

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN

JULY 13, 2014
THIS WEEK'S NEWS

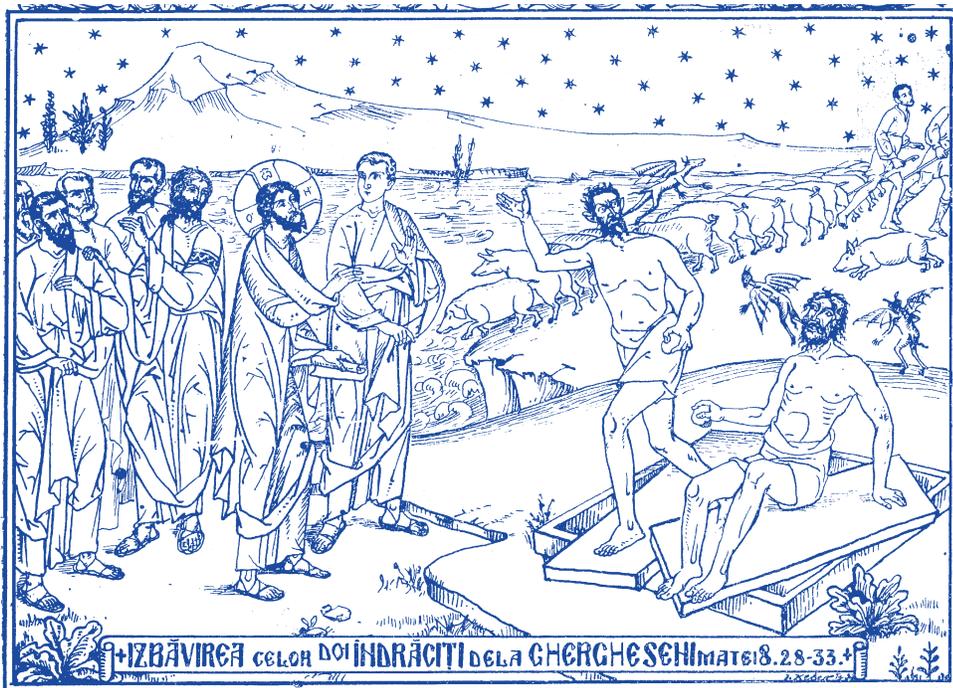
MEMORY ETERNAL! This past week **V. Rev. Fr. Spero Page fell asleep in the Lord.** Fr. Spero was pastor of St. Mary's Assumption Albanian Orthodox Church here in Worcester for many years until his retirement a few years ago. He is remembered for his down-to-earth wit, and his devotion to Christ's Church. We extend to his family and our sister community of St. Mary's Assumption our deepest sympathies. *May our Lord rest his soul among the just.*

THANKS TO THE FOOD PANTRY VOLUNTEERS for working the Orthodox Food Center on behalf of our parish yesterday. Our regular commitment is the first Saturday of the month from 9am to noon. About 4 people are needed. If you can help in this worthwhile ministry, please speak with Nicole Peterson or Lisa Mielnicki. Our next Saturday is August 2nd.

ALSO, THE FOOD PANTRY NEEDS PLASTIC BAGS. Please bring any plastic grocery bags that you might have — in good condition — to Church and we'll see that they get put to use.

PITA BAKING, Thursday, July 24th at 9:00 am. Will be working on inventory for the stART event. **Extra help is needed** and everyone's help is welcome. Questions? Please see Chris Toda. No experience necessary!

GREETERS TEAM 1:
V. GERALD BELBA & CALIN GALERIU
ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED
COFFEE HOUR ON VACATION



THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
THE FATHERS OF THE FOURTH ŒCUMENICAL COUNCIL
APOSTOLIC READING: ROMANS 10:1-10 ☩ GOSPEL: MATTHEW 8:28-9:1
(JESUS HEALS THE GADARENE DEMONIACS)
TONE 4 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL: 5

THE PARISH COUNCIL will hold its regular monthly meeting on **Monday, July 21st at 6:30 pm.** Parish Council Members, please let Deb Sedares know if you are unable to attend.

COFFEE HOUR is on summer vacation. Exceptions are always made for special occasions such as memorials and anniversaries. The reason we're doing this is because the volunteers who prepare the coffee hour and those who clean up afterward need a break, as do we all. We'll pick up the usual routine again in the fall.



COMMUNITY NEWS

ST MICHAEL, SOUTHBRIDGE, will be held on **Sunday, July 20th, 12:00pm - 6:00pm,** on the grounds at Romanian Avenue in Southbridge. St. Michael is celebrating its 90th Anniversary this year, so this is a very special occasion. Featured will be: Shish-Kebab, Homemade Romanian Pastries, Live Music, and many more surprises. Admission

DATES TO REMEMBER

Sun, July 20 Parish Picnic-St Michael, Southbridge
Mon, July 21 Parish Council, 6:30 pm
Thurs, July 24 Pita Baking, 9:00 am
Aug 1-15 Dormition Fast
Sat, Aug 2 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry 9am-12pm
Fri, Aug 15 Mustard Seed Meal, 5 pm
Sat, Sept 6 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry 9am-12pm
Sun, Sept 21 stART on the Street Festival

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A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas

is free and the event is rain or shine. For information: www.stmichaelorth.org

FREE FUN FRIDAYS ARE BACK FOR THE SUMMER! Free Fun Fridays is the annual summer program that opens doors at no cost to visitors to many of the most treasured cultural venues in Massachusetts. Free Fun Fridays shines a spotlight on the broad and diverse art and cultural offerings across Massachusetts. Whether you live in Boston or the Berkshires, Worcester or Cape Cod, the North Shore or the South Coast, you can take advantage of this free program. This year, 60 museums and cultural venues will participate in the program. Beginning June 28th through August 30th, six cultural venues will be open free-of-charge every Friday for 10 weeks this summer. Keeping young people intellectually and socially engaged in the summer is very important – whether the children are in pre-school or all the way through high school. This is a great program for families to take advantage of this summer. To see the whole program, and the sites that available each Friday, go to: highlandstreet.org/freefunfridays.htm or pick up a hard copy flier at the Church. Free Fun Fridays are organized by the Highland Street Foundation and a number of other prominent organizations.

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

SAVE THE DATE! October 9, 2014. Holy Trinity's 8th **FOOD and WINE FEST** in conjunction with Holy Trinity's 20th Anniversary promises to be a great evening! This year's event will be at St. George Orthodox Cathedral. Look for more details!

Holy Trinity Nursing & Rehabilitation Center & Holy Trinity Hospice are Orthodox Charities and rely on your donations to continue the mission of providing the best care possible.

NAMEDAYS

July 7

The Holy Martyr Kyriaki

Kyri Sedares

July 11

The Blessed Olga, Princess of Russia

Olga Lolo

Olga Thanas

July 12

St. Veronica, the woman healed by our Lord Jesus

Veronica Pandaru

July 16

The Holy Martyr Julia of Carthage

Julia Donabed

July 17

The Holy Great Martyr Marina (Margareta) of Antioch in Pisidia

Margareta Gikas

Margarite Landry

Lindsey Marina Sparages

Marina Sparages

July 20

The Holy Prophet Elijah (Elias)

Louis P. Belba

Elias James Christo

Irlie Ilie Durmillari

Louis P. Messier

Louis Rucho

Louis Evan Stamoulis

July 24

The Holy Great Martyr Christina

Christine Masterjohn

July 26

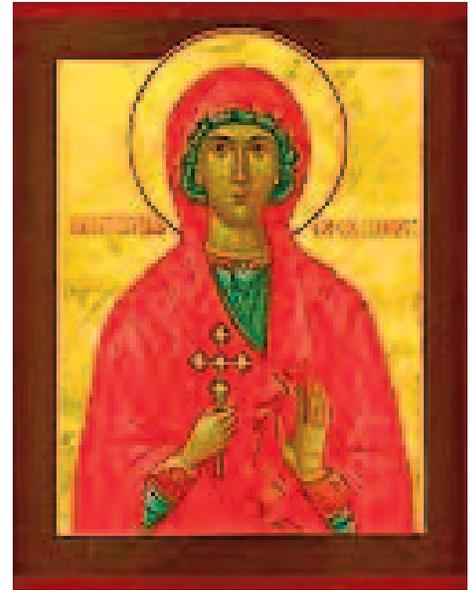
The Holy Martyr Parascheve of Rome

Premtina Thamel

July 27

The Holy Great-martyr and Healer Panteleimon

Peter Mountzouris



THE HOLY GREAT MARTYR MARINA

JULY 17

The Holy Great Martyr Marina (Margareta) was born in Asia Minor, in the city of Antioch of Pisidia (southern Asia Minor), into the family of a pagan priest. In infancy she lost her mother, and her father gave her into the care of a nursemaid, who raised Marina in the Orthodox Faith. Upon learning that his daughter had become a Christian, the father angrily disowned her. During the time of the persecution against Christians under the emperor Diocletian (284-305), when she was fifteen years old, St Marina was arrested and locked up in prison. With firm trust in the will of God and His help, the young prisoner prepared for her impending fate.

The governor Olymbrios, charmed with the beautiful girl, tried to persuade her to renounce the Christian Faith and become his wife. But the saint, unswayed, refused his offers. The vexed governor gave the holy martyr over to torture. Having beaten her fiercely, they fastened the saint with nails to a board and tore at her body with tridents. The

governor himself, unable to bear the horror of these tortures, hid his face in his hands. But the holy martyr remained unyielding. Thrown for the night into prison, she was granted heavenly aid and healed of her wounds. They stripped her and tied her to a tree, then burned the martyr with fire. Barely alive, the martyr prayed: “Lord, You have granted me to go through fire for Your Name, grant me also to go through the water of holy Baptism.”

Hearing the word “water”, the governor gave orders to drown the saint in a large cauldron. The martyr besought the Lord that this manner of execution should become for her holy Baptism.

When they plunged her into the water, there suddenly shone a light, and a snow-white dove came down from Heaven, bearing in its beak a golden crown. The fetters put upon St Marina came apart by themselves. The martyr stood up in the fount of Baptism glorifying the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. St Marina emerged from the fount completely healed, without any trace of burns. Amazed at this miracle, the people glorified the True God, and many came to believe. This brought the governor into a rage, and he gave orders to kill anyone who might confess the Name of Christ. 15,000 Christians perished there, and the holy Martyr Marina

was beheaded. The sufferings of the Great Martyr Marina were described by an eyewitness of the event, named Theotimos.

Up until the taking of Constantinople by Western crusaders in the year 1204, the relics of the Great Martyr Marina were in the Panteponteia monastery. According to other sources, they were located in Antioch until the year 908 and from there transferred to Italy. Now they are in Athens, in a church dedicated to the holy Virgin Martyr. Her venerable hand was transferred to Mount Athos, to the Vatopedi monastery.



A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

LORD, OUR SOVEREIGN GOD: Let us acquire the treasure of love, for it is a grace that only your unspeakable generosity can provide. Let us understand that it is not only an act, but a state of the will, an attitude of the mind and heart, whereby we wish nothing but the very best for all others. In so doing, enable us also to perceive that emotions, the feelings we have for those we love, while all well and good, are not love, though they very frequently accompany it. Help us, Lord, to understand a little more of life.

For you are a loving God, and we give you glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages, amen.

“HAVE YOU COME TO TORMENT US BEFORE THE TIME?”

THIS Sunday’s Gospel lesson touches on a very interesting and somewhat sensitive topic: demonic possession and mental illness. It is the account of the healing of the demoniacs of the Gadarenes (Gergesenes) found in the Gospel of Matthew (8:28-9:1). There are parallel accounts of this exorcism also found in Mark 5:1-20 and Luke 8:26-39.

Throughout the Gospels, we find many people who come to the Lord asking for healing who today we might describe as suffering from various mental illnesses, but who the Evangelists record as “having” or being possessed by a demon.

Today, we view “abnormal” behavior through the lens of modern social and medical science, and this informs our understanding. We know how such maladies can lead a person to do many horrible things, both to themselves and to others. We could fairly describe these people as not being themselves, not being “in their right mind” — not reflecting the true essence of who they are. This Gospel passage provides us with an opportunity to look at mental illness and demonic possession from both a spiritual and social scientific perspective.

In Matthew’s account, prior to the Lord’s encounter with the demoniacs, he and the disciples reached land after having sailed through a tremendous storm. Even though the wind and water were raging, Jesus had been sleeping throughout, but, fearing death, his disciples woke him. He rose, raised his hands, and rebuked the winds and the sea. The disciples marveled, wondering “what sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?” (v. 27)

Shortly after, when on the shore, the Lord encounters the demoniacs. The demons are similarly awed by Jesus, but they don’t wonder “what sort of man is this.” Unlike the disciples, they recognize him immediately. They know who he is. They say: “What have you to do with us, O Son of God?” (v. 29) But lest we think that the demons are happy to see him, they add: “Have you come to torment us before the time?”

Knowing that Jesus is going to expel them from these men, they ask permission to enter the herd of swine feeding nearby. He says to them: “Go.” They leave the persons they had possessed, and enter the swine, who run down the steep bank and drown in the sea.

We have a number of points to consider in this encounter. First, the demons need Jesus’ permission to leave the persons possessed and enter the swine; the Lord has power over them. Second, the demons bring the swine to immediate destruction. It could be that they delighted in killing the animals, or that the animals could not tolerate being under their influence. And third, everyone witnessing



this event was frightened. The townspeople even asked Jesus to leave (v. 34). The reality of demonic possession terrified them. The reality of evil overwhelmed them.

What should we understand from this story? First, God is always in charge. God’s grace was protecting the people possessed by the demons even while in their state of possession. We see what happened to the pigs when Jesus allowed the demons to enter them. This is what would happen to us if God allowed the demons free reign.

Second, the demons are working constantly for our destruction. We give them entry into our lives through our “passions:” greed, envy, even laziness and jealousy. And, they play with us.

Before we know it we are under their influence. For example, people struggling with addictions and mental illness often hurt and destroy themselves and others, many times feeling disassociated from their actions, as though someone or something else were controlling them and causing bad things to happen. Is this not “possession?”

When we choose to follow Christ, we don’t become someone else, we become more truly ourselves. When we choose to follow sin, we, like the demoniacs, serve as the “host” of other desires, and become controlled by them. May we always follow God. May we always ask Him to lead us to ourselves.

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA