

# ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN

JUNE 12, 2016

## THIS WEEK'S NEWS

**GODPARENTS & GRANDPARENTS SUNDAY. TODAY, Sunday, June 12th,** together with the closing ceremonies for Religious Education, we are hosting "Godparents and Grandparents Sunday." Children (and adults) are encouraged to invite their godparent or grandparent to join them at Divine Liturgy, after which a special prayer will be offered to affirm those relationships. We will also be honoring graduates from our parish. A Parish Cookout will follow on the Church Grounds to kick off the summer with hot dogs, burgers, sausages and all the fixings.

**DOUGH ROLLING AND PITA BAKING SET FOR** Saturday, June 25th, 9:00am to noon. We need 12-15 people, so that the work is evenly distributed and we can finish with prep and clean-up in 3 hours. All help appreciated. No experience necessary — there's a job for everyone. If you'd like to participate, contact Chris Toda at: [thetodas@msn.com](mailto:thetodas@msn.com), or 508-832-6271.

**THE PARISH COUNCIL** will hold its regular monthly meeting tomorrow, **Monday, June 13th at 6:30 pm.** Parish Council Members, please let George

**GREETERS TEAM 1:**  
V. GERALD BELBA AND MARGARITE LANDRY

**COOK-OUT CLEAN-UP:**  
ALL HANDS  
ON DECK

**ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED**



### THE SEVENTH SUNDAY OF PASCHA

THE SUNDAY OF THE FATHERS OF THE FIRST ECUMENICAL SYNOD

EPISTLE: ACTS 20:16-18; 28-36 ☩ GOSPEL: JOHN 17:1-13

tone 6 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL 10

Demake know if you are unable to attend.

**THE NEXT MUSTARD SEED MEAL** is **THIS Friday, June 17th.** The Mustard Seed is a Catholic Worker home providing dinner to about 150 people in need each day. **Help is needed Friday from noon to cook and prepare food, and at 5:00 on Friday evening** to transport and serve. If you'd like to help, contact **Fr. Nick.**

**SATURDAY OF THE SOULS** before Pentecost is this coming Saturday, June 11th. Liturgy will begin at 10:00 am with Matins preceding at 9:00 am. We are asking for someone to volunteer to prepare the Memorial Wheat. Please speak with Fr. Nick.

**THANKS TO THE PITA ROLLERS** who rolled 100 lbs of flour yesterday!

**THANKS TO THE E-RECYCLING CREW** for their work as well yesterday!

**THANKS TO THE WAX CLEAN-UP TEAM,** Christine Masterjohn and Margarite Landry, for their work!

### DATES TO REMEMBER

- Sun, June 12 Godparents/Grandparents Sunday  
Parish Cookout
- Mon, June 13 Parish Council Meeting, 6:30pm
- Fri, June 17 Mustard Seed Meal, 5 pm
- Sat, June 18 Saturday of Souls, Lit, 10am
- Sun, June 19 PENTECOST
- Sat, June 25 Pita Dough Rolling, 9am-12pm
- Sat, July 2 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry
- Sun, July 3 NO LITURGY, Archdiocesan Congress
- Sun, July 31 St. Michael Southbridge Annual Picnic
- Sun, Sept 18 stART on the Street Festival
- Thurs, Oct 6 Holy Trinity Wine/Food Fest

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A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas

## A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

**P**RAISE TO YOU, ETERNAL, LOVING GOD AND FATHER, O you who loved us before we were even conceived: Today, the gates of heaven, the eternal portals, are lifted high, because your only Son, the king of glory, enters in. As we celebrate his glorious return to the right of your majesty, we pray that you will draw us ever closer to him, so that, faithful to him at all times, we may rise above the difficulties of this earthly life to enjoy the glory of eternal life. Receive our spiritual worship, and prepare us for the descent of your all-holy Spirit in the days to come.

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



**W**hen You had fulfilled the dispensation for our sake, and united earth to heaven: You ascended in glory, O Christ our God, not being parted from those who love You, but remaining with them and crying: "I am with you and no one will be against you!"

## COMMUNITY NEWS

**THE WEeping ICON** of the Theotokos "Kardiotissa" (Tender-Hearted) from the St. George Orthodox Church in Taylor, PA, will be coming to the Ss. Constantine & Helen Church in Webster on Friday, June 17th. You may venerate the Icon from the afternoon. There will be a Paraklesis Service at 6:00 pm with anointing with Myrrh from the Icon.

**FREE FUN FRIDAYS ARE BACK FOR THE SUMMER!** Free Fun Fridays is the annual summer program that opens doors at no cost to visitors to many of the most treasured cultural venues in Massachusetts. This year, the Highland Street Foundation is partnering with 80 cultural institutions to provide a sum-

mer of fun, educational and enriching experiences. **Every Friday from June 24 to August 26, eight sites will be open for free.** All are welcome! This is a great program for families to take advantage of this summer. **To see the whole program, and the sites that available each Friday, go to: <http://www.highlandstreet.org>** or pick up a hard copy flier at the Church. Free Fun Fridays are organized by the Highland Street Foundation and a number of other prominent organizations.

## NAMEDAYS

June 8

*The Holy Martyr Kalliopi*

Kaliopi Demma



# IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE

**T**HIS is the seventh Sunday of Pascha. We remember the Fathers of the First Œcumenical Synod held at Nicæa in the year 325 AD. We also find ourselves in the days between the Lord's Ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Today's lesson from the Book of Acts (20:16-18; 28-36) reads like a farewell speech, a final admonition, from St. Paul to the elders of the Church at Ephesus, but its message speaks to us as well. St. Paul is on his way to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. He says (in verses not included in this reading), "I am going to Jerusalem, bound in the Spirit, not knowing what shall befall me there; except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me" (Acts 20:22-23). The authorities in Jerusalem have wanted to imprison and even kill St. Paul since his acceptance of our Lord Jesus Christ as the Messiah. He believes he will never see the Church of Ephesus again. He is correct; he never does.

He is primarily concerned for the future well-being of the Church. He directs his remarks specifically to the "elders" of the Church — that is, the *episcopi* or "overseers." (In part this explains why this lesson is chosen for today when we remember the Fathers of the First Œcumenical Council.) He tells the "*episcopi*" to, "Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of the Lord that he obtained with his own blood" (v. 28).

There are two aspects to this "oversight." The first is that if you are given leadership in the Church you need to "keep watch over yourself." You should keep yourself right with the Lord. You have to be self-disciplined and resolute. St. Paul says something similar to St. Timothy: "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1

Timothy 4:16). When following God's call to shepherd Christ's Church, our first duty is to be watchful over ourselves.

The second important duty is to "Keep watch ... over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers [guardians]" (v. 28). We do not set ourselves up as "leaders" in the Church. People do not (or should not) take this responsibility on themselves. The Holy Spirit chooses. He is the one who anoints leaders in God's Church. We are to behave as shepherds, guarding and protecting the flock. It is God's flock. It is God's Church. We have been enlisted into the Lord's service for His people, "that He obtained with his own blood."

Keeping with this image of shepherd and sheep, St. Paul says, "I know that after I have gone, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Some even from your own group will come distorting the truth in order to entice the disciples to follow them" (v. 29-30). Anyone with experience in the Church knows the truth of what St. Paul is forewarning. The Evil One is constantly working to divide the Church, to divide the parish. Each of us needs to be vigilant. We need to strive to discern the source of our thoughts, feelings, and actions, and sometimes help our brothers and sisters to do the same.

The objective is to remain firmly planted in God's truth. Each Christian generation has faced its particular challenges. The Apostles had theirs. The Church of the fourth century had Arius, whom the Synod of Nicæa confronted directly. We have ours, perhaps an even more difficult challenge: indifference and secularism. Surrounded by material comforts, we resist God who is the only one who can truly comfort us.

This reading highlights the question of leadership in the Church, and of course, in the parish. In America, we 'elect' parish councils and diocesan congresses to provide assistance and direc-

tion to the Church's leadership. Sometimes, but not always, the lay representatives find themselves in conflict with the ordained leadership, the bishops and presbyters, as well as the deacons and the other clergy. Each member of Christ's Body needs to remember that the Holy Spirit is the one who calls us for service. No one should serve him or her self; each of us should serve God.

When you read this passage take special note of the closing verses. St. Paul admonishes them with tears and kisses. He prays with them and over them. He grieves for the words he has spoken, particularly that he would not see them again. He commends them "to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build [them] up and to give [them] the inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (v. 32). By his love for them he shows God's Word works in us when we keep the Word close to our hearts; this is what will build us up.

Finally, Paul gives us a saying of the Lord that appears nowhere else in the New Testament, not the Gospels nor the other Apostolic writings: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (v. 35). It is often quoted because the truth of the Lord's words resonates in our hearts. It also reminds us that not everything the Lord said and did was written down. As the Evangelist John says: "Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:30-31) The simple truth, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," can guide our lives even as it strengthens our faith.

Christ has Ascended! ...

He has Ascended in Glory!

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA

# THE COSMONAUTS DIDN'T FIND GOD

**I**T SEEMS TO ME THAT THE LORD'S ASCENSION presents the modern believer with a few difficult questions, conceptually speaking. For example, for those of us who regularly fly — who regularly “ascend” — what exactly does the Lord's going up mean? For the last fifty-odd years, we periodically send people up beyond earth's atmosphere. What does it mean then that the Lord was carried up into heaven? When the Soviet cosmonauts ascended into the heavens they proclaimed that they hadn't found God there, in this way claiming to prove the silliness of religious faith. For people of Jesus' time it was a marvel if someone ascended to the heavens. Today, we go to the airport and catch our flight.

A second question is perhaps more mystifying. How can the actions of one person effect all of humanity? How can Christ's Ascension (when He took His place on the right hand of God the Father), also impact us? How do we share in the Lord's Resurrection? Why are we living the consequences of what Adam and Eve did?

Even though we have other examples in Scripture of people either being taken up into the heavens or transported from one place to another, the way in which the Lord ascended differs in a number of important ways. His ascension is seen as a return to the Father, a completion of His mission to restore the relationship between God and humanity. It fulfills the promise implicit in the resurrection. He also will send the Holy Spirit to enliven His followers. Moreover, He says that He will return.

The closest example we have in the Bible of an ascension like the Lord's is with the Prophet Elijah (Elias). He had been told by God that he would be taken up and was preparing his disciple Elisha to take up his mantle. (A mantle is a large cloak.) Elijah's mantle is a sign of his prophetic power. For example, one day Elijah and Elisha were walking

and talking about this, and were able to cross the Jordan when Elijah had struck the water with it causing the river's flow to stop. As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven (2 Kings 2:11). As he was taken up his mantle dropped from the chariot and Elisha picked it up. As Elijah had promised him, Elisha received a double share of his spirit. This is where we get the expression to “take up the mantle.”

Unlike the Lord, Elijah is taken up before he tasted death. In one sense it was a prefiguring, a foreshadowing, of what was to come in Jesus. The way he was taken up also gave rise to the speculation in Israel that Elijah would return to proclaim the coming Messiah. It was John the Baptist, as the Lord himself said, who would be the “Elijah” announcing the Christ (cf. Mark 9:13).

Another example of this sort was in the days of Daniel, when he was held prisoner in the lion's den. The Prophet Habakkuk was in Judaea making a stew and breaking bread and an angel of the Lord took him up and brought him to Babylon to feed Daniel (cf. Daniel 14:31ff). There is also the Prophet Ezekiel, who was carried by the hand of the Lord into the middle of a valley where he was presented with the vision of the dry bones (cf. Ezekiel 37:1). These examples are not ascensions in the sense of Elijah's and certainly not the Lord's, yet in these two instances we can see how time and space have a different meaning for God. The Lord ascended to the place He was before, but not a place we can get to without God's help and permission. So, the Soviet cosmonauts were not able to find God, even though they passed through earth's atmosphere.

I find the second question to be more interesting than the first. While we might find it engaging to speculate where the Lord went when He as-

ceded, the fact that His bodily ascent has an effect on us is more provoking. How is it that what Christ did and does changes me? This is not only true in the Ascension, but in every aspect of Christ's Incarnation. As the Church has always taught, through the sacraments we participate in our Lord's saving work. As St. Paul says, those of us who have been baptized have been joined with Christ in his death. “For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his” (Romans 6:5).

We've been nurtured in a culture that emphasizes our individualism and plays down our connectedness — to one another and to the world around us. Yet our study of biology and other sciences has begun to tell us the same story that our theology has told us for millennia: we are all deeply connected one to another and to the whole of creation. St. Maximos the Confessor speaks of the human beings as a “microcosm,” literally, a small world. He says that God created us in such a way that all of creation is summarized in us. We contain the world inside us, in our very being.

The more we unpack and analyze our own DNA and the DNA of everything living, the more we realize how interconnected the creation is. We used to think that “people are different.” Now we know that we are all practically first cousins.

When the Second Person of the Holy Trinity assumed our nature, He changed our DNA. When Jesus dies and rises, death is destroyed for each of us. And, when the incarnate Word of God sits at the right-hand of the Father, we are all enthroned. God's promise to each of us is real and true.

Christ has Ascended! ...

He has Ascended in Glory!

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA

## 2016 GRADUATES

*“He has filled them with the spirit of God, with skill, intelligence,  
and knowledge in every kind of craft.” (Exodus 35:31)*

We want to acknowledge members of our Church community who are celebrating a graduation and recognize their achievement.

### HIGH SCHOOL

**Dimitri Daniel Christo** is graduated from Abby Kelly Foster Public Charter School in Worcester. He will attend Assumption College in the fall.

**Mathew Collins** is graduated from Algonquin High School. He will be attending The Wentworth Institute of Technology in the fall.

**Tatiana Karadimitriou** is graduated from Shrewsbury High School. She earned a full scholarship to attend the University of Southern California and study neuroscience.

**Alex Trakadas** is graduated from Grafton High School. Over the summer he will be working with the Special Olympics program in the Marlborough offices and will attend Quinsigamond Community College in the fall to pursue a Business and Political Science Degree.

**Christian Polymeros** is graduated from Worcester Academy. He will be attending Massachusetts Maritime Academy in the fall.

**William Polymeros** is graduated from Algonquin High School. He will be attending Framingham State College in the fall.

**Zoe Tsongalis** is graduated from Kimball Union Academy in Meriden, NH. She will attend Providence College in the fall to study Education.

**Christian Wybieracki** (grandson of Janice and Randy Samara) is graduated from Boston College High School and will attend Bentley College in the fall.

### COLLEGE

**Christopher Bacon** is graduated from Worcester State University with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration. He is planning to work in finance.

**Alex Johnson** is graduated from Worcester State University with a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice

**Stephen Keimig** is graduated from Franklin Pierce University with a Bachelor of Arts, *summa cum laude*, in journalism and production. He was recipient of the Fitzwater Center Medallion for contributions to the public discourse by a graduating senior, among his other achievements.

**Alexandra Murphy** is graduated from Coastal Carolina University with a Bachelor's Degree in Art and Design.

**Athena Polymeros** is graduated from University of Massachusetts at Amherst with a Bachelor's Degree in mathematics and a Master's in Education. She will be teaching high school math at Nashoba Regional High School in the fall.

**Matthew Rucho** is graduated from Wentworth Institute of Technology with a degree in Construction Management. He has accepted a position as an assistant Project Manager at Trinity Construction Co. in Wilmington, MA.

### OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

**Christine Masterjohn** has received a professional certificate in Health Care Advocacy from Assumption College.

*May our loving Lord continue to bless their efforts and grant them a long life, health, prosperity, and many, many years!*