

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

To Suffer for Doing Right

On February 8 we celebrate the memory of the Greatmartyr Theodore Stratelates, whose title is often translated as "commander" or "general."

Theodore was one of those multi-gifted people who attract both admiration and jealousy. He was a brave soldier, and at the same time he was an articulate Christian who convinced many to join him in the faith. Several icons of Theodore depict an unusually handsome face with strong features.

The pagan emperor Licinius was well aware of his military commander's qualities, and those qualities worried him. He didn't want an enemy — Christianity — to have such a powerful advocate. So he called Theodore to the imperial court, and invited him to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods. Theodore came, and asked to take some of the pagan idols home, saying he would return with them the next day to offer sacrifice. What he actually did was to melt down the precious metal they were made of, and then distribute the valuable chunks to the poor.

Theodore would pay dearly for his dedication to Christ. He was tortured and crucified, and when those things miraculously failed to kill him, he was beheaded.

We remember Theodore as the patron saint of soldiers. But he also fulfilled a Biblical exhortation which we read on this day: "Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3: 15b). Theodore gave himself up to the emperor's men, and was heard to say, "Glory to God" as he died.

What does it mean in our lives, in our day, to "be prepared to make a defense" of our faith? For one thing, Christians should be

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

ready to challenge public assertions that go against the words of Jesus Christ. One example is a recent book by Deepak Chopra, a well-known advocate of alternative medicine. In 2010 he produced a book called "Muhammad: A Story of the Last Prophet."

For Christians there is only one "last prophet" and that is John the Baptist. Jesus says, "The law and the prophets were until John" (Mt. 11:13). These words tell us that the Old Testament law and prophecies have been fulfilled in Christ, to whom John was Forerunner. John's own words about Christ, found in John the Evangelist's writings (Jn. 1:26-34), are also fulfilled. Christ has completed all the prophecies, and the time of prophets is done.

Some people say it's fine for everyone to believe as they wish; we can call John the last of the prophets and others can say the last is Muhammad. But calling Muhammad the last means that Islam's claims are true, and those of Christianity are false. This would be a denial of the One who ended all prophecy by fulfilling it, the One who, as Peter further writes, "has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to Him" (1 Peter 3: 22).

Birthday Greetings

Happy birthday to **Jeffrey Rahnefeld**, who celebrates his birthday this Thursday, and **Christopher Kary**, this Saturday. May God grant both of you, and all who celebrate a birthday this week good health and happiness for Many Years! Mnohaja Lita!



Announcements

◆ The **Annual Parish Meeting** will be held next **Sunday, February 11, 2018** immediately following the Divine Liturgy. All parishioners (members in good standing, as defined by the Church Canons, and OCA, Diocesan and Parish by-laws) are urged to attend this very important in the life of our parish meeting.

◆ Through the generosity of many parishes in the OCA, including our own, who participated in the St. Nicholas "wish lists" of married seminarian students and their families, the FOCA was able to fill the wish lists for 31 families at St. Tikhon's and St. Vladimir's Seminaries. Seventy-four children's Nativity was brighter because of your love. Many thanks to all of you, here at St. John's, who contributed to our seminary family "wish list." In addition to the wish lists at the two seminaries, over \$1,000 was sent to St. Herman's Seminary in Alaska by the FOCA for distribution among their married seminarians and families. Thanks also to all who donated to our "Gifts of Love" appeal to help in the preservation of the St. Nicholas Chapel in Kenai, Alaska. The FOCA collected a total of \$12,500. St. John's has been a part of the St. Nicholas wish lists appeal and the Gifts of Love donations for many years, and we are truly grateful for your help in these worthy causes.

◆ Our Food Pantry coordinator, Helen Baron, who also directed the St. Nicholas wish list appeal, would like to express gratitude and thankfulness to all of you who donate regularly to our food pantry. Your donations are gratefully appreciated.



February 4, 2018

SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON

Afterfeast of the Meeting

- **8:50am** – Hours
- **9:00am** – Divine Liturgy
Epistle: 1 Cor. 6:12-20
Gospel: Lk. 15:11-32
- **Panikhida** – in memory of **Rose Marie Chabay**, on the 40th day of her Repose, offered by the family and Barbara Kary.
- **Coffee Hour** – everyone is invited for fellowship following the service

Schedule of Services

SATURDAY, FEB. 10 - MEMORIAL SATURDAY

9:00am - Divine Liturgy & Panikhida

6:00pm - Vespers & gen. confession

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11

9:00am - Divine Liturgy, followed by Annual Parish Meeting