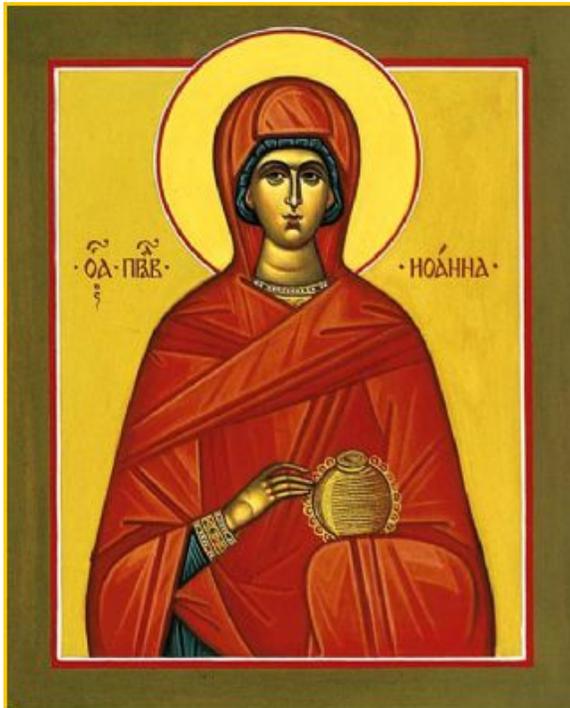


This weekly bulletin insert complements the curriculum published by the Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America. This and many other Christian Education resources are available at <http://dce.oca.org>.



On June 27 we remember a saint who was given the precious and rare privilege of traveling, hearing and speaking with Jesus Christ as He lived on earth. She is Joanna, one of the Myrrh-Bearing Women who witnessed the empty tomb on Pascha morning. Joanna, as a contemporary and follower of the Messiah, truly had "conversations with God."

For Joanna, following Jesus was a risk. She was the wife of Chuza, steward to King Herod who was one of the Jesus' powerful enemies. She displayed courage in staying with the Lord, and her doing so shows us that those "conversations" with Him were filled with a truth she could not abandon or ignore, no matter how great the risk.

A fairly recent (1996) book called "Conversations with God" is said by its author, Neale Donald Walsch, to be the record of his own dialogue with God, in which his pen began to move on its own, and he found himself not so much writing as taking dictation.

Yet early in the book, Walsch "quotes" God as saying that words are the least effective communicator, open to misinterpretation, unreliable as a purveyor of Truth. If that's the case, why should we take this book, which is a long collection of words, as a reliable source of God's message to us? Why would God choose to communicate with Walsch

in this least effective of media?

But "Conversations with God" has even deeper flaws than this. When Walsch asks God to reveal Himself (though Walsch ascribes no gender to God) the answer he gets is that God has "no form or shape you understand." This flatly contradicts the bedrock Christian teaching that God became Man in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. In fact, Walsch makes his disdain for the Incarnate Lord very clear: "So who said Jesus was perfect?" God also assures Walsch that the two of them share the same essence, and possess the same qualities, including the ability to "create physical reality out of thin air." So much for the unique divinity of the Son who co-created us and came to save us.

Truth with a capital "T" comes up often in Walsch's writing, so we might expect God to offer a clear definition of it. But here's what we get: "My Truth is in the whisper of the wind, the babble of the brook, the crack of the thunder, the tap of the rain. My Truth—and your surest help in time of need—is as awesome as the night sky, and as simply, incontrovertibly, trustful as a baby's gurgle." Does this mean that Truth is "trustful" or, in other words, trusting? The statement makes no sense, especially when Truth is compared to a baby's gurgle.

A world in which this sort of book can become widely popular needs the Truth that Saint Joanna found and followed. We can ask her to guide seekers to the One who provides, and actually is, that Truth—the only One who merits a capital "T."