

Christ The Saviour Orthodox Church
American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese
Ecumenical Patriarchate

10000 State Road
North Royalton, OH 44133

Parish Website: www.christsaviour.weebly.com

Diocesan Website: www.acrod.org

Church Phone: (440) 237-9196

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Schedule of Services:

Sunday June 24th: Obednitsa Service at 10 am

Sunday July 1st: Obednitsa Service at 10 am

Sunday July 8th: Obednitsa Service at 10 am

Sunday July 15th: Obednitsa Service at 10 am

For more dates of services check out the parish website's calendar.

If you wish to have someone added or removed from the Prayer list, please contact a member of the Royko family or send an email to:

- christsaviour@live.com

Prayer List:

Living		
Theodore (Bunevich)	Theresa (Popovich)	Frank (Popovich)
Penney (Royko)	Sally (Hubiak)	Ethel (Rusyniak)
Eileen (Bunevich)	Virginia (Shymske)	Rosalie (Strachan)
Kathryn (Royko)	Thomas (Royko)	James (Strachan)
Tiana (Hosta)	Logan (Gatchell)	Doris (Gatchell)
Marsha (Will)	Emerson (Sirilla)	Fr. Andrew (Harmon)
Dolores (Royko)	Pani Donna (Smoley)	Jane
Gerard (Mosback)		

Departed		
Matushka Catherine (Jula)	Very Reverend Father Doctor Stephen (Jula)	Pani Magdaline (Blaschak)
Joey (Jarvis)	Vicky (Zabala)	

“What I see around me would drive me insane, if I did not know that no matter what happens, God will have the last word.”

Birthdays & Anniversaries:

Penney & Brian- July 1st



North Royalton Bicentennial Gala Ball:

The City of North Royalton is celebrating it's bicentennial in 2018 and will be hosting a gala and invited Christ the Saviour to join in the celebration. The event is August 4th at Carrie Cerino's. Tickets cost \$50 a person. There is more information available on the bulletin board. Please RSVP to Kathryn Royko by June 27, 2018.



Epistle Reading: St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 13:11-14; 14:1-4

Brethren, salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions. One believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats; for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for God is able to make him stand.

Gospel Reading: Luke 1:1-25, 57-68, 76-80

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed. In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years. Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, it fell to him by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn

incense. And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zacharias was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth; for he will be great before the Lord, and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared." And Zacharias said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God; and I was sent to speak to you, and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things come to pass, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time." And the people were waiting for Zacharias, and they wondered at his delay in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak to them, and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he made signs to them and remained dumb. And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home. After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she hid herself, saying, "Thus the Lord has done to me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men." Now the time came for Elizabeth to be delivered, and she gave birth to a son. And her neighbors and kinsfolk heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they would have named him Zacharias after his father, but his mother said, "Not so; he shall be called John." And they said to her, "None of your kindred is called by this name." And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, "His name is John." And they all marveled. And immediately his mouth was opened and

his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea; and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him. And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways." And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness till the day of his manifestation to Israel.

Saints and Feasts

Nativity of the Forerunner John the Baptist; Elizabeth, Mother of the Forerunner; Panagiotis the New Martyr; Athanasios Parios

Sermon for Sunday of the Nativity of John the Baptist

Today we celebrate the birthday of one of the most unusual and important people in the history of our faith: St. John the Baptist. He has the titles of prophet, forerunner, and baptist because he fulfilled all three roles, speaking the word of the Lord as he prepared the way for the coming of Christ, calling God's people to repentance and baptism, and even baptizing the incarnate Son of God at the very moment when the Holy Trinity was revealed by the voice of the Father and the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove upon the Lord in the Jordan. Even before St. John was born, he pointed to Christ, leaping in the womb of St. Elizabeth at the arrival of the pregnant Theotokos, who contained within her the Savior of the world.

John's own birth was miraculous, as his parents were an old, childless Jewish couple. We've heard that story before with Abraham and Sarah. But even though Zacharias was a priest actually serving in the Temple when the Archangel Gabriel brought the news that Elizabeth would bear him a son, he did not believe the message. "How shall I know this? For I

am an old man and my wife advanced in years," he said. Zacharias used the exact same phrase that Abraham did in Genesis to question how he could know that God would make him the father of a multitude in the promised land. Zacharias surely knew the story of Abraham, and he should have welcomed this wonderful news with faith and joy. Instead, he doubted and was disciplined by losing the ability to speak until John was born.

There had also been silence, no prophetic word from the Lord in Israel in hundreds of years, since the time of Malachi. Now Zacharias the priest has no voice. The evil King Herod was not really Jewish and ruled in collaboration with the pagan Romans. Those holding the three offices fulfilled in Christ of prophet, priest, and king were vacant, silent, or illegitimate. Now it was time for God to prepare the way for the coming of the true Messiah by means of a prophet like Elijah who would turn the hearts of the people back to the Lord.

And what a prophet St. John was: An ascetic who lived in the desert, subsisted on a diet of locusts and honey, and fearlessly called religious leaders, soldiers, tax-collectors, and even King Herod to turn from their sinful ways and to live righteously. He eventually lost his head for criticizing the immorality of the royal family. It's not surprising that one sent to prepare the way for Jesus Christ was killed by those who loved their own power more than God.

St. Elizabeth hid herself for the first five months of her pregnancy until Christ was conceived, for all the events surrounding John's birth were preparatory to the coming of the Savior. Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke as a prophetess to the pregnant Theotokos even as John jumped within her: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb...Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord." Zacharias himself came to believe the Archangel's message, receiving his voice back when he wrote on a tablet to confirm that the baby should be named John, even though none of his relatives had that name.

In his song of praise after the John's birth, Zacharias blessed God for the salvation that would come in Jesus Christ in fulfillment of the original promise to Abraham. He must have had some time to ponder what he and Elizabeth had in common with Abraham and Sarah during those months when he could not speak, and he finally saw the connection. He would die a martyr when Herod's troops could not find John to kill him in the slaughter of the innocents, when the king had all the little boys of Bethlehem and the surrounding regions murdered. Elizabeth miraculously hid herself and John in a cave from this terror; after she died forty days later, the boy grew up in the wilderness, fed by angels and protected by God.

There's certainly nothing about John the Baptist that is business as usual. Not his ministry, his conception, his parents, or what was going on around him. And that's precisely the point we should ponder today, for God's ways are not our ways, His salvation and blessing are not merely spiritually-charged extensions of our own habits, plans, and preferences. He calls us to a Kingdom not of this world in which barren old married women give birth to great prophets and a righteous virgin carries the Son of God in her womb. He overthrows political and religious leaders with little babies, pregnant women, and confused old men. He prepares the way for the Messiah with a prophet who lived anything but a conventional or comfortable life.

The same God who worked in such outrageous ways through St. John and his parents continues to operate in our lives, our church, and our world. And He calls each of us to do what Zacharias originally failed to do: to believe and obey that salvation and blessing really are for us, that we have a unique role to play in how the Lord redeems and heals His good creation, here and now, today, in our generation.

Too often, we have sold ourselves and God short. We have assumed that our faith does no more than support our prejudices and preconceived notions, and those of our society. We have rested easy with our faith making us a bit more religious and perhaps less stressed out before life's challenges. Too rarely, however, have we taken Christ at His word to

make us living icons of the Kingdom, participants in the divine nature by grace. Yes, our Savior wants to make us perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect, to make us shine like irons left in a holy fire. He wants us to forgive those who have wronged us; to love our enemies; to care for Him in the needy, miserable, and outcast; to refuse to worship the false gods of power, wealth, and pleasure; and to treat everyone who bears His image and likeness with the same love that we would show to Him.

John the Baptist is a reminder that we won't be transformed by following business as usual. We need a radical change, a spiritual rebirth, a new dependence on and openness to the power of a God who does not operate according to our preferences and agendas. Instead of coming up with the usual excuses as to why we can't believe and live as Christ taught, it's time to be shaken out of our complacency. It's time to recognize that what has brought us weakness, despair, and sorrow will simply continue to make more of the same. A little bit of convenient religion on the margins of our lives may produce socially respectable people, but not those who manifest the heavenly kingdom even as they live in a corrupt world.

The Jews of the first century desperately needed a wake-up call, and did they ever get one in St. John the Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist! We still need his shocking message and witness. And even as Zacharias eventually came to his senses, we can too. The Lord wants to replace our spiritual barrenness with an abundance of new life as a sign of the salvation of the world. Let's take Him at His word and live accordingly. That's the best way to celebrate the birthday of St. John.

+Fr. Philip LeMasters