

Photini, The Samaritan Woman, c. 67 CE

Commemoration on February 26

When Jesus passed through Samaria ([John 4.3-42](#)) he stopped at Jacob's Well in Sychar, a well that the patriarch Jacob had left to his son Joseph. Sitting by the well to rest, the Lord asked a Samaritan woman who came to the well to draw water to give him a drink. The request violated cultural taboos — a man speaking privately with a woman, and a Jew speaking to a Samaritan — anticipating the theological insight of Galatians 3:28. Their brief encounter is one of notable theological depth in which Jesus makes the first of several important “I am” statements in John's Gospel. The Samaritan woman had been married five times and was living with a man to whom she was not married. Whether this was through her own fault or due to unfortunate circumstances beyond her control the text does not indicate. However, she has the distinct honor of being the first person to whom Jesus reveals his Messianic title and the first person to preach the gospel that Jesus is the Christ.

While unnamed in the Johannine text, Orthodox Christian tradition has it that the woman was baptized by the Apostles on the first Pentecost and given the name Photini, “the enlightened one” (Svetlana, in the Russian Church). Celebrated in the Orthodox Church as an Evangelist, “Equal to the Apostles,” a significant hagiography developed around her. She, her sisters, and her children are said to have been cruelly tortured and martyred at the command of the emperor Nero.

Over the centuries many churches have been built at the site of Jacob's Well, where Jesus held discourse with the Samaritan woman; the present church building within Bir Ya'qub Monastery was built in 1893 by order of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem and consecrated to St. Photini.

Lesser Feasts and Fasts Revised 2018

Learn more

[Samaritan Woman at the Well](#) (Photini) on Wikipedia

[Photine of Samaria](#) (Photini or Svetlana) on [OrthodoxWiki](#)

Collect and Readings from the Commemoration

O Almighty God, whose most blessed Son revealed to the Samaritan woman that He is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the World; grant us to drink of the well that springs up to everlasting life that we may worship you in spirit and in truth through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lessons and Psalm

[2 Kings 17:28–41](#) | [Psalm 119:33–40](#) | [John 4:1–26](#)