



ἉΓΙΑ

ΒΑΡΒΑΡΑ

A SAINTLY EXAMPLE OF PURITY



THE GREAT MARTYR BARBARA lived and suffered during the reign of the Emperor Maximian in the early years of the 4th century. Her pagan father Dioscorus was so protective of her that he placed her in a tower so that she could have no contact with anyone he considered to be unworthy. Alone in her tower, Barbara would often ponder the beauty of creation that she could study from her lofty perch. She was able to reach the conclusion that all of this was the work of the One, True God.

When Barbara became old enough to marry, her father brought her many suitors, whom she rejected one by one. Thinking she might change her mind if she was exposed to the world outside her tower, Dioscorus allowed her to leave and mingle with others. Little did he realize that many of the new people she met were Christians! Soon Barbara became one of them herself.

Upon returning from a trip, Dioscorus was furious to find that Barbara had cut a cross into one of her marble walls. When she told him that she was a Christian, he tried to kill her with his sword. Barbara was able to flee and hide on a nearby mountain, but the next day, her father captured her and took her to the local governor for execution. She willingly submitted to brutal torture and ultimately to martyrdom, understanding that this was the greatest way she could show her love for Christ. Before dying, Barbara prayed to God that everyone who would remember her in prayer should not be subjected to a sudden death and deprived of receiving the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

She met her end by the merciless hand of her father. Divine justice prevailed though, as Dioscorus was struck down and killed that same day.

St. Mary's Orthodox Church
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Phone.....570-645-2772
OUR WEBSITE...www.stmarysnativity.org

Rector: V. Rev. James Weremedic
Retired Attached: V. Rev Paul Ropitsky
Reader Hours: Mat. Lisa

Sunday, December 3, 2023
Choir Director: Wash King
Reader Epistle: Edward Pierson

26th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST Tone 8. Prophet Zephaniah. Ven. Savva, Abbot of Zvenigorod.
St. Theodulus, Eparch of Constantinople. Ven. John the Silent of St. Sabbas.

Tone 1 Troparion (Resurrection)

When the stone had been sealed by the Jews, while the soldiers were guarding Your most pure body, You rose on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world. The powers of heaven therefore cried to You, O Giver of Life: "Glory to Your Resurrection, O Christ! Glory to Your Kingdom! // Glory to Your dispensation, O Lover of mankind!"

Tone 1 Kontakion (Resurrection)

As God, You rose from the tomb in glory, raising the world with Yourself. Human nature praises You as God, for death has vanished. Adam exults, O Master! Eve rejoices, for she is freed from bondage and cries to You: // "You are the Giver of Resurrection to all, O Christ!"

We welcome all our visitors today! We want to let you know that we are so glad you came to pray with us. Please come again; join us after the Divine Liturgy in the parish hall for fellowship. If you do not have a home church, we invite you to become a part of our parish family. Only those Orthodox Christians who have properly prepared themselves may approach the Chalice and receive Holy Communion.

SERVICES:

Sunday, Dec. 3	9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy, Church School & Fellowship
Tuesday, Dec. 5	4:00 PM – Great Vespers & Confessions
Wednesday, Dec. 6	9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy, St. Nicholas, the Wonderworker
Saturday, Dec. 9	3:30 PM – Parastas: <i>Nancy Lorchak offered by Joseph Benulis, Jean (Haspe) Hoffman offered by family</i>
Saturday, Dec. 9	4:00 PM – Great Vespers & Confessions
Sunday, Dec. 10	9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy, Church School & Fellowship
Saturday, Dec. 16	4:00 PM – Great Vespers & Confessions
Sunday, Dec. 17	9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy, Church School & Fellowship

Prayer List*:

Fr. Michael Evans, Fr. James Weremedic, Sbdn. James Weremedic
Stephanie Chmel, Ilene Devine, Julia Forte, Michael & Julia Harahus, Karen & Rose Harkins, Nancy King, Olga Kushnir, Anna Marie Mantey, Dorothy & Joseph Macenka, Anna Pierson, Melissa Schmitt, Helen Sheers, Olga Sidoriak, Martha Stafiniak, Elizabeth Warcholak, Victoria Weremedic, Marie Yurchak

* Names will cycle off approximately every 30 days. You may request to have your name or the name of a loved one placed back on the list at any time by contacting Fr. James directly

On December 24, 2023, we will have our first parish 'Holy Supper' in our church hall with traditional strict fasting foods. Celebrating as a family of St. Mary's is important to prepare for the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ! Please sign up on the signup sheet at the candle desk.

If anyone is in need of a priest, please call Father James Weremedic at 570-645-2772. Visitation of the Sick and Infirm: If you are going into the hospital for any reason, please inform Fr. James at the Rectory. Emergency Calls: Please call the Rectory (570-645-2772) anytime (day or night) in an emergency.

Candles (December 3)

7-day Vigils-Altar... In memory of **John P. O'Shura** offered by Millie O'Shura & family
Altar Candles... In memory of **Kay & Paul Maliniak** offered by William Yelsh
Eternal Lamp... In memory of **Helen Butts** offered by Raymond & MaryJo Danchak
7-day Vigils-Tetrapod... In memory of **Mary & Andrew Yelsh** offered by William Yelsh
Decorated Candles... In memory of **Andrew & Mary Bybel** offered by family members
Vigil Crosses... In memory of **Andrew & Mary Bybel** offered by family members

December Birthdays: 3- Izrael Bracero, 9- Odess Remington, 11- Stephanie Chmel,
16- James Weremedic, Jr., 18- Kathryn Jupin, 19- Ixsaviar Bracero, 28- Sophie James

Financials 11/26/2023: Operating Acct: Weekly Envelopes \$429, Non-envelope \$265,
Holy Day \$176, Candles \$77

Fellowship Hour Hosts:

December 3 John Evetushick December 10 Michael Tutusko
December 17 Open December 24 Russell King

St. Mary's Youth Group

St. Mary's youth group will be collecting items to deliver to our shut-ins during the month of December. A collection bin is located in the back of the church. If you are unable to shop and wish to make a monetary donation, please see Barbara Birosik or Mat. Lisa. They will take a child shopping for the items of your choice. Suggested items include:

neck pillows	baby wipes	all occasion card	flashlights
lap blankets	hand cream	note cards	thick pens
slipper socks	tissues	puzzle books	stamps
gloves	hand sanitizer	adult coloring books	grocery gift cards

26th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST *Tone 1.*

Prophet Zephaniah (Sophonias—635-605 B.C.). Ven. Savva, Abbot of Zvenigorod, disciple of Ven. Sergius of Radonezh (1406). St. Theodulus, Eparch of Constantinople (ca. 440). Ven. John the Silent of St. Sabbas' Monastery (558). Hieromartyr Theodore, Archbishop of Alexandria (606). Monastic Martyr Cosmas of St. Anne's Skete (Mt. Athos).

Ephesians 5:9-19 (Epistle)

For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth, finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light." See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

Silent Prayer before the Gospel:

Illumine our hearts, O Master Who lovest mankind, with the pure light of Thy divine knowledge. Open the eyes of our mind to the understanding of Thy gospel teachings. Implant also in us the fear of Thy blessed commandments, that trampling down all carnal desires, we may enter upon a spiritual manner of living, both thinking and doing such things as are well-pleasing unto Thee. For Thou art the illumination of our souls and bodies, O Christ our God, and unto Thee we ascribe glory, together with Thy Father, Who is from everlasting, and Thine all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Luke 18:18-27 (Gospel)

Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'"

And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth."

So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

And those who heard it said, "Who then can be saved?" But He said, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

The Nativity Fast: The Testing of our Patience

On November 15, we began the forty day Nativity Fast, one of four seasons of the year during which we are called upon to intensify our spiritual lives through prayer, fasting and almsgiving. I would like to expand on this by emphasizing the necessary virtue of patience that accompanies any period of preparation in the life of the Church. We are directed to observe a fast as we prepare for the advent of the Son of God in the flesh. This is only for forty days, but that can seem like a very long period to make some alterations and adjustments in our lifestyles! Clearly, it has its challenges, all of which we are very much aware of. We know that the "sacred" number of forty – years or days – is a very scriptural number, always implying a period of expectation and fulfillment, a movement begun and completed in accordance with the express will of God. That could be the

forty years of Israel's wandering in the desert, or the Lord fasting for forty days in the wilderness. Yet, less specifically, we need to understand the great length of time that Israel was forced to wait for its deliverance. If we think in terms of Abraham to Christ, we become aware of the 3 x 14 generations that Saint Matthew lists in the opening genealogy of his Gospel. That is a long history indeed, filled with God's providential care for His chosen people, but also filled with apostasy and betrayal on the part of Israel—a history embracing Israel's victories against its surrounding enemies, but also its subjugation and humiliation at the hands of other enemies.

While this tumultuous and even torturous history of Israel was unfolding, the prophets were both exhorting and chastising the people, but also speaking of deliverance. Although this is a very complex development, there were clear indications among the prophets of a Messiah figure – sometimes very human, but at times a transcendent figure – around whom and in whom these longings for deliverance were concentrated. He would be the Lord's Anointed, and as such he would proclaim deliverance and salvation to Israel. That profound and poignant sense of longing for deliverance is beautifully expressed in the two hymns found in the opening chapters of Saint Luke's Gospel, the first from Saint Zechariah [Luke 1:67-79] and the other, the *Magnificat* of the Theotokos [Luke 1:46-55]. One needs only to read the Book of Isaiah to get a sense of this messianic longing which took on universal dimensions, so that all the peoples of the earth would come to know the one true God and then come to Zion to worship Him. We read of the Son of Man, the Suffering Servant of the Lord, and of the Messiah throughout the prophetic books of the Old Testament. This basic human longing for regaining a "lost paradise" in one form or another was gathered around these mysterious figures "promised" by the prophets who, in turn, were those chosen by God to deliver God's word to the people of Israel. But many generations were disappointed that these prophetic promises were not fulfilled in their time.

If we can appreciate this sense of waiting and longing, we can understand better how we, as contemporary Christians, in a very modest sense, are re-living or actualizing the experience of Israel as we await the advent of our Lord in a specially designated period known as the Nativity/Advent Fast. This designated forty days serves as a microcosm of Israel's testing and preparation. Waiting implies expectation, perhaps even a certain sense of excitement. (Ask your children about that!). But it also implies patience, stabilized and strengthened by trust and faith in God, especially when we encounter obstacles, temptations, doubts, diversions and distractions. Therefore, if Israel waited for the Lord's Anointed, so will we as the New Israel of God. Of course, we know and believe that the Messiah has come as Jesus of Nazareth, and our festal cycle again allows us to also re-live and actualize that advent on an annual basis, so as to renew our sense of fulfillment of the prophecies of old and to again "greet" the newborn Christ Child with great joy and thanksgiving to God for working out our salvation "in the midst of the earth." All Christian believers of all ages can experience a child-like joy in the birth of Christ, the Son of God Who became flesh. We have the decided advantage of knowing all of this in advance, and this has been expressed very powerfully in the Epistle to the Hebrews, wherein the author, after reminding the early Christians of the great faith of the saints who lived before Christ, further reminds them of the great privilege of having lived in the time of fulfillment: "And all these, though well-attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect" [Hebrews 11:39-40].

We cannot join "the world" in its indifference to Christ. And we cannot descend to the level of the crass commercialization of Christmas. We are, after all, Christians! Our goal is to fulfill the words of the Apostle Paul "I therefore... beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" [Ephesians 4:1-3]. This will test our patience, our trust in God, and our faith. It has never been otherwise.