

# ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN

## FEBRUARY 1, 2015

### THIS WEEK'S NEWS

#### THE TRIODION BEGINS TODAY.

The Triodion is the Church's hymnbook for the period from now, through Great Lent, until Pascha. The next three weeks are meant to prepare us for Great Lent that begins on Monday, February 23rd. This coming week is totally fast-free.

#### 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.

#### FOOD PANTRY.

Help is needed to staff the Orthodox Food Center **THIS Saturday, January 31st, from 9 am - noon.** It is a "5th Saturday" and our responsibility this time around. Also, please keep in mind **we are still responsible as well for NEXT Saturday, February 7th,** from 9 am - noon, which is our regular monthly Saturday. About 4 people are needed. Likewise, donations of food are always needed, and may be dropped off at the Food Pantry housed at St. Spyridon Cathedral. If you can help in this worthwhile ministry, please speak with

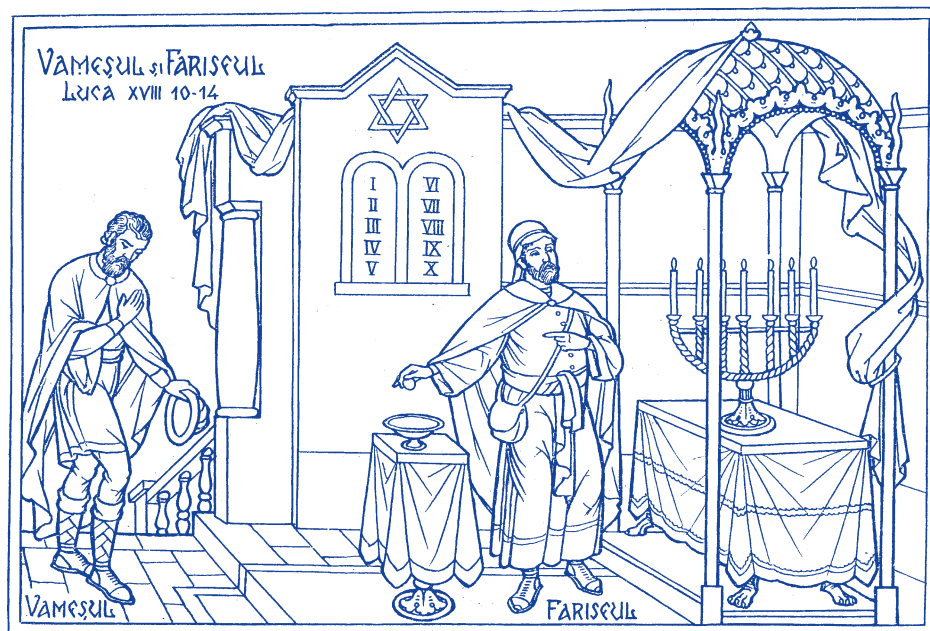
#### GREETERS TEAM 2:

MARY ANNA DYMEK &  
MARGARITE LANDRY

#### COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP CREW A:

MARGARITE LANDRY, FLAVIA GURAN,  
CHRISTINE MASTERJOHN  
& KATINA COCAVESSIS

ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED



### THE THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

#### THE TRIODION BEGINS

EPISTLE: 2 TIMOTHY 3:10-15 ☩ GOSPEL: LUKE 18:10-14

(THE PARABLE OF THE PUBLICAN AND THE PHARISEE)

tone 1 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL 1

Lisa Mielnicki or Nicole Apostola.

**PITA BAKING**, this **Thursday, February 5th 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](mailto: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 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

#### DATES TO REMEMBER

Sun, Feb 1 Triodion Begins  
Thurs, Feb 5 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

would like to sponsor one.

**TODAY WE CELEBRATE A MEMORIAL SERVICE** for **Athena Tsoules**, fallen asleep one year, *May her memory be eternal!*

**TODAY'S COFFEE HOUR** is sponsored by in memory of **Haralambos Kehayoglou** by his daughter Sofia Apostol and family.

## COMMUNITY NEWS

**Notre Dame Academy** is inviting all current seventh grade and transfer students to spend an academic day there. For more information call: 508-757-6200 x229 or email: admissions@nda-worc.org. NDA is a Catholic college prep high school for young women.

## 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.



## THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR IN THE TEMPLE FEBRUARY 2ND

**W**hen the most pure Mother and Ever-Virgin Mary's forty days of purification had been fulfilled, she took her first-born Son to Jerusalem on this, the fortieth day after His birth, that she might present Him in the temple according to the Law of Moses, which teaches that every first-born male child be dedicated to God, and also that she might offer the sacrifice of a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons, as required by the Law (Luke 2:22-24; Exod. 13:2; Lev. 12:6-8). On this same day, a just and devout man, the greatly aged Symeon, was also present in the temple, being guided by the Holy Spirit. For a long time, this man had been awaiting the salvation of God, and he had been informed by divine revelation that he would not die until he beheld the Lord's Christ. Thus, when he beheld Him at that time and took Him up into his aged arms, he gave glory to God, singing: "Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, ..." And he confessed that he would close his eyes joyfully, since he had seen the Light of revelation for the

## A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

**O** GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST: When your divine Son was brought into the temple, carried along with the offerings to be sacrificed, the blessed Simeon received him from the arms of his mother. The elder's joy, however, was tempered by apprehension, for, with the eyes of the spirit, he saw the powers of heaven in attendance, glorifying the infant saviour with great awe and reverence. Just as the divinity of your Son did not consume the elder, do not let it consume us, either, though we deserve it for our indifferent, careless, and fickle way of living. Rather, as we prepare for the night that quickly approaches, grant us forgiveness of our sins, and let peace and tranquillity restore our tired souls and bodies.

By the grace and mercy and love of your only Son, with whom you are blest, together with your all holy, good, and life-giving Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.



nations and the Glory of Israel (Luke 2:25-32). From ancient times, the Holy Church has retained this tradition of the churching of the mother and new-born child on the fortieth day and of the reading of prayers of purification.

# GOD, BE MERCIFUL TO ME A SINNER!

**T**HIS week we begin the Triodion Period. The Triodion is the Church's hymnbook for the Lenten season. From now until Pascha we will read and sing from it to supplement the hymns typically sung in Vespers and Matins. The Gospel lesson for this first Sunday of the Triodion is Jesus' parable of the Publican (tax collector) and the Pharisee (Luke 18:9-14). It is a story showing us the innermost thoughts swirling in the hearts and minds of these two people. It is a story of truth and self-deception. It is a story intended to prepare us for the season of repentance.

At its core it is a very simple story. The Lord tells us that "two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector" (v. 10). The Pharisee prayed in the usual manner: he lifted his eyes and hands toward Heaven and then began to recount his good works. He prayed, "God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income" (v. 11-12). By contrast, the tax collector didn't even lift his head up. Bowing low he prayed, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" (v. 13) Jesus tells those listening that it was the tax collector who was justified in the eyes of God, not the Pharisee. No doubt that when he said this the Lord shocked those who heard him.

On one level the Pharisee was telling the truth. He did try to the best of his ability to follow the Law, that is, the rules of pious behavior outlined by Moses. However the Lord is asking his listeners to go beyond external behavior; he wants people to look to the heart of the matter, to look into their own hearts. This is the meaning of "all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted" (v. 14). We always stand on spiritual quicksand when we think that we are better than we actually are.



This story is a parable. It is designed to paint the picture not with subtle, but rather, with strong lines so that we might more easily understand the meaning. We recognize that the Pharisee is exhibiting a certain kind of pridefulness and the tax collector a particular form of humility. The challenge for us is to recognize both of these characteristics in ourselves. How might we avoid the pride of the one while cultivating the humility of the other?

As only St. John Chrysostom could observe, he says that in a way the tax collector is not humbling himself, but rather simply acknowledging the truth. He is stating the facts. He is honestly assessing himself. He recognizes his sin. The first step toward understanding humility is a deep, perhaps even brutally honest assessment of yourself. No delusions, no illusions, and no excuses. It is a very difficult thing to do.

St. John Chrysostom offers us something else to consider. He says that if someone calls us "names" we shouldn't react at all. On some level and in some way the accusation is more than

likely true. This may in fact be the very reason we react. We recognize a certain truth in it, and are embarrassed.

Of course this honest assessment works both ways. It is false humility not to acknowledge the gifts that we have and the good that we do. Sinners we may be, but we are not wholly without redeeming qualities. What the Pharisee said was not a lie. He did fast. He did tithe. His problem was that he compared himself to other people, and in so doing he felt as though he were better than they. Yet, to recognize that we have a particular gift, or to feel good about the fact that we've helped someone is, if we are careful, a way to grow further in goodness and holiness. But, to brag about a gift we have, or some good we've done, is self-serving and prideful. We understand this best when we see it displayed in someone else. The real challenge is to see it in ourselves.

Of course there is another dimension to consider, namely the source of our gifts. If we are gifted at something — say as a superb athlete, clever in business, or able to sing like an angel — are we truly responsible for that gift? Are we really to be credited? Or, is it but an example of the many things God has given us, a talent that we improve upon? If we do good, help the poor, visit the sick, should we broadcast it about, even to ourselves? Or, should we rejoice in the power given us by God to assist another?

As we prepare ourselves for our Lenten journey toward Pascha, our first task is to make this sort of spiritual self-assessment; to look into our hearts, honestly; to acknowledge our strengths and our failings; and finally, to have the courage to make this simple prayer to our Heavenly Father: God, be merciful to me a sinner!

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA