



St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre Orthodox Church

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Services Schedule

Please see our [online calendar](#) for dates and times of Feast Day services.

Bulletin for Sunday, May 30, 2021

Welcome



Jesus Christ taught us to love and serve all people, regardless of their ethnicity or nationality.

To understand that, we need to look no further than to the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Every time we celebrate the Divine

Liturgy, it is offered "on behalf of all, and for all." As Orthodox Christians we stand against

racism and bigotry. All human beings share one common identity as children of God. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatian 3:28)

Members of our Parish Council are:

Joseph Barbera - Council Member at Large
Dori Kuziak - Council Secretary
Carolyn Neiss - Vice President
Marlene Melesko - Council Member at Large
Kyle Hollis - President
Roderick Seurattan - Treasurer

Pastoral Care - General Information

Emergency Sick Calls can be made at any time. Please call Fr Steven at (860) 866-5802, when a family member is admitted to the hospital.

Anointing in Sickness: The Sacrament of Unction is available in Church, the hospital, or your home, for anyone who is sick and suffering, however severe.

Marriages and Baptisms require early planning, scheduling and selections of sponsors (crown bearers or godparents). See Father before booking dates and reception halls!

Funerals are celebrated for practicing Orthodox Christians. Please see Father for details. The Church opposes cremation; we cannot celebrate funerals for cremations.

Announcements

Study Session

We had a very good session this week, dealing with questions concerning Scripture and Tradition. Keep your questions coming! I have recorded the session and will place it in our shared folder, in a director called "Study Sessions". You can then watch the lessons at your own leisure.

COVID Resitrictions

As the state has lifted virtually every COVID-related resitriction, I have been asked when might we do the same? I am currently waiting to hear what our SYNOD

or Metropolitan Tikhon (*locum tennets*) should issue in the upcoming weeks. In the meantime, we will continue with our customary procedures. We do have some room to relax our restrictions under our guidelines for "reopening". The council will discuss these at our next meeting.

Prayers, Intercessions and Commemorations



Archpriest Dennis,
Archpriest Michael,
Deacon Timothy, Evelyn,
Katheryn, Anne, Aaron,
Veronica, Richard,
Nancy, Susanne, Carol,
Alexander, Gail, Vincent,
Nina, Ellen, Maureen,
Elizabeth, Christopher,
Joshua, Jennifer, Petra,
Olivia, Jessica, Sean,
Sarah, Justin, Arnold,
Carol-Anne, Anthony,
Natasha, Gene, John, John, Michael, Kelley,
Krisha, Alix, Natalie, Edward, Nathan, Caila,
Julianna, Paul, John, Jacob, Lynn, Anna,
Richard, Robert, Dorothy, Elaina

Many years to Sarah Luft on the occasion of her birthday.

Memory Eternal for Joseph Anselmo on the anniversary of his repose. Memory Eternal for those who give their lives in service to this country.

- Pray for: All those confined to hospitals, nursing homes, and their own homes due to illness; for all those who serve in the armed forces; widows, orphans, prisoners, victims of violence, and refugees;
- All those suffering chronic illness, financial hardship, loneliness, addictions, abuse, abandonment and despair; those who are homeless, those who are institutionalized, those who have no one to pray for them;
- All Orthodox seminarians & families; all Orthodox monks and nuns, and all those considering monastic life; all Orthodox missionaries and their families.
- All those who have perished due to hatred, intolerance and pestilence; all those departed this life in the hope of the Resurrection.

—

Samaritan Woman. Ven. Isaac, Founder of the Dalmatian Monastery at Constantinople (383).

Saints and Feasts

May 30

Isaacius, Abbot of the Monastery of Dalmatus

The righteous Isaacius was from Syria and came to Constantinople in 374, excelled in the monastic life, and departed to the Lord in 396. According to tradition, his monastery was built by Dalmatus the Patrician, a nephew of Saint Constantine

the Great. But many say that the monastery was founded by Saint Isaacius, and afterwards took the name of the Abbot Dalmatus who succeeded Saint Isaacius (see Aug. 3 for an account of the life of Saints Isaacius and Dalmatus). Yet others maintain that it received its name from both of these, and that is why its name in Greek is in the plural. According to Zonaras, the Iconoclast Emperor Constantine Copronymus later turned this monastery into a barracks: "And as for the Monastery called Dalmatus, which is ancient and the oldest of all those in Constantinople, after he had expelled the monks, [the Emperor] made it a barracks for soldiers" (Chronicle, XV, 8). The Third Ecumenical Council raised its abbot to the rank of archimandrite and exarch of the prominent monasteries of the imperial city. The famous Cathedral of Saint Isaac in Saint Petersburg is dedicated to this Saint.

May 30

Sunday of the Samaritan Woman

One of the most ancient cities of the Promised Land was Shechem, also called Sikima, located at the foot of Mount Gerazim. There the Israelites had heard the blessings in the days of Moses and Jesus of Navi. Near to this town, Jacob, who had come from Mesopotamia in the nineteenth century before Christ, bought a piece of land where there was a well. This well, preserved even until the time of Christ, was known as Jacob's Well. Later, before he died in Egypt, he left that piece of land as a special inheritance to his son Joseph (Gen.

49:22). This town, before it was taken into possession by Samaria, was also the leading city of the kingdom of the ten tribes. In the time of the Romans it was called Neapolis, and at present Nablus. It was the first city in Canaan visited by the Patriarch Abraham. Here also, Jesus of Navi (Joshua) addressed the tribes of Israel for the last time. Almost three hundred years later, all Israel assembled there to make Roboam (Rehoboam) king.

When our Lord Jesus Christ, then, came at midday to this city, which is also called Sychar (John 4:5), He was wearied from the journey and the heat, and He sat down at this well. After a little while the Samaritan woman mentioned in today's Gospel passage came to draw water. As she conversed at some length with the Lord and heard from Him secret things concerning herself, she believed in Him; through her many other Samaritans also believed.

Concerning the Samaritans we know the following: In the year 721 before Christ, Salmanasar (Shalmaneser), King of the Assyrians, took the ten tribes of the kingdom of Israel into captivity, and relocated all these people to Babylon and the land of the Medes. From there he gathered various nations and sent them to Samaria. These nations had been idolaters from before. Although they were later instructed in the Jewish faith and believed in the one God, they worshipped the idols also. Furthermore, they accepted only the Pentateuch of Moses, and rejected the other books of Holy Scripture. Nonetheless, they thought themselves to be descendants of Abraham and Jacob. Therefore, the pious

Jews named these Judaizing and idolatrous peoples Samaritans, since they lived in Samaria, the former leading city of the Israelites, as well as in the other towns thereabout. The Jews rejected them as heathen and foreigners, and had no communion with them at all, as the Samaritan woman observed, "the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (John 4:9). Therefore, the name Samaritan is used derisively many times in the Gospel narrations. After the Ascension of the Lord, and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the woman of Samaria was baptized by the holy Apostles and became a great preacher and Martyr of Christ; she was called Photine, and her feast is kept on February 26.

May 31

Hermias the Martyr at Comana

According to some, this Martyr strove in contest during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, also called Antoninus (161-180); according to others, it was in the reign of Antoninus Pius (138-161). Already an old man, the Saint was brought before Sebastian, Proconsul in Comana of Cappadocia, and because he would not renounce his confession of Christ, his tormentors showing no reverence to his grey hairs, broke his jaw, tore the flesh from his face, pierced his eyes with a sharp instrument, subjected him to many other torments, and finally, after three days of such torture, beheaded him.

June 01

Justin the Philosopher and Martyr and his Companions

This Saint, who was from Neapolis of Palestine, was a follower of Plato the philosopher. Born in 103, he came to the Faith of Christ when he was already a mature man, seeking to find God through philosophy and human reasoning. A venerable elder appeared to him and spoke to him about the Prophets who had taught of God not through their own wisdom, but by revelation; and he led him to knowledge of Christ, Who is the fulfillment of what the Prophets taught. Saint Justin soon became a fervent follower of Christ, and an illustrious apologist of the Evangelical teachings. To the end of his life, while preaching Christ in all parts, he never put off his philosopher's garb. In Rome, he gave the Emperor Antoninus Pius (reigned 138-161) an apology wherein he proved the innocence and holiness of the Christian Faith, persuading him to relieve the persecution of Christians. Through the machinations of Crescens, a Cynic philosopher who envied him, Saint Justin was beheaded in Rome in 167 under Antoninus' successor, Marcus Aurelius (reigned 161-180). Besides his defense of Christianity (First and Second Apologies), Saint Justin wrote against paganism (Discourse to the Greeks, Hortatory Address to the Greeks), and refuted Jewish objections against Christ (Dialogue with Trypho).

June 02

Nicephorus the Confessor, Patriarch of Constantinople

Saint Nicephorus was born in Constantinople about the year 758, of pious parents; his father Theodore endured exile and tribulation for the holy icons during the reign of Constantine Copronymus (741-775). Nicephorus served in the imperial palace as a secretary. Later, he took up the monastic life, and struggled in asceticism not far from the imperial city; he also founded monasteries on the eastern shore of the Bosphorus, among them one dedicated to the Great Martyr Theodore.

After the repose of the holy Patriarch Tarasius, he was ordained Patriarch, on April 12, 806, and in this high office led the Orthodox resistance to the Iconoclasts' war on piety, which was stirred up by Leo the Armenian. Because Nicephorus championed the veneration of the icons, Leo drove Nicephorus from his throne on March 13, 815, exiling him from one place to another, and lastly to the Monastery of Saint Theodore which Nicephorus himself had founded. It was here that, after glorifying God for nine years as Patriarch, and then for thirteen years as an exile, tormented and afflicted, he gave up his blameless soul in 828 at about the age of seventy. See also March 8.

June 04

Mary & Martha, the sisters of Lazarus

The Holy Myrrh-bearers Mary and Martha, together with their brother Lazarus, were

especially devoted to our Savior, as we see from the accounts given in the tenth chapter of Saint Luke, and in the eleventh and twelfth chapters of Saint John. They reposed in Cyprus, where their brother became the first Bishop of Kition after his resurrection from the dead. See also the accounts on Lazarus Saturday and the Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women.

Hymns of the Day



To begin the Divine Liturgy...

Priest: "Blessed is the Kingdom..."

Choir: "Amen."

Priest: "Christ is risen..."
" (2 ½ times)

Choir: "and upon those

in the tombs bestowing life!"

Tone 4 Troparion (Resurrection)

When the women disciples of the Lord learned from the angel the joyous message of Your Resurrection, they cast away the ancestral curse and elatedly told the apostles:
"Death is overthrown!
Christ God is risen, //
granting the world great mercy!"

Tone 8 Troparion (Midfeast)

In the middle of the feast, O Savior, fill my thirsting soul with the waters of piety, as You cried to all:
"If anyone thirst, let him come to Me and drink!" //

O Christ God, Fountain of our life, glory to You!

Tone 8 Kontakion (Pentecostarion)

The Samaritan Woman came to the well in faith;
she saw You, the Water of wisdom and drank abundantly. //
She inherited the Kingdom on high, and is ever glorified!

Tone 4 Kontakion (Midfeast)

Christ God, the Creator and Master of all, cried to all in the midst of the feast of the Law:

"Come and draw the water of immortality!"
We fall before You and faithfully cry: //
"Grant us Your mercies, for You are the Fountain of our life!"

(Instead of "It is truly meet...", we sing:)

The Angel cried to the Lady, full of grace:
"Rejoice, O pure Virgin! Again, I say: Rejoice, your Son is risen from His three days in the tomb!
With Himself He has raised all the dead."
Rejoice, O ye people!

Shine, shine, O new Jerusalem!
The glory of the Lord has shone on you.
Exult now, and be glad, O Zion!
Be radiant, O pure Theotokos,
in the Resurrection of your Son!

Communion Hymn

Receive the Body of Christ; taste the fountain of immortality!

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him
in the highest!
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Priest: "In the fear of God..."

Choir: "Blessed is He that comes in the Name
of the Lord..."

Priest: "O God, save Your people..."

Choir: "Christ is risen from the dead..." (sung
once, instead of "We have seen the True
Light...")

Priest: "Always, now and ever..."

Choir: "Let our mouths be filled..."

At the Dismissal, the Priest says: "Glory to
You, O Christ..." and the choir sings "Christ is
risen from the dead..." (thrice).

And unto us He has given eternal life.
Let us worship His Resurrection on the third
day!

Gospel and Epistle Readings

Epistle Reading

Prokeimenon. 4th Tone. Psalm 103.24,1.

O Lord, how manifold are your works. You
have made all things in wisdom.

Verse: Bless the Lord, O my soul.

The reading is from Acts of the Apostles 11:19-30.

In those days, those apostles who were
scattered because of the persecution that
arose over Stephen traveled as far as
Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch,

speaking the word to none except Jews. But
there were some of them, men of Cyprus and
Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to
the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus.
And the hand of the Lord was with them, and
a great number that believed turned to the
Lord. News of this came to the ears of the
church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas
to Antioch. When he came and saw the grace
of God, he was glad; and he exhorted them all
to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast
purpose; for he was a good man, full of the
Holy Spirit and of faith. And a large company
was added to the Lord. So Barnabas went to
Tarsus to look for Saul; and when he had
found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a
whole year they met with the church, and
taught a large company of people; and in
Antioch the disciples were for the first time
called Christians. Now in these days prophets
came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And
one of them named Agabos stood up and
foretold by the Spirit that there would be a
great famine over all the world; and this took
place in the days of Claudius. And the
disciples determined, every one according to
his ability, to send relief to the brethren who
lived in Judea, and they did so, sending it to
the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

Gospel Reading

Sunday of the Samaritan Woman The Reading is from John 4:5-42

At that time, Jesus came to a city of Samaria,
called Sychar, near the field that

Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and so Jesus, wearied as he was with his journey, sat down beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?" Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw."

Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband; this you said truly." The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain; and you say that Jerusalem is the place where

men ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will show us all things." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

Just then his disciples came. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but none said, "What do you wish?" or, "Why are you talking with her?" So the woman left her water jar, and went away into the city and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" They went out of the city and were coming to him.

Meanwhile the disciples besought him, saying "Rabbi, eat." But he said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." So the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought him food?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work. Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest. He who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds

true, 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony. "He told me all that I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard ourselves, and we know that this is indeed Christ the Savior of the world."

Wisdom of the Fathers

The example of the good Samaritan shows that we must not abandon those in whom even the faintest amount of faith is still alive.

St. Ambrose of Milan

*Two Books of St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan,
Concerning Repentance, Chapter 11*

He shows that she is worthy to hear and not to be overlooked, and then He reveals Himself. For she, as soon as she had learnt who He was, would straightway hearken and attend to Him; ...

St. John Chrysostom

Homily 31 on John 3, 4th Century

Here is love! Here is teaching! Here is acquiescence! Here is a model! ... Those who love they also serve. If you want to find out how great your love is towards God, then measure your obedience to the will of God, and you will immediately learn.

Bishop Nicolai Velimirovic

Prolog, 7 Sept., B #80, 706.

Beyond the Sermon



St Photeine, the Woman at the Well

The Eastern Orthodox Church honors the Samaritan woman whom Christ met at the well as Saint Photeine.

Celebrated on February 26 and again on the

fourth Sunday after Easter, she entered Christian literature and history in the fourth chapter of the fourth Gospel, when St. John, writing around 90-100 A.D., records as an extraordinary happening, Jesus' encounter with a woman from Samaria. This story does not appear anywhere else in the New Testament.

The encounter, the Evangelist relates, took place at high noon or the "sixth hour"; when

a Jewish teacher or rabbi weary from heat and travel stops to rest by the ancient well of Jacob in Samaria. A woman, carrying a water jar, has come from a nearby village to draw water for her household. When the man asks her for a drink of water, the request surprises her. Something extraordinary was indeed taking place. She knows that Jews despise Samaritans and avoid all contacts with them. And, despite centuries old religious prejudices, a Jew was talking to a Samaritan, courteously asking for a drink of water.

Her great surprise notwithstanding, the Samaritan woman responds. Soon the two at the well are engaged in conversation, discussing Jewish and Samaritan theology. This was even more extraordinary. Jewish men did not talk to women in public, especially Jewish teachers or rabbis. Rabbis, moreover, never talked theology with a woman, either publicly or privately. No wonder, then, that when Jesus' male disciples arrived at the well from their shopping in the town they "were astonished to find him talking with a "woman" (John 4:27). Had the disciples heard the remarkable conversation between their teacher and the woman, their astonishment would have increased.

In the course of the conversation, the weary traveler sitting by the well and talking about "living water" reveals for the first time to anyone that he is the Messiah: "I am he, I who am speaking to you now" (John 4:26). Thus, according to the Evangelist, the revelation of Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah first is made to a woman. An important disclosure about God has taken

place.

The woman immediately accepts the disclosure. She believes that Jesus is the Christ of God and runs eagerly to tell her other villagers the good news. On the strength of her witness, we are told by St. John, many Samaritans came to believe in Jesus. And so, it was a woman who brought Jesus his first converts.

The Greek theologians and teachers of the early Christian centuries did not fail to appreciate the significance of the Samaritan woman with whom Christ had spoken at the well. Greek Church Fathers — St. John Chrysostom among them — praised the woman's sensitivity and faith, as well as her intelligence. They grant her the titles of "apostle" and "evangelist." In Greek sermons written between the fourth and 14th centuries, the Samaritan woman is compared to the male disciples and apostles and found to be their superior.

During this same period many hymns were composed to honor the woman at the well. The poet of an elaborate sixth-century hymn calls her "wise," "holy," "faithful" and "god-bearing." With one voice Greek hymn writers sing the praises of the woman who, when she received the water of eternal life, rushed to share it with others. In more than a few hymns the Samaritan woman is herself glorified as a "spring of living water."

In time she was canonized by the Eastern Orthodox Church and enrolled among her saints. Her cult spread throughout the Eastern Mediterranean world, and reached as far west as Spain. On Mount Zion,

Jerusalem, a Syrian convent bore the name of our saint.

Along with a saint's golden halo, the Samaritan woman also received a name, while in the Gospel of St. John she is nameless, being identified only by her ethnic origin and by her sex. According to tradition Christ names her Photeine, which in Greek means "bright," "shining," "radiant." The nameless woman of the Gospel becomes transfigured into light, listed in Orthodox liturgical books as the "Glorious Saint and Great Martyr Photeine, the Samaritan Woman." In the Roman Catholic Church she is commemorated on March 20 as St. Photina.

Like all proper saints, Saint Photeine has a legend, which begins where the story in the Gospel ends. Recorded in Greek collections of saints' lives, it tells the story of a pioneer woman apostle.

Photeine, baptized at the first Pentecost with her five sisters and two sons, then began an illustrious career as a missionary. She traveled far and wide, from place to place, in the company of other apostles, preaching and converting pagans to Christianity. With her younger son, Joseph, Photeine went to Carthage to carry the Gospel to North Africa. She preached there "with great boldness" and won many souls for Christ.

After a vision in which Jesus appeared to her, she sailed from Carthage for Rome, her last mission field. In the imperial city she amazed the populace. Never had they seen a woman of greater faith and courage. Photeine even dared to confront

the Emperor Nero, who at that time had ordered the persecution of Christians who were living in his capital. Not only did she confront the persecutor of her co-religionists, but she tried to convert him.

Infuriated by Photeine's missionary zeal, Nero did everything in his power to destroy Photeine and her faith. But, when he sent his daughter and her hundred maidservants to persuade the saint to abandon Christianity, the results did not please him. Photeine converted and baptized the imperial princess and her attendants.

The tyrant then resorted to punishments and tortures of all kinds. He sent his most powerful magician to poison the saint. But when she swallowed his most lethal poison, the magician became a Christian and was baptized by Photeine. On hearing this, Nero ordered his magician beheaded. All his attempts to break Photeine's faith had failed.

For three years Photeine remained imprisoned in Rome. While in jail, she transformed it into a "house of God." A marvelous bright light and sweet fragrance filled her prison. Romans came in crowds to see and to hear her talk about Christ. Many were converted by her into Christians, "children of light."

Finally when her five sisters had been put to death and Saint Photeine was left alone, Nero tried one last time to annihilate her. She was thrown into a very deep and dry well. When this cruel torture failed (as had all others), Photeine was returned to prison where she died peacefully.

Sad that she had not been "crowned with martyrdom" along with her sisters, Photeine had prayed for death. In answer to her prayers Christ appeared to the saint, blessing her with the sign of the cross. Some days later, while singing praises to God, Saint Photeine put her beautiful soul into the hands of the Savior.

The legend of Saint Photeine, the Samaritan woman, preserves the memory of Christianity's first valiant woman, who not only believed in the Word but also proclaimed it. In honoring Saint Photeine, the Orthodox Church pays homage to the first women apostles.

Eva Catafygiotu Topping

Parish Calendar

May 30 to June 14, 2021

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
30	31	JUN 1	2	3	4	5
Sunday of the Samaritan Woman 9:00AM Divine Liturgy	Hermias the Martyr at Comana	Justin the Philosopher and Martyr and his Companions	Sarah Luft 5th Wednesday after Pascha	Repose of Joseph Anselmo 5th Thursday after Pascha 7:00PM Faith Study	Our Father Metrophanes, Archbishop of Constantinople	The Holy Hieromartyr Dorotheus, Bishop of Tyre 5:30PM Great Vespers
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Sunday of the Blind Man 9:30AM Divine Liturgy	6th Monday after Pascha	Akathist to St John Kronstadt Removal of the Relics of Theodore the Commander	Apodosis of Pascha 6:00PM Vesperal Divine Liturgy	June Bronen Holy Ascension 7:00PM Faith Study	Bartholomew the Holy Apostle	Onuphrius of Egypt 5:30PM Great Vespers

Who is Junia?

This weekly bulletin insert complements the curriculum published by the Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America. This and many other Christian Education resources are available at <http://dce.oca.org>.



The Church honors the Samaritan Woman who met Christ while drawing water at Jacob's Well. She was surprised by His love and concern for her, since she was a Samaritan, with whom the Jews "had no dealings." She was further surprised by His knowledge of her crowded personal life.

But unlike some others, she was neither offended nor frightened by the depth of His insight, and so eventually she became His follower and strong witness. She is traditionally known by the name Photini. With her sons and sisters, she was arrested by the Emperor Nero and later suffered martyrdom, but not before she brought the cruel emperor's own daughter to the faith.

Some years ago, Newsweek Magazine and other more notably academic publications trumpeted the news of a "remarkable discovery" concerning another of Christ's female followers. The discovery was made by a feminist professor of Christian Studies at Brandeis University. By reading older versions of the Bible, this professor had found out that the person mentioned by Saint Paul in Romans 16:7 is a woman named Junia, not a man named Junius. According to the Newsweek article, her name had

been "masculinized" over the centuries by Biblical translators "with their own agenda"—presumably a misogynistic agenda.

But Saint John Chrysostom, in the fourth century, wrote this about Junia: "Oh, how great is the devotion of this woman, that she should be counted worthy even to be called an apostle." The so-called discovery of Junia's identity as a female really reflects only incomplete knowledge and superficial research on the part of some modern scholars, not a brave uncovering of deliberately-hidden truth.

Saint Paul writes about Junia with obvious admiration, calling her and her husband his "countrymen and fellow prisoners" and saying that they are "of note among the apostles." He also writes that they were both Christians before he was. One modern scholar who is reliable and respected, Ben Witherington, has speculated that Junia is the same person as Joanna, one of the Myrrh-Bearing Women. He believes it is possible that she broke with her first husband Chuza (King Herod's steward) and later married Andronicus. Then together they worked with Paul to spread the Gospel and teach.

But whether Junia is Joanna or a different person really makes little difference. She is honored as someone who, like the Samaritan Woman, believed in Jesus Christ deeply enough to be imprisoned for her faith. She is recognized as His apostle.

The Orthodox Church has never hidden or attempted to alter facts about Junia. As we have noted, Saint John Chrysostom singles her out for praise. And the reason she comes to our attention in the first place is that Saint Paul does the same. He appreciated any person, woman or man, who shared his dedication and readiness to suffer for Christ. Junia is a shining example of just such a person.