



*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.\*\**

**\*\* Archbishop Michael  
has blessed us to worship  
with up to ten (10)  
households per service.  
Please contact Father  
Peter if you are planning  
to attend. \*\***

### **Holy Prophet Zachariah and Righteous Elizabeth, Parents of John the Baptist, September 5**



**Upcoming Services:  
Sunday, August 30,  
September 6, 8, 13, 14  
Divine Liturgy: 10 am**

**No coffee hour \*\*Social  
Distancing guidelines  
must be observed.**

***The above services are at  
St. Olympia Chapel  
123 Main Street***

Holy Prophet Zachariah and the Righteous Elizabeth were the parents of the holy Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist of the Lord, John. They were descended from the lineage of Aaron: Saint Zachariah, son of Barach, was a priest in the Jerusalem Temple, and Saint Elizabeth was the sister of Saint Anna, the mother of the Most Holy Theotokos. The righteous spouses, “walking in all the commandments of the Lord (Luke 1:6), suffered barrenness, which in those times was considered a punishment from God.

Once, during his turn of priestly service in the Temple, Saint Zachariah was told by an angel that his aged wife would bear him a son, who “will be great in the sight of the Lord” (Luke 1:15) and “will go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias” (Luke 1:17). Zachariah doubted that this prediction would come true, and for his weakness of faith he was punished by becoming mute. When Elizabeth gave birth to a son, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit she announced that his name was John, although no one in their family had this name. They asked Zachariah and he also wrote the name John down on a tablet. Immediately the gift of speech returned to him, and inspired by the Holy Spirit, he began to prophesy about his son as the Forerunner of the Lord.

When King Herod heard from the Magi about the birth of the Messiah, he decided to kill all the infants up to two years old at Bethlehem and the surrounding area, hoping that the new-born Messiah would be among them. Herod knew about John’s unusual birth and he wanted to kill him, fearing that he was the foretold King of the Jews. But Elizabeth hid herself and the infant in the hills. The murderers searched everywhere for John. Elizabeth, when she

saw her pursuers, began to implore God for their safety, and immediately the hill opened up and concealed her and the infant from their pursuers.

In these tragic days Saint Zachariah was taking his turn at the services in the Temple. Soldiers sent by Herod tried in vain to learn from him the whereabouts of his son. Then, by command of Herod, they murdered this holy prophet, having stabbed him between the temple and the altar (Matthew 23: 35). Elizabeth died forty days after her husband, and Saint John, preserved by the Lord, dwelt in the wilderness until the day of his appearance to the nation of Israel

## **When Someone New Comes to Your Church**

**By Dr. David Ford, St. Tikhon's Seminary**

1. Welcome them warmly, but not effusively; be genuinely interested in getting to know them, especially something of their spiritual history. If they are not Orthodox; find places of agreement with Orthodoxy that you can affirm together.
2. Lament together with Protestants over the grievous proliferation of denominations; remember that Orthodoxy is not just one more such denomination – rather, Orthodoxy is the Mother Lode, from which all other Christian groups have separated off: first the Roman Church (1054), and then the thousands of Protestant denominations splintering off from the Roman Church, beginning in the 1520's and continuing to the present day.
3. Rejoice in the spiritual fervor of Evangelical Protestants, and their deep love for the Holy Scriptures; just gently remind them that everything written needs the proper interpretation. So whom are we to trust for the proper interpretation of the Scriptures – the consistent witness/Tradition of the Church for 2000 years, or some other group, or some other person, or just yourself? Also gently remind them that spiritual fervor needs grounding, direction, and stability to avoid an endless cycle of highs and lows – the fire needs a fireplace: the guidance of Holy Tradition!
4. Explain gently to them that just because the Orthodox Church is hierarchical, with fancy vestments and elaborate rituals/liturgies, this doesn't mean it's oppressive, that the dogmas behind it are all being "shoved down our throats!" For we Orthodox fully and freely choose, "according to the dictates of our own conscience," to embrace and live by these dogmas and the whole way of life of the Church, because we trust the amazingly consistent Tradition of 2,000 years, AND because we find this way of life, undergirded by these dogmas, to be life-giving, and endlessly spiritually enriching.
5. Emphasize gently how the Orthodox Church's life does not change through the years; the Church aims to shape and transform the surrounding society, rather than being shaped and altered by it. For human nature has not changed in modern times! We all still need Christ as our Savior, repentance and forgiveness for our sins, self-control over our passions, and time-tested guidance for the spiritual life.
6. Emphasize gently how Orthodoxy offers endless avenues for spiritual growth: such as through the Saints, the Sacraments, the icons, the Feastdays, the writings of the Church Fathers, and our Monasteries, which all bring us closer to Christ.

*“Remember that not a single word is lost during prayer, if you say it from your heart; God hears each word, and weighs it in a balance. Sometimes it seems to us that our words only strike the air in vain, and sound as the voice of one crying in the wilderness. No, no; it is not so!...The Lord responds to every desire of the heart, expressed in words or unexpressed.”*

*St. John of Kronstadt*