

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN JANUARY 3, 2016

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

LITURGY FOR THE FEAST OF THEOPHANY with the Great Blessing of Water will be celebrated **Tuesday evening, January 5th, at 6:00 pm** starting with Great Vespers with the Liturgy of St. Basil following. Royal Hours will be said on Tuesday afternoon at 3:00 pm. Services on Theophany day, January 6th will be held at Holy Trinity at 9:30 am.

THE BLESSING OF HOMES AT THEOPHANY will begin Thursday, January 7th and continue throughout January. Fr. Nick will be sending you a notice with a specific date and time, but if you have a preference, please contact him by e-mail (frnick@stnicholaschurch.org) or on his cell phone: 508-335-7378.

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 Lisa Mielnicki or Nicole Apostola. Our next Saturday is February 6th.

THE 2016 CHURCH CALENDARS in both English and Romanian are available at the Candles. Please consider making a donation to cover the costs!

COFFEE HOUR SPONSORS ARE NEEDED for the coming weeks. Please speak with Presvytera Maria if you would like to sponsor one.

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

Check out Holy Trinity's December 2015 Newsletter at htnr.net on the front page!

GREETERS TEAM 1:
V. GERALD BELBA & MARGARITE LANDRY

COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP CREW D:
ILIANA & SEAN FAHEY,
DIMITRI SAFFRON,
CHRISTOS & SPIRO SPYROU

ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED

Want to directly help residents of Holy Trinity with daytime events?

Small donations for events at Holy Trinity are:

- * Sunday AM Dunkin Donuts for one floor - \$75.00
- * Soda Cart for one floor - 475.00
- * Ice Cream truck visit - \$250.00
- * Various local bus trips for 6 to 8 residents - \$250.00
- * Afternoon music entertainment - \$150.00
- * Flowers for dining room -

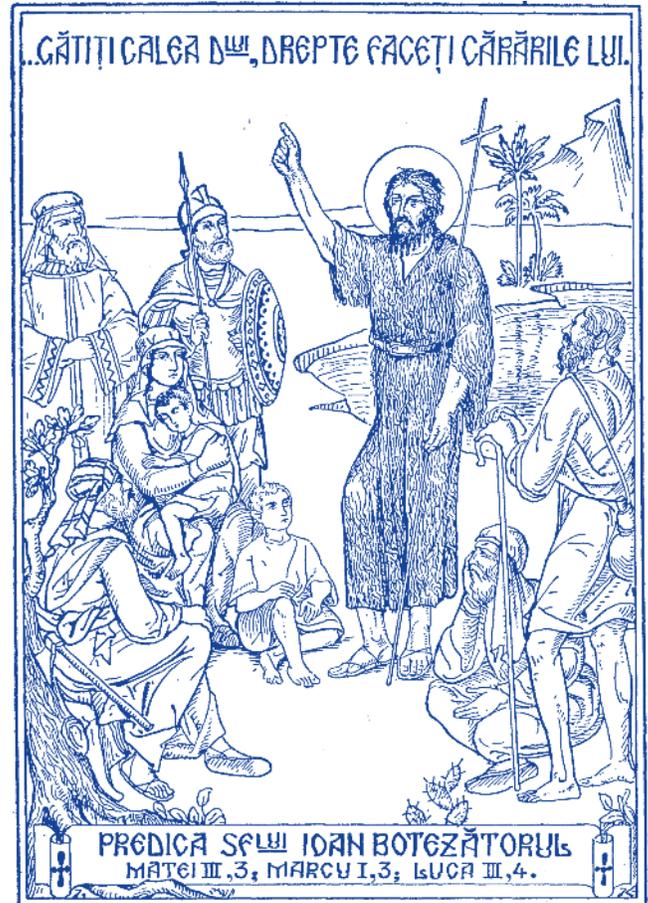
\$40.00/dozen, 2 times/ month

- * Music Therapy Resident lessons - \$50.00/hr.

Donations can be made by contacting The Holy Trinity Activities Director, Tina Metras at 508-752-1000.

DATES TO REMEMBER

- Thurs, Jan 5 Royal Hours, 3:00 pm
Vespers Lit of St. Basil, 6:00 pm
with Great Blessing of Water
- Fri, Jan 10 Sun after Theophany, Liturgy 10 am
- Sat, Feb 6 Orthodox Food Pantry, 9am-12pm
- May 1 Great and Holy Pascha



THE SUNDAY BEFORE THEOPHANY

EPISTLE: 2 TIMOTHY 4:5-8 ☩ GOSPEL: MARK 1:1-8

TONE 6 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL 9

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A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas

HOLY TRINITY HOSPICE offers exceptional care for individuals facing serious illnesses and those at the end of life. It provides individualized care for loved ones in their place of residence, whether that be at home, in an assisted living or at a nursing facility. Holy Trinity Hospice would be honored to help through your difficult time. If you would like further information, please call our office at 508-791-8200 and ask for the Hospice Director, Beth Miller or the Community Liaison, Ursula Hanus.



A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

O LORD AND MASTER! Source and origin of life and immortality! Designer and creator of all that is visible and invisible, of the seasons and of the times, who keep everything in existence, directing all things by your unfathomable power and wisdom! We come to give thanks to you for the year that has come to a close. And we entreat you, bountiful Lord: With your grace and light, bless the year we now begin. In your great love for us, grace us with all that we need for the coming year. Give us the strength and the wisdom to live each day as it comes, in peace and without fear, fortified by the knowledge that you are with us, and strengthened by the strength that only you can give. Watch over your church throughout the world, give peace to all people, and have mercy on this world of yours.

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

NAMEDAYS

January 1

St. Basil the Great

William Dino Cavanaugh
William Cocavessis
Bryan Donabed
William Keimig
Vasia Lolo
Vasilika Lolo
William Polymeros
Valarie Stamoulis
Vasilika Tanko
William Tsoules

January 6

The Holy Theophany of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Francis Polymeros
Jordan Sparages

January 7

The Holy Prophet and Forerunner

John the Baptist

Rev. Fr. John Daly
Nița Dumitriu
John Ermilio
Sean Fahey
Ian Mayer
John David Thoren

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

THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS

THIS is the Sunday before Theophany — the Baptism of Jesus. While many of us may think the beginning verses of the Gospel are about the Lord's birth and his early days, actually most of the Evangelists begin the "Good News" with John the Baptist. This is because John is the Prophet of the Savior's coming, his "Forerunner." Even St. Matthew who begins his Gospel with the Lord's genealogy and birth, follows immediately with the account of Jesus' baptism by the hand of John.

The Gospel lesson for this Sunday is from St Mark 1:1-8 that starts with a reference to the Prophet Isaiah, who speaks of the one who will prepare the Messiah's way: "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight'" (Mark 1:2-3; cf. Is 40:3). St. Mark makes it clear from the outset that John the Baptist is the Forerunner of the Messiah, and that Jesus is the long-awaited Savior.

John is central to the Evangelion, that is, the "Good News" of salvation, in a number of important respects. St. Luke records how his birth, like Jesus' birth, is miraculous. He was born into a priestly family. His father Zechariah was of the order of Abijah and his mother was a descendant of Aaron (Luke 1:5). They were a pious couple, but childless, and of an age where conception was highly unlikely. While on service in the Temple in Jerusalem Zechariah received a vision telling him that his wife Elizabeth would conceive and that the son born to them, John, would be a Prophet consecrated to God.

St. Luke also tells us that Elizabeth is a relative of Mary. After Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit she went and visited Elizabeth. When she approached the house and called to her, Elizabeth replies: "Blessed are you among women,



and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy." (Luke 1:42-44).

As he grew to manhood, St. John set out for the desert and took up the prophetic mantle of "camel's hair, with a leather belt" (Mark 1:6), but more importantly, he took on the prophetic voice: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 3:2)

Some people in Israel thought John was the promised Messiah. But many more saw John as the manifestation of the Prophet Elijah who most believed would appear to proclaim the Messiah. For his part, John believed that Jesus might be this "Elijah," and hints at this when he says: "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mark 1:7-8).

However, the Lord is clear that it is John who is the "Elijah" that had been predicted when He tells his disciples: "Elijah is indeed coming first to restore

all things. ... I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written about him." (Mark 9:11-13) He goes even further when he says, "Among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist. ... For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John came; and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come." (Matthew 11:11, 13-14)

The way in which John "prepared the way of the Lord" was to call people to repentance. He preached in the desert on the banks of the Jordan River, and there he baptized people. With water from that stream he washed away their sins so that they might be ready to hear and receive the Messiah.

After John had been arrested, Jesus, again referring to John, says to the people following him: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? Why then did you go out? To see someone dressed in soft robes? ... What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'" (Luke 7:24-27)

For us today, even though we know the History of Salvation, even though we know who "Elijah" is, and the identity of the expected Messiah, we still should reflect on and cling to John's words: "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." (Mark 1:7-8) This is our Lord Jesus Christ who will receive baptism for our sins and reveal His heavenly Father to us. He is the one we longed for, and the one we still long for.

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA

“BURN THE MORTGAGE” CAMPAIGN ENTERS FINAL STAGE



Nearly two years ago, the parish undertook an initiative to pay off the principal amount due under the church's mortgage in order to finish this first phase of our building project. Presently, the principal balance due on the mortgage is \$523,000. As a result of our campaign, we've received 19 pledges totaling \$117,250.

By God's Grace, we have wonderful announcement to make. Thanks to the faithfulness and generosity of Vasil (Billy) and Elva Gartsu, founding members of our parish, St. Nicholas has received a bequest in the amount of \$300,000 to be applied against the principal debt of our mortgage. We are humbled and overwhelmed by their example of stewardship and faithfulness. Vasil and Elva were humble and hardworking people. Throughout their lives they were faithful stewards of their time, talent and treasure to the church. When Elva married Billy she was

not Orthodox. In fact, when they were married the entire service was conducted in Romanian and Elva didn't understand a word. It was only when Fr. Nicholas was appointed priest at St. Nicholas, and the services were celebrated in English, that she began attending Liturgy regularly, pulling Billy along with her. It was then that Elva expressed her desire to embrace the Orthodox faith. Together, they became stalwarts of the Parish.

Vasil fell asleep in the Lord over a decade ago. Elva continued her devotion to the Lord and her dedication to the Parish. Remembering the original Church on Hammond Street in Worcester, she expressed her constant desire to see a new Church on our current site in Shrewsbury. While she didn't see the new Church itself, she certainly saw the new structures and design. As she declined in health, her constant wish was that whatever resources she had should be devoted

to seeing the completion of the new St. Nicholas. Both her and Vasil's faith are a great blessing for our St. Nicholas community.

Where are we now? How do we get to where we need to be? As a result of the pledges previously made and this generous and profound gift, ONLY \$106,000 remain to be paid on the principal in order to finish paying off this current debt! Given where we began only a few years ago, our St. Nicholas Parish has a property valued at \$1.9 million dollars. Yet, we still have the Church building to build.

OUR CHALLENGE RIGHT NOW is to finish the work and receive pledges that would pay off the full debt by Palm Sunday 2016. Of course the dollar total is important, but equally as important is that we have every member of our parish contribute towards this goal, at whatever level is within their means.

During the season of Epiphany Fr. Nick visits each of our homes to bless them and ask for God's blessing on our families in the coming year. We also ask this year that each one of us consider the importance of our St. Nicholas community in our lives. Reflect on the example of faith and love that Vasil and Elva Gartsu have shown. We all need to participate in the paying off of our church mortgage to the Glory of God and to securing the future of His Church for generations to come.

Attached is a pledge form for your consideration. Please fill it out and send it in as soon as possible.

With love in Christ,

Thomas Fitzpatrick, Chair
"Burn the Mortgage" Campaign