

# ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN MARCH 20, 2016

## THIS WEEK'S NEWS

**PICK UP YOUR BAKING ORDERS FOR THE WESTERN EASTER TODAY.** Extra Pastry is also available for sale — first come, first serve. Questions? See Betty Anderson.

**TODAY IS THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY.** Toward the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy we will have the traditional procession with the Icons, held by our children. We ask that parents bring their children's icons to Church on Sunday so that they might hold them high during the procession.

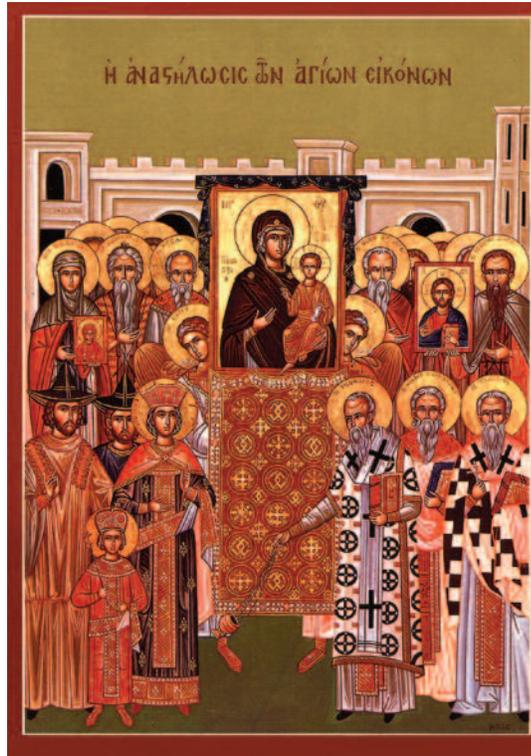
**ALSO,** as part of the **SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY** celebration, all of the clergy and faithful of our area will gather at 6:00 pm at St. George Cathedral to celebrate Great Vespers marking the Feast. Please plan on attending!

**A BLOCK OF TICKETS HAS BEEN RESERVED** for the production of **JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR**, for **Sunday April 10 at 2:00 pm.** There is a poster and sign up sheet on the bulletin board at the Church for this event. **Reservations must be in by THIS Sunday March 20th.** Questions/reservations, e-mail (gdemake@charter.net) or call (774-535-2821) **George Demake.**

**GREETERS TEAM 2**  
ARTIC GAVALA AND CĂLIN GALERIU

**COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP CREW C:**  
PRIZIO FAMILY

**ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED**



FIRST SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT  
THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY  
EPISTLE: HEBREWS 11:24-26; 32-40  
GOSPEL: JOHN 1:43-51  
TONE 1 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL 9

**THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE THEOTOKOS** is this Friday, March 25th. We will celebrate Liturgy together with our brothers and sister at the **Ss Anagyroi Church in Marlborough, at 10:00 am.**

**THE PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY** for this coming Wednesday, March 23rd, is at St. George Cathedral, at 6:00 pm.

**THE ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY** of our Parish will be held on **Sunday, April 3rd,** following the Divine Liturgy.

**VESPERS AND CONFESSION** will be held **each Saturday evening at 5:00 pm during Great Lent, begin-**

**ning March 12th.** Fr. Nick will be available for confession each week after Vespers, and before Vespers by appointment (e-mail Fr. Nick).

**A SLIDE PRESENTATION AND TALK ON THE HOLY LAND** will be offered by Margarete Landry and Fr. Nick after Coffee Hour on two Sundays: March 27th and April 10th. Both they and Presvytera Maria traveled with Fr. Timothy last year just after Pascha and toured extensively in Israel/Palestine. They will share not only their photographs, but more importantly their insights into the situation in the Holy Land and the position of the remaining Christians living there. Presentations with questions and answers will be no more than 45 minutes. Plan on staying a little later on both Sundays!

**TODAY WE CELEBRATE A MEMORIAL** for the servant of God **David Gity,** fallen asleep 40-days. **May his memory be eternal!**

### DATES TO REMEMBER

Sun, March 20	Sun of Orthodoxy Vespers, St. George
Wed, March 23	PreSanctified, St. George, 6 pm
Fri, March 25	Annunciation Lit, at Marlboro, 10am
Sat, March 26	Vespers & Confession, 5pm
Sun, March 27	Holy Land Presentation, after Liturgy
Wed, March 30	PreSanctified Lit, St. Spyridon, 6pm
Sat, April 2	Orthodox Food Pantry, 9am-12pm Vespers & Confession, 5pm
Sun, April 3	General Assembly, following Lit
Sat, April 9	Electronics Recycling 9 am-2 pm Vespers & Confession, 5pm
Sun, April 10	Holy Land Presentation, after Liturgy Jesus Christ Superstar, 2pm
Sun, April 24	Palm Sunday
Sun, May 1	Great and Holy Pascha

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A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas

*TODAY'S COFFEE HOUR* is sponsored in the memory of **Gary Soter**, by his family. *May God rest him with the just!*

## UP-COMING

A **CHILDREN/YOUTH RETREAT** is planned for the first two days of **April Vacation Week, Monday and Tuesday, April 18th and 19th**. For all ages, through High School. Starts at 10:00 am and ends at 1:30 pm. Lunch and snacks provided. We're doing this in conjunction with the Ss Anagyroi parish in Marlborough; Monday, April 18th will be at Ss Anagyroi. and Tuesday, April 19th will be at St. Nicholas. There are no fees, but you will need to register, for planning purposes. Fr. Gregory Christakos (fathergreg@stsanagyroi.org) and Valarie Stamoulis (valarie.stamoulis@gmail.com) are coordinating. Contact either with questions and registration data. More information to follow.

## NAMEDAYS

### March 19

#### *St. Theodore of Tyre*

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

### March 25

#### *The Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos*

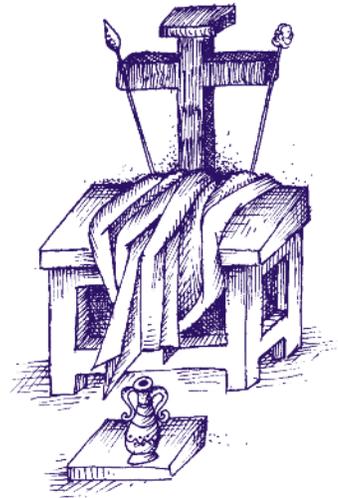
V. Gerald Belba  
Lea Christo  
Mary Anna Dymek  
Vangjush Lolo  
Evan Sparages  
Evan Stamoulis  
Lynne Tonna  
Evans Tsoules

## A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

**G**LORY TO YOU, O Father, for sending us your only Son to be our salvation! Glory to you, O Christ, for dying on the cross to give us life! Glory to you, O Holy Spirit, for initiating and perfecting the mystery of our salvation! We again ask you to bring our lenten observances to fruition. Enable us to internalize our external practices, and convert us to the truth in spite of us, showing us how to think and live correctly. Help us to hold onto confidence and endurance, so that, by doing your will, we may reap the rewards you promise. And, as we rejoice in this season of grace, enable us to remain focused on the paschal mysteries, so that our joy may be completed by seeing them fulfilled in our lives.

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



## PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGIES

2016

Wednesday, March 23, 2016

St. George Cathedral

Wednesday, March 30, 2016

St. Spyridon Cathedral

Wednesday, April 6, 2016

St. Mary's Assumption

Wednesday, April 13, 2016

St. Spyridon Cathedral

Wednesday, April 23, 2016

St. George 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.

# THE SATURDAY OF ST. THEODORE

**O**n the first Saturday of Great Lent, we celebrate the wondrous miracle which the holy, glorious Great-martyr Theodore the Tyron performed with koliva, the boiled wheat.

When Julian the Apostate, Emperor of Byzantium (361-63 A.D.) after Constantius (son of St. Constantine the Great), seized power, he began the persecution of Christians, for he had apostasized from Christ and had begun worshiping the ancient pagan gods. Therefore, he sought every opportunity to persecute the Church, either openly or secretly, and to tempt them from their faith. This pagan did not want to harshly torture the Christians nor suddenly assault them, being afraid that more would convert to Christianity; therefore, the godless instigator made plans to secretly defile the Christians, thinking he could make them into pagans. Thus, in the year 362, he devised the following scheme to make them feel infected and ashamed by eating food polluted by the blood of pagan animal sacrifices.

The Emperor knew that the people of Christ began to fast more strictly during the first week of Holy Great Lent, thus purifying themselves and drawing closer to God, feeling great devotion and compunction - which is why this week is called Clean Week or Purification Week - but that they eased their restrictions on Saturday of that week due to St. Theodore's feast day, so he called the governor of the Imperial City and ordered that all foods be removed from the markets and substituted with foods polluted with the blood of pagan animal sacrifices. In this way, the Christians would be defiled by buying even Lenten foods since they were especially desiring to purify themselves during this first week of the Fast. Thus, the Christians would be in a great dilemma - to starve or to eat the defiled food.

The governor executed the order and filled the markets with all manner of polluted foods: breads, meats, drinks, fruits, and vegetables. But God, whose eye sees everything and knows how to capture crafty men in their wickedness, took care of His servants and loosed the apostate's evil plot in the following manner: when the saintly Patriarch Eudoxius learned of the apostate's evil snare, he became exceedingly troubled in spirit and heavy of heart and immediately summoned his clergy, blessing the serving of an all-night vigil to discern God's will and humbly to implore Divine protection for his flock. After they had spent a night in fervent prayer, St. Theodore the victorious martyr, the so-called Tyron [which means "recruit," or some say means he was a member of the Tyronian Legion], was sent by God to Patriarch Eudoxius in a vision.

St. Theodore said to the Patriarch, "Arise and call the faithful of the city together and make it known to them that by command of the impious emperor, the foods in the markets are polluted with the blood of pagan sacrifices. Therefore, they should not buy anything to eat from them."

The Patriarch answered, saying, "How shall it be possible for those who are not rich and have not enough food in their homes to refrain from purchasing?"

St. Theodore replied, "You shall prepare and eat koliva." Perplexed, the Patriarch asked, "What manner of food is koliva?"

St. Theodore answered, "It is boiled wheat, as it is prepared after the custom of Euchaita."

At that Patriarch Eudoxius asked, "And who are you to show such love and concern for Christ's flock?"

St. Theodore responded saying, "I am Christ's martyr, Theodore. I have been sent as an appropriate helper to

you in your time of need."

Immediately, the Patriarch arose, gathered the people together on Monday morning of the first week of Great Lent, and announced to them what had come to pass. Thus, the Christians were preserved from the evil scheme of the hostile Apostate.

When the impious Emperor realized that his plot had failed, he felt greatly ashamed and ordered that the markets again be filled with ordinary foods. On Saturday, at the end of the week, the people of Christ addressed thanksgiving hymns to their Benefactor, Christ our God, and His Great-martyr Theodore, celebrating his commemoration with the preparation of great quantities of koliva.

Therefore, we boil wheat, adding to it tasty and sweet ingredients, and have it blessed in the churches today as a memorial of St. Theodore's miracle.

## 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!

**I**nstead, give me the spirit of prudence and humility, of patience and charity.

**Y**es, 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 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 (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, which St. John the Evangelist appropriately places at the very beginning of his Gospel.

Jesus is assembling his disciples. The day before Jesus' encounter with Nathanael, two disciples of St. John the Baptist were standing with him as Jesus passed. The Baptist 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 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 Philip 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) exacting man. He was expecting a skeptical response, that's why Philip 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 reticence to offend his friend 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. Jesus 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 living and traveling with Jesus, his witnessing of 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 different 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 very place they reveal to us.

— FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA