

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN MARCH 1, 2015

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY celebration will be held, **today, Sunday, March 1st at St. George Cathedral at 6:00 pm.** His Grace Bishop John will be the prime celebrant together with the other clergy of the local Orthodox parishes. Please join us in this beautiful Lenten service.

PITA DOUGH BAKING, this **Thursday March 5th** at 9:00 am. Also, we are looking for a large dough rolling session this coming Saturday, March 7th from 9:00 am to noon. The weather has taken its toll on our baking schedule, so any and all help is desperately needed. Questions? Please talk to Chris Toda.

THE PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGY sponsored by the Council of Eastern Orthodox Churches will be at St. Spyridon Cathedral on this coming Wednesday, March 4th at 6:00 pm.

FOOD PANTRY. Help is needed to staff our monthly responsibility at the Orthodox Food Center **next Saturday, March 7th, from 9 am - noon.** About 4 people are needed. Likewise, donations of food are always needed, and may be dropped off at the Food Pantry housed

GREETERS TEAM 2:
MARY ANNA DYMEK &
MARGARITE LANDRY

COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP CREW A:
MARGARITE LANDRY, CHRISTINE
MASTERJOHN & KATINA COCAVESSIS

ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED



THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY ☩ FIRST SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT
APOSTOLIC READING: HEBREWS 11:24-26; 32-40 ☩ GOSPEL: JOHN 1:43-51
(JESUS CALLS PHILIP AND NATHANAE)
TONE 5 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL 5

at St. Spyridon Cathedral. If you can help in this worthwhile ministry, please speak with **Lisa Mielnicki or Nicole Apostola.**

VESPERS AND CONFESSION will be held each Saturday evening at 5:00 pm during Great Lent. Fr. Nick will be available for confession each week after Vespers, and before Vespers by appointment (call or e-mail Fr. Nick).

CONGRATULATIONS to the newly illumined servant of God **Elizabeth Grace Cavanaugh**, who was baptized last Saturday, February 21st. Her joy is shared by her parents, **Andy and Jackie Cavanaugh**, and big brothers, **Thomas and William. God grant them all every blessing!**

TODAY'S COFFEE HOUR is sponsored in memory of **Stela Shpira** by the **Tanacea 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

Sun March 1	Sun of Orthodoxy Vespers, 6pm
Wed, March 4	PreSanctified Lit at St. Spyridon, 6pm
Thurs, March 5	Pita Baking, 9am
Sat, March 7	Staff Orthodox Food Pantry Pita Baking, 9am Vespers/Confession, 5pm
Wed, March 11	PreSanctified Lit at St. George, 6pm
Sat, April 4	Staff Orthodox Food Pantry
Sun, April 12	Great and Holy Pascha

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

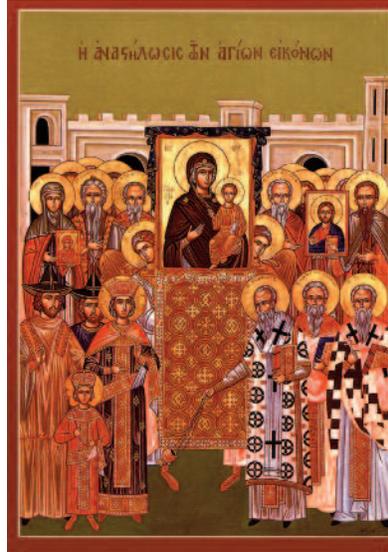
A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas

A LENTEN PRAYER

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

O GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST: As we move, day by day, through these weeks of fasting, discipline, and self-control, help us to reflect on the season and its meaning: The days of each week are like us, runners in a contest, and the goal, a place in eternal life. Throughout this time, we are given anew the opportunity to struggle successfully, and, in the end, whether we succeed or fail will be only too clear. To the holy days of this divinely inspired time we add the week of the saving passion of your Son, together with holy and great Saturday. Thus, in a mere tenth of the year, we are given the opportunity to change ourselves in earnest, so that we may attain eternal life. Help us, therefore, O Lord, to fight a good fight and win the crown of incorruptible life.

For you are good and full of love for us, O God, and we give you glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages, amen.



SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY

FOR more than one hundred years the Church of Christ was troubled by the persecution of the Iconoclasts of evil belief, beginning in the reign of Leo the Isaurian (717-741) and ending in the reign of Theophilus (829-842). After Theophilus's death, his widow the Empress Theodora (celebrated Feb. 11), together with the Patriarch Methodius (June 14), established Orthodoxy anew. This ever-memorable Queen venerated the icon of the Mother of God in the

presence of the Patriarch Methodius and the other confessors and righteous men, and openly cried out these holy words: "If anyone does not offer relative worship to the holy icons, not adoring them as though they were gods, but venerating them out of love as images of the archetype, let him be anathema." Then with common prayer and fasting during the whole first week of the Forty-day Fast, she asked God's forgiveness for her husband. After this, on the first Sunday of the Fast, she and her son, Michael the Emperor, made a procession with all the clergy and people and restored the holy icons, and again adorned the Church of Christ with them. This is the holy deed that all we the Orthodox commemorate today, and we call this radiant and venerable day the Sunday of Orthodoxy, that is, the triumph of true doctrine over heresy.

NAMEDAYS

February 28

St. Theodore of Tyre

Theodore Belba
Theodora Collins
Theodhoraq Lolo
Teodor Nedelcu
Theodore Peter Tonna
Theodore Russell Tonna
Derek Wilder

March 3

Henricus, hermit martyr in Norway

Eric Lolo
Erik Mayer

March 9

The Holy Forty Martyrs of Sebaste

Mircea Nedelcu

March 17

St. Alexios the Man of God

Alex John Johnson
Alex Leo Toda

St. Patrick, Enlightener of Ireland

Padraic Donnchadh Peterson
Patricia Thanas

THE PRAYER OF ST. EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN

O Lord and master of my life! Dispel from me the spirit of discouragement and slothfulness, of ambition and vain talk!

Instead, give me the spirit of prudence and humility, of patience and charity.

Yes, my king and Lord, let me look at my own sins and refrain from judging others: For you are blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

I SAW YOU UNDER THE FIG TREE

ON THIS first Sunday of Lent we remember that event in ad 843 when the veneration of the holy images was again allowed and the 120-year civil war over their role ended. The ad 843 restoration of icons was an affirmation of the decision of the Seventh Ecumenical Council held in ad 787. Since that time the proper place and use of holy images in our worship and devotion has been defined in such a way that all understand that icons are not idols; we worship God alone, not images.

At first glance today's Gospel reading (John 1:43-51) would seem to have little to do with the veneration of icons. It is the story of the Apostle Nathanael's call and confession, and the Evangelist John appropriately places it at the very start of his Gospel.

Jesus is assembling his disciples. The day before Jesus' encounter with Nathanael, two disciples of John the Baptist were standing next to him as Jesus passed by. John said to them: "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" (John 1:36) They immediately followed him. One of these was Andrew who then went and got his brother Simon Peter, and brought him to meet Jesus.

The next day Jesus found Philip and said to him, very simply: "Follow me" (1:43). And he did. Then he went to find his friend Nathanael and told him: "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth" (1:45).

Philip knew Nathanael to be a careful and — as St. John Chrysostom describes him — exact man. He was expecting a skeptical response that's why he cited Moses and the prophets. Nathanael didn't disappoint, but even in his back-handed response — "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" — he showed his reluctance to offend by not directly contradicting Philip.

When they came toward Jesus, the Lord said: "Here is truly an Israelite in



whom there is no deceit!" (1:47) Nathanael wanted to know how Jesus knew him. He tells him: "I saw you under the fig tree, before Philip called you" (1:48).

We don't know what Nathanael was doing or thinking while alone under the fig tree. Some speculate that he was praying, perhaps even asking God to hasten the Messiah's coming. It doesn't really matter. The point is that it was deeply private. Only Nathanael and God knew. However, when he heard Jesus' words Nathanael knew that he had access to his heart. Jesus *knew* Nathanael.

This is why Nathanael responded with a solemn confession: "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" (1:49) Nathanael's declaration is similar to Peter's — "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16) — but contrasts with his in one significant way. While the words are almost the same, each understands Jesus differently. Peter's confession springs from his having lived and traveled with Jesus, his having witnessed miracles and wonders. He declares Jesus to be God. Nathanael marvels and rejoices at the Lord's words, but sees him as a man, the King of Israel.

This becomes evident in the differ-

ent ways the Lord responded to them. To Peter he said: "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood have not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven" (Matthew 16:17). And to Nathanael he said: "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these" (John 1:50). Here is where we can return to the subject of the holy icons.

The heart of the iconoclasts' argument was that images were warping the understanding of who Christ was and is: the Son of the living God. By the ways in which many were using the images, they were distorting the true significance of Christ's coming. They were stuck on material representations.

The response of the icon supporters was that the image was just that: a representation. The language used to distinguish the "original" from the "copy" became official doctrine: we *worship* God only, while we only *venerate* saints and images. The Church saw then, as it sees now, the vital need to affirm the actual physical incarnation of the Son of God in the human we know as Jesus of Nazareth. At the same time, we also need to affirm that God is totally beyond any kind of physical representation. Put another way, Nathanael's witness springs from an outward experience, a miracle. Peter's declaration reveals the Lord's very nature.

One favorite way the Lord chose to describe himself was "the Son of Man," a reference to a vision the Prophet Daniel had of the Messiah (Daniel 7:13). In this phrase the Lord captures his dual nature: God and human; the Mediator between us and heaven. If the icons are truly windows that allow us to peer into heaven, we should treasure them and venerate them, even as we long to be in that place they reveal to us.

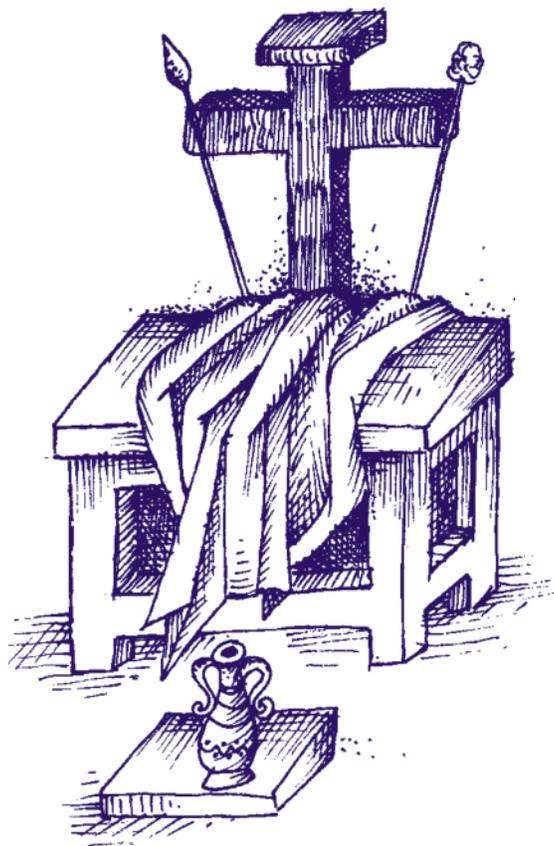
— FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA

PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGIES 2015

Wednesday, February 25, 2015
St. Nicholas Church

Wednesday, March 4, 2015
St. Spyridon Cathedral

Wednesday, March 11, 2015
St. George Cathedral



Wednesday, March 18, 2015
St. Mary's Assumption

Wednesday, March 25, 2015
St. George Cathedral

Wednesday, April 1, 2015
St. Spyridon Cathedral

Each Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts will begin at 6:00 p.m. The faithful should prepare themselves for Holy Communion in the usual way: prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and regular confession. There will be a modest 'pot-luck' lenten meal offered after the Liturgy. People are encouraged to bring something to share with others.