

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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Saint Blaise and a New Book

On February 11 we remember Saint Blaise, the fourth-century bishop of Sebaste in Armenia who lived during the persecutions of Christians by the emperor Diocletian. The bishop encouraged imprisoned believers, prayed for the martyrs, and stood courageously for the faith.

In his later years, Saint Blaise retreated to a mountain cave. Wild beasts recognized him as a trustworthy person and kept him company, even receiving healing from him. Human beings were not so able to see Saint Blaise's holiness as the animals were; he was arrested at his cave, tortured, and martyred. But believers for centuries have prayed to him for the well-being of domestic animals.

A new book entitled *Living in God's Creation* by Elizabeth Theokritoff, and published by St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, describes the authentic Orthodox Christian understanding of creation, an understanding which has enabled Saint Blaise and many others to live in true harmony with the world. The book makes an important distinction between "the environment" and "creation." The environment is something around us; it is defined in relation to human beings. Creation is defined in relation not to us, but to the Creator. It is "the reality to which we ourselves belong, along with everything else from archangels and galaxies to caterpillars and quarks."

This recognition of creation as having value is central to the Christian Gospel. Such a Gospel came as something brand new to a world steeped in pagan Greek philosophy, which saw the body as a prison of the spirit, and matter as worthless. Christians said something startlingly different: "When we affirm that eternal life involves resurrection, we are saying that matter has an eternal significance."



February 11, 2018

SUNDAY OF MEATFARE

Sunday of the Last Judgment

- **8:50am** – Hours
- **9:00am** – Divine Liturgy
Epistle: 1 Cor. 8:8-9:2
Gospel: Mt. 25:31-46
- **Annual Parish Meeting**

NOTE FROM RUBRICS: After this Sunday, meat is no longer eaten until the Sunday of Pascha, but otherwise there is no fasting this week, so that eggs, cheese, butter, milk and fish are permitted each day, including Wednesday and Friday.

Schedule of Services

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17
6:00pm - Great Vespers

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18
9:00am - Divine Liturgy, followed by
Maslenitsa & Forgiveness Vespers

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 Lazorczyk, Dennis Maixner, Marian Nagel, MaryAnn Rabakozi, Helen Rahnefeld, Anna Rozanovich, Maryann Stagen, Eva Stashitsky.

Living in God's Creation traces this authentic understanding of creation through the teachings of the Church Fathers, the ascetical and monastic tradition, and the worship and sacraments of the Orthodox Church. Although the author's scholarship is exceptional, it is never heavy or intimidating, and gives us much to think about. For example, she writes: "We should know by now that there is no path to the Kingdom except through a thousand ordinary, humdrum decisions, whether it is sparing a kind word for somebody or recycling a sheet of paper."

One chapter of the book offers stories of saints who valued creatures and matter as God's gift. We meet Paul of Oborna, a forest-dweller who often sat with birds perched all over him and eating from his hands, while bears nearby patiently waited their turn as foxes and rabbits ran around, with no fear of Paul or of each other. Other saints also befriended animals; some lived with vipers. Their relationship was never sentimental, and they didn't champion "animal rights" but acknowledged the "rightful place" of animals and growing things in creation.

The book calls us to live "sacramentally", neither putting our hope in technology nor looking back to some "golden age" of harmony with nature, but conforming ourselves to God's will and anticipating the transfiguration of all things. Saint Blaise, awaiting martyrdom, would have known just what that means.

Birthday Greetings

Happy birthday to **Alissa Pecoraro**, who celebrates her birthday today, and **Chris Finno**, this Wednesday. 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 today, **Sunday, February 11**, 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.

◆ Next Sunday, February 18, is the Cheesefare Sunday. It is the last day when we are allowed to have dairy products and eggs before Pascha. After the Divine Liturgy everyone is invited for Malsenitsa in our church hall, followed by the Forgiveness Vespers in the Church. Let us together celebrate the beginning of our Lenten journey this year.

Our Deepest Sympathy to:

◆ Family and friends of **Rose Key Boykas**, who passed away on Monday, February 5, 2018, and was buried from our church on Friday, February 9;

◆ Family and friends of **Julia Labowsky**, who passed away on Wednesday, February 7, 2018. Funeral arrangements are as follows: viewing will be at Vander May Wayne Colonial Funeral Home today, Sunday, February 11 from 2pm - 6pm with Parastas at 5pm; funeral will be in our Church tomorrow, Monday, February 12 at 10am.