

# ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN

## JANUARY 25, 2015

### THIS WEEK'S NEWS

**THE BLESSING OF HOMES AT THEOPHANY CONTINUES.** You should have received a notice with a specific date and time. If there is a more convenient time for you, or if you didn't receive a notice, please e-mail (FrNick@StNicholasChurch.org) or call Fr. Nick (508-335-7378) to arrange it.

**PITA BAKING**, this **Thursday, January 29th at 9:00 am**. We need to re-build our inventory for the coming holidays. Everyone's help is welcome. Questions? Please see **Chris Toda**. No experience necessary!

**BREAD BAKING LESSONS.** Presvytera Maria will be holding **bread baking sessions** in February and March with two objectives. The first is to **teach** people how to make holiday breads and koulourakia. The second is to **build our inventory** for the upcoming Easter holidays. (Learning how to bake other pastries will be schedule later.) If you'd like to both learn and help our parish, please contact her at: mzm@net1plus.com. Once she's got a sense of who's available on which Saturdays, we'll set the dates.

**A NEW PARISH COUNCIL WILL BE ELECTED IN FEBRUARY**, (the two-year term of the Parish Council expires

#### **GREETERS TEAM 1:**

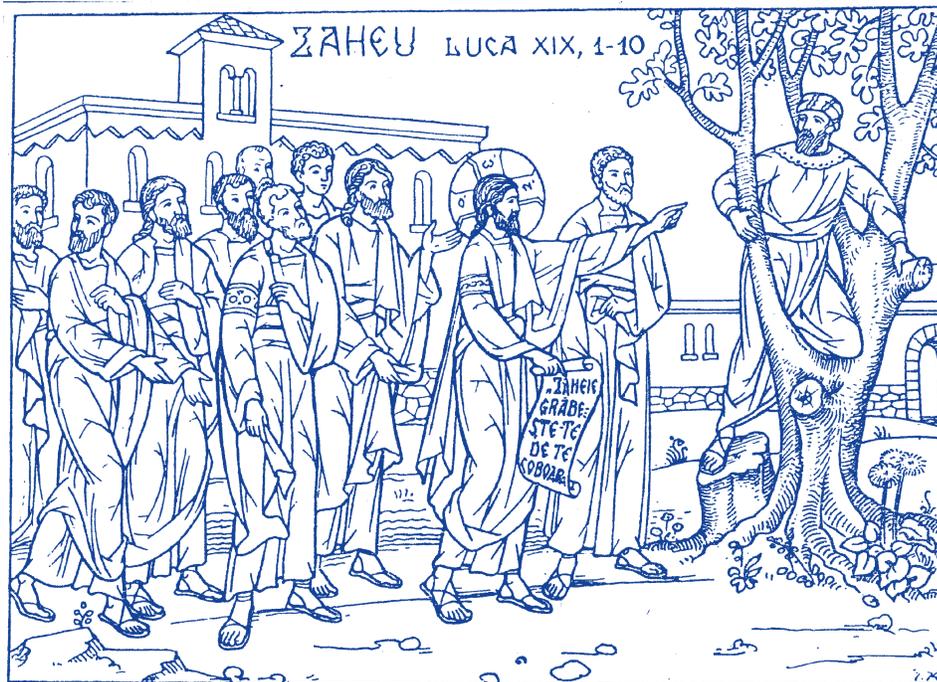
V. GERALD BELBA & CĂLIN GALERIU

#### **COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP CREW D:**

ILEANA & SEAN FAHEY,

DIMITRI SAFFRON, CHRISTOS SPYROU

**ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED**



### THE THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**ST. GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN & ST. BRETANION, BISHOP OF TOMIS**

EPISTLE: 1 TIMOTHY 4:9-15 ☩ GOSPEL: LUKE 19:1-10

(THE CONVERSION OF ZACCHAEUS)

TONE 8 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL 11

this year). Please consider offering a stewardship of your time in this important ministry. We also are asking for people to serve on other Parish committees, if you'd like to focus your efforts in a particular area or project. However you'd like to serve, please speak with **Fr. Nick**.

**COFFEE HOUR SPONSORS ARE NEEDED** for the coming weeks. Please speak with Presvytera Maria if you

would like to sponsor one.

**LAST WEEK WE CELEBRATED** a one year memorial for the servant of God **Dr. Victor Lorian**. May his memory be eternal!

**TODAY WE CELEBRATE A MEMORIAL SERVICE** for **Victoria Chachi**, fallen asleep two years, *May her memory be*

*eternal!*

**TODAY'S COFFEE HOUR** is sponsored by in memory of **Victoria Chachi** by her family.

### HOLY TRINITY NEWS

**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.

#### DATES TO REMEMBER

Thurs, Jan 29 Pita Baking, 9:00 am  
 Sat, Feb 7 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry  
 Sat, Feb 14 Sat of the Souls, Liturgy 10am  
 Fri, Feb 20 Mustard Seed Meal, 5 pm  
 Mon, Feb 23 Great Lent Begins  
 Wed, Feb 25 PreSanctified Lit at St. Nick's 6pm  
 Sun, April 12 Great and Holy Pascha

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A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas

## NAMEDAYS

**January 12**

***St. Tatiana the Martyr of Rome***

Tatiana Sofia Karadimitriou

**January 17**

***St. Anthony the Great***

Anthony Theodore Christo

Scott Anthony Maynard

Anthony Rucho

Tony Nicholas Trakadas

**January 18**

***St. Athanasios***

***Patriarch of Alexandria***

Thanas Lolo

Arthur Peterson

**January 22**

***The Holy Apostle Timothy***

Rev. Fr. Timothy Lowe

Timothy Rucho

**January 25**

***St. Gregory the Theologian***

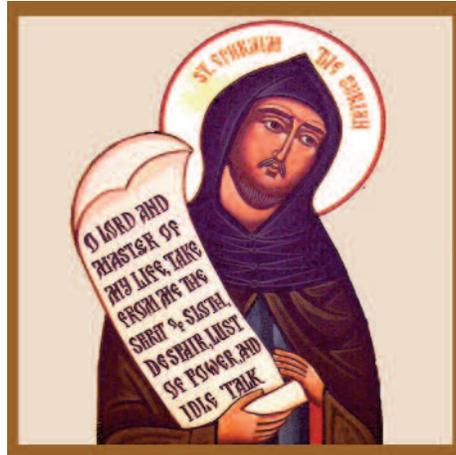
Rev. Fr. Gregory Christakos

Dr. Gregory Tsongalis

**January 28**

***St. Ephraim the Syrian***

Rev. Fr. Ephraim Peters



**ST. EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN**

**JANUARY 28TH**

**S**aint Ephraim was born in Nisibis of Mesopotamia some time about the year 306, and in his youth was the disciple of Saint James, Bishop of Nisibis, one of the 318 Fathers at the First Ecumenical Council. Ephraim lived in Nisibis, practicing a severe ascetical life and increasing in holiness, until 363, the year in which Julian the Apostate was slain in his war against the Persians, and his successor Jovian surrendered Nisibis to them. Ephraim then made his dwelling in Edessa, where he found many heresies to do battle with. He waged an especial war against Bardaisan; this gnostic had written many hymns propagating his errors, which by their sweet melodies became popular and enticed souls away from the truth. Saint Ephraim, having received from God a singular gift of eloquence, turned Bardaisan's own weapon against him, and wrote a multitude of hymns to be chanted by choirs of women, which set forth the true doctrines, refuted heretical error, and praised the contests of the Martyrs.

Of the multitude of sermons, commentaries, and hymns that Saint Ephraim wrote, many were translated into Greek in his own lifetime. Sozomen says that Ephraim "Surpassed the most

approved writers of Greece," observing that the Greek writings, when translated into other tongues, lose most of their original beauty, but Ephraim's works "are no less admired when read in Greek than when read in Syriac" (Eccl. Hist., Book 111, 16). Saint Ephraim was ordained deacon, some say by Saint Basil the Great, whom Sozomen said "was a great admirer of Ephraim, and was astonished at his erudition." Saint Ephraim was the first to make the poetic expression of hymnody and song a vehicle of Orthodox theological teachings, constituting it an integral part of the Church's worship; he may rightly be called the first and greatest hymnographer of the Church, who set the pattern for these who followed him, especially Saint Romanos the Melodist. Because of this he is called the "Harp of the Holy Spirit." Jerome says that his writings were read in some churches after the reading of the Scriptures, and adds that once he read a Greek translation of one of Ephraim's works, "and recognized, even in translation, the incisive power of his lofty genius" (De vir. ill., ch. CXV).

Shortly before the end of his life, a famine broke out in Edessa, and Saint Ephraim left his cell to rebuke the rich for not sharing their goods with the poor. The rich answered that they knew no one to whom they could entrust their goods. Ephraim asked them, "What do you think of me?" When they confessed their reverence for him, he offered to distribute their alms, to which they agreed. He himself cared with his own hands for many of the sick from the famine, and so crowned his life with mercy and love for neighbor. Saint Ephraim reposed in peace, according to some in the year 373, according to others, 379.

### A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

**P**RESERVE US FROM RASHNESS, LORD GOD OF GENTLENESS, that we may not be taken captive by ignorance, and show us how to nourish gentleness of spirit that we may attain knowledge, for you love the gentle but the rash you banish from your presence. Show us how to flee irascibility so that we may live in gentleness and without fear.

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

## TODAY SALVATION HAS COME TO THIS HOUSE

**T**HIS week's Gospel reading is the story of the conversion of Zacchæus, the Tax Collector (Luke 19:1-10). This encounter takes place in Jericho, following on the healing of the Blind Man (Luke 18:35-43) which occurred just on the outskirts of the city as Jesus was making his way into Jericho. Although the Evangelist Luke doesn't say so explicitly, it would be fair to assume that Zacchæus had heard of the miracle and was curious, like so many others, to see this Jesus.

St. Luke tells us a few things about Zacchæus. He's a chief tax collector and he's rich (v. 2). From what we know about how tax collectors operated in those days, we might infer that at least some of his wealth was ill-gotten gain. He also tells us that he is short (v. 3). As Jesus is walking into Jericho, crowd begins to form and people are struggling to get a glimpse of him. Because of the crowd it is difficult for Zacchæus to see Jesus as he passes, so he climbs a sycamore tree. Sycamore trees have short, fat trunks and branches that spread broad and wide, making it relatively easy for someone to climb up and gain an advantage of a few feet. Nonetheless, it must have been something to see — a prominent official climbing a tree, like a child.

When Jesus gets to where Zacchæus is he says to him: "Zacchæus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today" (v. 5). Zacchæus is overwhelmed. He hurries down and welcomes him with joy. People in the crowd began to grumble complaining that Jesus was going to Zacchæus' house, the house of a sinner, but Zacchæus isn't cowered. He turns to Jesus and says, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay



back four times as much" (v. 8).

St. John Chrysostom draws our attention to the way in which Zacchæus expresses his repentance. Chrysostom says that it isn't enough to simply restore what was stolen, but reparations are a necessary part of making amends. In this case Zacchæus says that he will pay back four times as much. Chrysostom uses this example to challenge us. He asks, if when we bring our sins before God asking for forgiveness, do we follow the example of Zacchæus? Do we offer to repay our debt four times as much?

Chrysostom presents another interesting analogy. He observes that when someone hosts an important guest the first impulse is to clean and redecorate and fill their houses with fine and even luxuriant furnishings. Zacchæus, Chrysostom says, "decorates" his house with this profound act of repentance.

When we bless a new home, the service prescribed uses this very same Gospel reading, illustrating what it means to ask Christ to come into our house. The prayer says: "O Lord, who

condescended to enter under the roof of Zacchæus, bringing salvation to him and his whole house ... keep safe from harm those who dwell here ..."

In a prayer written by St. John Chrysostom read when preparing for Holy Communion we say, "O Lord my God, I know that I am not worthy that you should come under the roof of the house of my soul, for all is desolate and fallen in ruins ..." In these moving words, that bring to mind the faith of the Centurion (Matthew 8:8), we can also find the image of Zacchæus, and his act of repentance. We are offered his example for us to model and follow.

When Jesus sees Zacchæus' repentance, he says, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham" (v. 9). Some early Fathers speculated from the way in which Jesus said this, that Zacchæus might have been a Gentile. Others say that the Lord is clarifying what makes each of us a true son or daughter of Abraham: faith in the Living God. Whichever is the actual case, it is love of God and our repentance that makes us true children of Abraham.

Zacchæus followed Jesus until the day he died. He was ordained Bishop of Caesarea in Palestine by the Apostle Peter. Later, during one of the persecutions of the late first century, he suffered martyrdom. The story of Zacchæus' great act of repentance comes alive for us each time we read it in Holy Scriptures, and especially when we put his example into practice in our own lives.

**FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA**