** will be held on **Sunday, February 19** following the Divine Liturgy and coffee hour. It is important that all parishioners attend, if possible, to help in the operation of our church.

◆ Save the date: the **New Jersey Deanery Appreciation Dinner** for the 2016 Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors of our Diocese will be held at the Holy Resurrection Church, 285 French Hill Road, Wayne, NJ 07470 on Sunday, February 19, at 5:00PM.



January 29, 2017

32nd Sunday After Pentecost

Sunday of Zacchaeus

- **9:00am** – Divine Liturgy
Epistle: 1Tim. 4:9-15
Gospel: Lk. 19:1-10
- **Panikhida** - in memory of **Deborah Ann Kovalycsik**, offered by Mary and Betty Ann Fechisin
- **Coffee Hour** – everyone is invited for a fellowship following the service.
- **12:30pm** - Great Vespers for the Feast of Three Holy Hierarchs

Schedule of Services

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1

6:00pm - Great Vespers with Litya and Blessing of Candles

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2 – MEETING OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE

9:00am - Liturgy & Blessing of Candles

(continued on the next page)