

# ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN

## SEPTEMBER 7, 2014 THIS WEEK'S NEWS

**PITA BAKING NEXT Thursday, September 18th** 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! Please note, for the next several weeks through and until stART, we will only be selling half sized pitas. We need to reserve the full-sized for stART.

**ALSO**, we have scheduled a **Saturday dough making session** for September 13, 9am to 1pm. We need a crew of 10 - 14 people, for 4 hours (probably less) — we already have 10 people committed! No experience necessary. We'll teach you to roll out the dough, how to butter/fold the dough, and package it for freezing. Please speak with Chris Toda (thetodas@msn.com or 774-272-2773) and confirm your help by signing the sheet at the candle stand, after speaking with Chris or Deb.

**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 October 4th.

**GREETERS TEAM 1:**  
**V. GERALD BELBA & CALIN GALERIU**  
**ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED**



**SUNDAY BEFORE THE ELEVATION  
OF THE PRECIOUS CROSS  
THE FOREFEAST OF THE  
NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS**  
EPISTLE: GALATIANS 6:11-18  
GOSPEL: JOHN 3:13-17  
(NIKODEMOS CONVERSES WITH JESUS)  
TONE 4 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL: 2

**PITA & PASTRY CONCESSION AT "START ON THE STREET:" SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21ST.** (Rain Date – Sunday, September 28th). St. Nicholas is returning to this community art festival, held on Park Avenue in Worcester between Pleasant and Highland Streets, which draws over 20,000 attendees each year. Our Church will again be one of the vendors in the Food Court selling pita and pastry. **This is a HUGE undertaking for us**, and requires your **"sweat stewardship"** to realize the fundraising potential of \$5,000. A detailed sign-up sheet is on the bulletin board for prep on Saturday the 20th as well as throughout the day on Sunday. Pita baking is also underway and help is needed

with that part of the effort as well. **The venue is established and presents a great opportunity to showcase our goods to the larger community. The only variable is YOU!** St. Nicholas needs your commitment of time and effort to make this a success! The volunteering schedule needs are on the Bulletin Board. **For more info, speak with Deb Sedares or Chris Toda.**

**THE PARISH COUNCIL** will hold its regular monthly meeting on **Monday, September 15th at 6:30 pm.** Parish Council Members, please let Deb Sedares know if you are unable to attend.

**ST NICHOLAS CHURCH SCHOOL AND OUR YOUTH** are a central part of our parish. We need you! If you are interested in teaching or assisting with Church School this year and/or working with the Youth of our parish on activities and programs geared to them, please see **Preoteasa Maria.** **The first day of Church School is Sunday, September 28th.** Everyone is welcome! Providing vibrant and meaningful opportunities for our Youth to learn about their Orthodox Faith and traditions, and work and play together is key to ensuring that our Orthodox Faith and the community of St. Nicholas remains vital for generations to come. Pick up a Registration form at the candles.

**A MEMORIAL** will be held today for

### DATES TO REMEMBER

Sat, Sept 6 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry 9am-12pm  
Thurs, Sept 11 Pita Baking, 9:00 am  
Sat, Sept 13 Pita Dough Making, 9am-1pm  
Sun, Sept 14 Exaltation of Cross *Strict Fast*  
Mon, Sept 15 Parish Council, 6:30 pm  
Sun, Sept 21 stART on the Street Festival  
Sun, Sept 28 First Day of Religious Education

**34 GOLD STREET, SHREWSBURY, MA 01545-6238 ♦ VOICE: 508.845.0088 ♦ FAX: 508.845.8850**  
**E-MAIL: FRNICK@STNICHOLASCHURCH.ORG ♦ WEB: WWW.STNICHOLASCHURCH.ORG**

*A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas*

the servants of God **Constantine and Elizabeth Sotiropoulos**. *May their memory be eternal!*

**TODAY'S COFFEE HOUR** is sponsored in memory of **Dino and Betty Sotiropoulos** by their family. Coffee Hour

## HOLY TRINITY NEWS

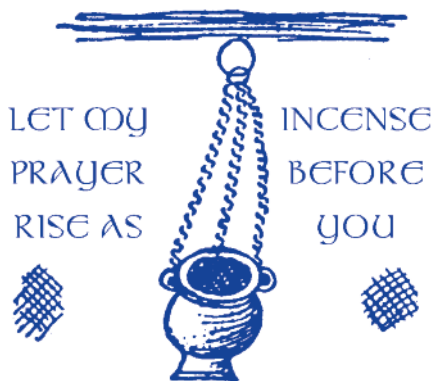
**SAVE THE DATE!** October 9, 2014. Holy Trinity's 8th **FOOD and WINE FEST** in conjunction with Holy Trinity's 20th Anniversary promises to be a great evening! This year's event will be at St. George Orthodox Cathedral. Look for more details!

**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.

## COMMUNITY NEWS

**STS CONSTANTINE & HELEN IN WEBSTER** will be holding it's annual Greek Festival **Saturday and Sunday, September 6-7**. For info: [www.schwebster.org/ministries/greek-festival](http://www.schwebster.org/ministries/greek-festival)

**NOTRE DAME ACADEMY** is holding an open house on **Thursday, Oct 2nd at 7:00 pm** for prospective students (young women grades 9-12). For info: [www.nda-worc.org](http://www.nda-worc.org), or call: 508-757-6200 x229.



### A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

**L**ORD OF ALL CREATION: We offer you praise and thanksgiving for all that you have done for us, from the creation of the universe and all its riches, to the brilliant salvation of our race that your Son accomplished in our very midst. This evening, we come before you to celebrate his mother's birthday, an event that stands on the border where shadows yield to light, where the new dispels the old, where we are finally united to realities and not just to signs and figures. For the sake of this wondrous woman whom you so favor, we beseech you to look favorably on us: Enable us to give birth to her Son in the spirit, just as surely as she gave birth to him in the flesh..

For you deserve all glory, honor, and worship, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages, amen.

## NAMEDAYS

### September 5

**St. Elizabeth the mother of St. John the Baptist**

Elizabeth Anderson  
Isabella Banks-Binici  
Elizabeth Florica Galeriu  
Lisa Mielnicki  
Karen Elizabeth Wilder

**The Holy Prophet Zachariah, father of St. John**

Zachary Spataro

### September 8

**The Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos**

Presvytera Maria Mossaides

### September 9

**The Holy Ancestors of God Joachim and Anna**

Ann Marie Chachi  
Ann Marie Clem  
Anna Maria Collins  
Ann Trakadas  
September 14

**The Exaltation of the Precious and Lifegiving Cross**

Stavri Tanacea

### September 17

**The Holy Martyr Faith, Daughter of St. Sophia**

Faith Mayer

**The Holy Martyr Sophia of Rome**

Sofia Apostol  
Sophia Amyra Apostola  
Sophia Banks-Binici  
Carol Fotos

### September 18

**The Holy Martyr Ariadna of Phrygia**

Ariana Sparages



## THE POWER OF THE CROSS

**T**HIS Sunday we prepare ourselves for the coming Feast of the Exaltation of the Precious Cross that is celebrated on September 14th. The Gospel lesson selected for this purpose is from St. John's Gospel (3:13-17). It is part of the discussion our Lord had with a Pharisee named Nikodemos, who was also a member of the Sanhedrin, the ruling Council of the Jewish nation at that time. Nikodemos, along with Joseph of Arimathea, would be the ones to bury Jesus after his Crucifixion.

Not wanting to be noticed, Nikodemos came to Jesus at night time. He perceived Jesus to be a "teacher who has come from God" (v. 2), but he had not truly come to understand who our Lord was. It is in this passage that we hear Jesus speak about being "born again" (v. 3). He knows that Nikodemos is beginning to understand, so He enlightens him distinguishing between being born from earth, and being born from above. He tells him he must be "born of the Spirit" (v. 8). Finally, Jesus gently reveals to him who He actually is. This is where the Gospel lesson for today begins.

Jesus says to him: "No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man" (v. 14). Then, in a way that it will only become clear to Nikodemos after Jesus' Resurrection, He speaks of His Crucifixion and the power it will have to save the world. "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life" (v. 14-15).

The reference here is to an incident in the desert where, after their liberation from Pharaoh and Egypt, the people of Israel, dissatisfied with their situation, complained against God and Moses (Numbers 21:5-9). God in his anger sent



poisonous serpents that bit the people. Many died. Repenting, the people came to Moses and asked him to pray to the Lord that this curse be taken away. The Lord told Moses to make an image of a serpent out of bronze and to lift it high on his staff. Anyone who had been bitten, if he looked upon the bronze serpent, would live.

This might seem a rather obscure reference, even for those who have studied the Scriptures. Here is what this means. Jesus is telling Nikodemos that this incident in the desert is a prefiguring, a "type," of the Crucifixion. God had sent the serpents as punishment. Then God tells Moses to use the very instrument of His punishment (the image of the serpent) as the means for healing and redemption. In the Lord's self-sacrifice on the Cross, God uses the very curse that had befallen humanity because of Adam's sin, namely death, as the means for our salvation. If we look up with faith at the Lord hanging on the wood of the Cross, we too will be healed and live.

Here we also need to understand a couple of more images. In many languages the word "tree" is used synonymously with wood. So wood, tree, and cross are oftentimes used interchangeably in liturgical hymns and prayers. What is especially significant here is the

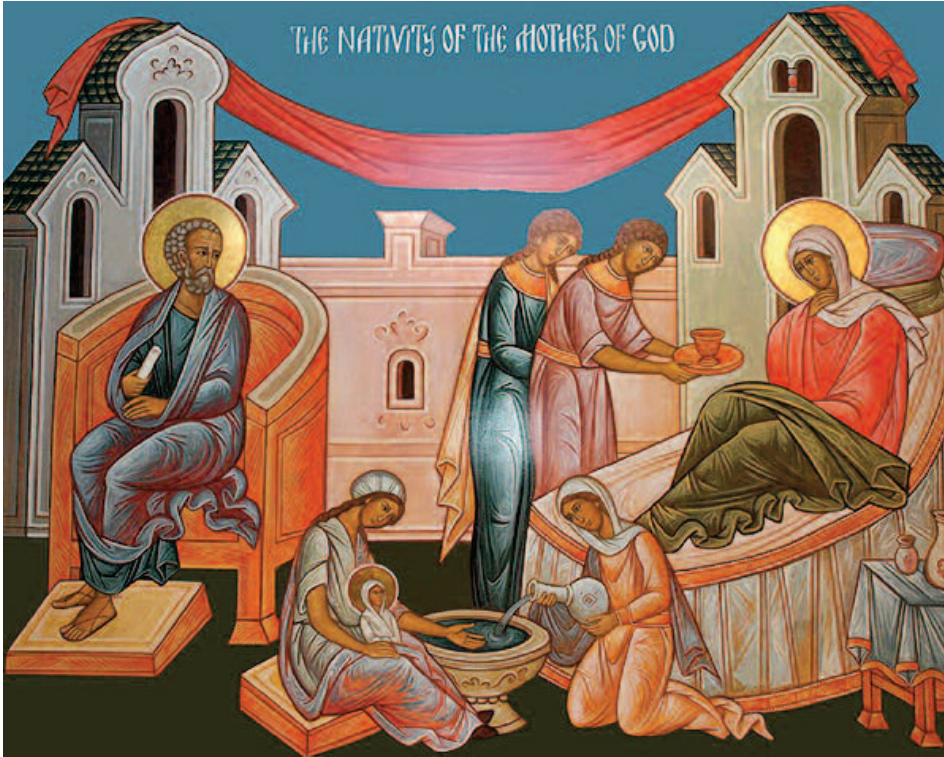
parallel drawn between the Tree in the Garden of Eden, whose fruit led to Adam and Eve's condition, and the poisonous snakes who were killing the children of Israel. The remedy for the snakes was an image of a snake lifted up as a sign of sacrifice and hope. The remedy for the sin in the Garden was the Son of Man lifted up on the Tree of the Cross.

We see this image of a snake (actually snakes) on a stick taken from this incident in the desert used today. The staff the bishop carries has two snakes wound together at the top separated by a Cross keeping them apart. Medicine uses a similar image of two snakes wrapped around a central pole. If you look it up you'll see it being explained as a Greek medical symbol attributed to the pagan god of healing, but if you know the Scriptures the meaning is unmistakable. This image of a snake healed and saved the children of Israel in the desert.

While these images given us are important and helpful, the verses with which this Gospel lesson ends are more important. They are a hopeful and prophetic set of passages, the most famous of which is: "for God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (v. 16). The persons who selected this passage wanted us to begin to understand *why* God sent His Son. They want us to reflect what the real significance of this event is as we witness His Cross being unearthed and lifted up.

God does not want us to die, but to live—forever. He does not consider sin the final word, but repentance. He offers us the Cross, like He did the serpent in the desert, as a way toward eternal life.

— Fr. Nicholas Apostola



**THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS**  
**SEPTEMBER 8TH**

**T**he Nativity of Our Most Holy Lady Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary: The Most Holy Virgin Mary was born at a time when people had reached such a degree of moral decay that it seemed altogether impossible to restore them. People often said that God must come into the world to restore faith and not permit the ruin of mankind.

The Son of God chose to take on human nature for the salvation of mankind, and chose as His Mother the All-Pure Virgin Mary, who alone was worthy to give birth to the Source of purity and holiness.

The Nativity of Our Most Holy Lady Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary is celebrated by the Church as a day of universal joy. Within the context of the Old and the New Testaments, the Most Blessed Virgin Mary was born on this radiant day, having been chosen before the ages by Divine Providence to bring about the Mystery of the Incarnation of the Word of God. She is revealed as the Mother of the Savior of the World, Our

Lord Jesus Christ.

The Most Holy Virgin Mary was born in the small city of Galilee, Nazareth. Her parents were Righteous Joachim of the tribe of the Prophet-King David, and Anna from the tribe of the First Priest Aaron. The couple was without child, since St Anna was barren.

Having reached old age, Joachim and Anna did not lose hope in God's mercy. They had strong faith that for God everything is possible, and that He would be able to overcome the barrenness of Anna even in her old age, as He had once overcome the barrenness of Sarah, spouse of the Patriarch Abraham. Sts Joachim and Anna vowed to dedicate the child which the Lord might give them, to the service of God in the Temple.

Childlessness was considered among the Hebrew nation as a Divine punishment for sin, and therefore the righteous Sts Joachim and Anna had to endure abuse from their own countrymen. On one of the feastdays at the

Temple in Jerusalem the elderly Joachim brought his sacrifice to offer to God, but the High Priest would not accept it, considering him to be unworthy since he was childless.

St Joachim in deep grief went into the wilderness, and there he prayed with tears to the Lord for a child. St Anna wept bitterly when she learned what had happened at the Jerusalem Temple. Never once did she complain against the Lord, but rather she prayed to ask God's mercy on her family.

The Lord fulfilled her petitions when the pious couple had attained to extreme old age and prepared themselves by virtuous life for a sublime calling: to be the parents of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, the future Mother of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Archangel Gabriel brought Joachim and Anna the joyous message that their prayers were heard by God, and of them would be born a most blessed daughter Mary, through Whom would come the Salvation of all the World.

The Most Holy Virgin Mary surpassed in purity and virtue not only all mankind, but also the angels. She was manifest as the living Temple of God, so the Church sings in its festal hymns: "the East Gate... bringing Christ into the world for the salvation of our souls" (2nd Stikhera on "Lord, I Have Cried", Tone 6).

The Nativity of the Theotokos marks the change of the times when the great and comforting promises of God for the salvation of the human race from slavery to the devil are about to be fulfilled. This event has brought to earth the grace of the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom of Truth, piety, virtue and everlasting life. The Theotokos is revealed to all of us by grace as a merciful Intercessor and Mother, to Whom we have recourse with filial devotion.