



# ST OLYMPIA ORTHODOX CHURCH

POTSDAM, NEW YORK 13676



ORTHODOX CHURCH OF AMERICA  
DIOCESE OF NY AND NJ

*Welcome to St. Olympia Orthodox Church,  
a young and, God willing, growing community of worshipers.*

*Our priest is Fr. Peter Irfan, Acting Rector.  
You may reach him at 716-342-8520 (cell) or at fatherpeter777@yahoo.com.*

*Please join us for prayer and fellowship.\*\**

*\*\* In keeping with  
OCA guidelines, we  
need to have a  
rotation schedule for  
those who wish to  
attend. Please contact  
Father Peter or the  
Parish Council for  
more information. \*\**

**Upcoming Services:**  
Sunday, May 17, 24  
Divine Liturgy: 10am

**No coffee hour  
following services**

*The above services are  
at St. Olympia Chapel  
123 Main Street  
Potsdam, NY, 13676*

## Sunday of the Samaritan Woman



**May 17**

## Saints Constantine and Helen Equal to the Apostles



**May 21**

### **Kontakions**

*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!*

*Today Constantine and his mother Helen  
reveal the precious Cross, the weapon of the faithful against their enemies.  
For our sakes, it has been shown to be a great sign, and fearsome in battle.*

## Rivers of Living Water

“So the woman left her water jar, and went away into the city....” [John 4:28].

A Samaritan woman came to Jacob’s Well in Sychar, a Samaritan city, at the same time that Jesus sat down by the well, being wearied by His journey. The evangelist John provides us with a time reference: “It was about the sixth hour” [John 4:6]—i.e. noon. The Samaritan woman had come to draw water from the well, a trip and activity that must have been an unquestioned daily routine that was part of life for her and her fellow city-dwellers. The ancients had a much more active sense of equating water with life than we do today with the accessibility of water from the kitchen tap, the shower, or the local store. On the basic level of biological survival, Jacob’s Well must have been something like a “fountain of life” for the inhabitants of Sychar. Therefore, it is rather incredible that she returned home without her water jar, a “detail” that the evangelist realized was so rich in symbolic meaning that he included it in the narrative recorded in his Gospel [John 4:5-42]. And this narrative, together with the incredible dialogue embedded in it, is so profound that every year we appoint this passage to be proclaimed in the Church on the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman, the Fifth Sunday after Pascha. Why, then, would the Samaritan woman fail to take her water jar home with her?

Her “failure” was based on a discovery that she made when she encountered and spoke with Jesus by Jacob’s Well. For even though the disciples “marveled” that Jesus was talking with a woman [v. 27], Jesus Himself began the dialogue with the woman perfectly free of any such social, cultural or even religious restraints. As this unlikely dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman unfolded by the well, it was revealed to the woman that Jesus was offering her a “living water” that was qualitatively distinct from the well-water that she habitually drank [v.11]. This “living water” had an absolutely unique quality to it that the Lord further revealed to the woman: “Jesus said to her, ‘Every one 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’” [v.13-14].

A perceptive and sensitive woman who was open to the words of Jesus, she responded with the clear indication that she had entered upon a process of discovery that would lead her to realize that she was speaking with someone who was a prophet—and more than a prophet: “Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw” [v.15]. Her thirst is now apparent on more than one level, as her mind and heart are now opening up to a spiritual thirst that was hidden but now stimulated by the presence and words of Jesus. Knowing this, Jesus will now disclose to her one of the great revelations of the entire New Testament, a revelation that will bring together Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles: “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” [v.23-24].

A careful reading of Saint John’s Gospel indicates that under the image of water, Jesus was speaking of His teaching that has come from God, or more specifically, to the gift of the Holy Spirit. For at the Feast of Tabernacles, as recorded in John 7, Jesus says this openly to the crowds that had come to celebrate the feast: “On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, ‘If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.’ Now this He said about the Spirit, Whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” [John 7:37-39].

Overwhelmed and excited, inspired and filled with the stirrings of a life-changing encounter, the Samaritan woman “left her water jar, and went away into the city and said to the people, ‘Come and see a man Who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?’” [v. 28-29]. It is not that the contents of her water jar was now unimportant or meaningless. That would be a false dichotomy between the material and the spiritual that is foreign to the Gospel. The Samaritan woman will eventually retrieve her forgotten water jar and fill it with simple water in fulfillment of her basic human needs. For the moment, however, she must go to her fellow city-dwellers and witness to Christ! They, in turn, will eventually believe that Jesus is “indeed the Savior of the world” [v.42].

There are indeed innumerable “wells” that we can go to in order to drink some “water” that promises to quench our thirst. These “wells” can represent every conceivable ideology, theory, philosophy of life, or worldview—in addition to all of the superficial distractions, pleasures, and mind-numbing attractions that offer some relief from the challenges and oppressive demands of life. For a Christian, to be tempted to drink the water from such wells would amount to nothing less than a betrayal of both the baptismal waters that were both a tomb and womb for us; and a betrayal of the living water that we receive from the teaching of Christ and that leads to eternal life. It is best to leave our “water jars” behind at such wells, and drink only that “living water” that is nothing less than the “gift of God” [John 4:10].