

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN JULY 31, 2016

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

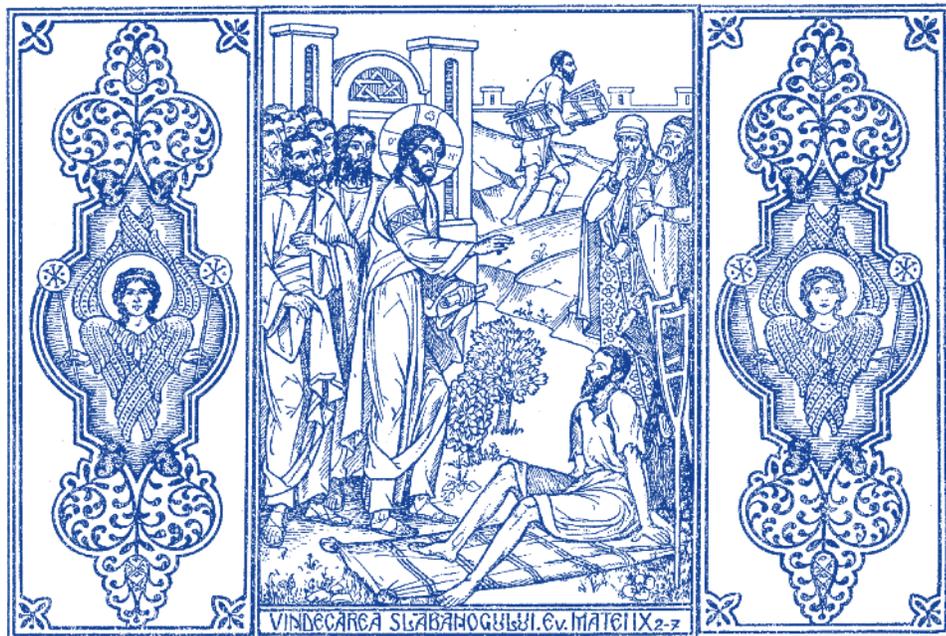
THE DORMITION FAST —in preparation for the Feast of the Falling-Asleep of the Theotokos— begins this coming Monday, August 1st, and continues through Monday, August 15th. During this two-week period we will hold a number of special services. Please refer to the full schedule on the next page.

PITA BAKING is scheduled for **THIS Thursday, August 4th, 9:00am to noon**. Any questions, contact Chris Toda at: thetodas@msn.com, or 508-832-6271. *All help appreciated. No experience necessary — there's a job for everyone.*

ST. MICHAEL PARISH in Southbridge it holding its **annual PICNIC, today, Sunday, July 31st** on the Church grounds. Pay a visit, have a good time.

FOOD PANTRY. Help is needed to staff our monthly responsibility at the Orthodox Food Center **next Saturday, August 6th, 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 at St. Spyridon Cathedral. If you can help in this worthwhile ministry, please speak with **Lisa Mielnicki or Nicole Apostola**.

GREETERS TEAM 4:
DIMITRI SAFFRON AND SEAN FAHEY
NO COFFEE HOUR THIS WEEK
ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED



THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

APOSTOLIC READING: ROMANS 12:6-14 ☩ GOSPEL: MATTHEW 9:1-8

(JESUS HEALS THE PARALYTIC OF CAPERNAUM)

TONE 5 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL 6

ORTHODOX FOOD CENTER NEEDS BAGS, both plastic and paper. We all have hundreds of these filling our pantries. This is your chance to save the Food Center some cash and do even more good by recycling. Please collect good, usable paper and plastic bags and bring them either to the Pantry on Saturday morning between 10 a.m. and 12 noon (St. Spyridon Cathedral, side entrance), or to our parish and we'll have someone from here deliver them.

THE PARISH COUNCIL will hold its regular monthly meeting **NEXT Monday, August 8th at 6:30 pm**. Parish Council Members, please let George Demake know if you are unable to attend.

We'll be holding **VACATION CHURCH SCHOOL** on Au-

gust 8, 9, & 10 (Monday – Wednesday), from 9am – noon each day, together with the our sister parish of Ss Anagyroi in Marlborough. The theme will be “*The Names of Jesus*.” There will be more information forthcoming along with a registration form. **Questions? contact**

DATES TO REMEMBER

Sun, July 31 St. Michael Southbridge Annual Picnic
Mon, Aug 1 Dormition Fast Begins
Tues, Aug 2 Supplication to Theotokos, 6:30pm
Thurs, Aug 4 Pita Baking, 9am-noon
Supplication to Theotokos, 6:30pm
Sat, Aug 6 Feast of Transfiguration, Liturgy 9:30am
Staff Orthodox Food Pantry
Aug 8, 9, & 10 Vacation Bible School
Thurs, Aug 11 Supplication to Theotokos, 6:30pm
Sun, Aug 14 Vespers for Dormition at St. Mary's 6pm
Mon, Aug 15 Dormition Liturgy, St. Mary's 9:00am
Fri, Aug 19 Mustard Seed Meal
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

Valarie Stamoulis: valarie.stamoulis@gmail.com or 508-393-3517

UP-COMING

OUR NEXT MUSTARD SEED MEAL is Friday, August 19th. We'll need help cooking and serving. **Prep** help needed (3 persons), 6pm Thursday. **Prep** help needed (2 persons), noon Friday. **Serving** help needed (5 persons), 5:30pm Friday. **We are also looking for donors to cover the cost of the meal—around \$400.00 for the 200 meals we usually serve.** If you'd like to help with preparing the meal or underwriting the cost, please talk to Fr. Nick.

COMMUNITY NEWS

St. George Orthodox Cathedral will once again host the **FEED MY STARVING CHILDREN MOBILEPACK** event on **August 20th**. They look to raise \$22,000, sign up 500 volunteers and pack 100,00 meals. Meals are sent to one of 70 countries where children are actively starving to death. Within months of eating this food, children's health begins to improve. Each meal costs only 22 cents. Please consider making a donation today by visiting: www.stgeorgeworces-ter.org or by sending a check to:

Feed My Starving Children
Attn: MobilePack #1608-054MI
401 93rd Avenue NW
Coon Rapids, MN 55433

ST. MICHAEL IN SOUTHBRIDGE will be holding its **9th Annual Romanian Golf Open on Saturday, September 10th**. For more information and/or to register, call Luke Yanka at 508-958-4144 or e-mail: lsyanka@yahoo.com.

NAMEDAYS

August 6

*The Holy Transfiguration
of the Savior*

S. Richard Seferi

August 8

*The Holy New Martyr
Triandaphyllos*

Rose Armida Salerno

August 15

*The Falling Asleep
of the Most Holy Theotokos*

Maria Blanchard

Mary Cocaine

Maria Dumitriu

Monika Maria Durmillari

Maria Kalpidou

Maria Prelipcean

Nancy Maria Tsongalis

Mary Tsoules

Marietta Zaruha

AUGUST LENTEN SERVICES

Dormition Fast Period (Aug 1-15)

- ◆ **Supplication Service** to the Theotokos at St. Nick's, Tuesday, August 2, 6:30 pm
- ◆ **Supplication Service** to the Theotokos at St. Nick's, Thursday, August 4, 6:30 pm
- ◆ **Divine Liturgy** for Transfiguration at St. Nick's, Saturday, August 6, 9:30 am
- ◆ **Supplication Service** to the Theotokos at St. Nick's, Thursday, August 11, 6:30 pm
- ◆ **Dormition Vespers** — St. Mary's, Sunday, August 14, 6:00 pm
- ◆ **Divine Liturgy** at St. St. Mary's, Monday, August 15, 9:00 am

A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

PREVENT us, Lord and Father, from being unmindful of you. Make us more and more sensitive to your presence, always growing in consciousness of you and your commandments. Inspire us to live correctly, filled with love for you and our neighbor. Let us be sensitive to your inspirations' and give us always the right response to them and the strength to carry them out.

By the grace and mercies and love for us 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.



LET OUR LOVE BE GENUINE

This is the sixth Sunday after Pentecost. In today's reading — Romans 12:6-14 — St. Paul moves the discussion from Law and Faith, to how our faith in Jesus the Messiah impacts and changes our life. Up until now he had been presenting a very detailed and systematic explanation as to why the Law of the Old Covenant needed to give way to God's Grace that we receive by our faith in Jesus Christ — the New Covenant. He wants us to focus on this new relationship with God and the implications it has on how we will live.

"We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us." (v. 6) We are not all the same; each of us has been given a particular charism. One of the greatest challenges we have in life is to recognize and understand the particular gifts given us. The second challenge is to fully develop these gifts.

As a way of transitioning from his discussion of the Law, St. Paul offers us this vivid image. He tells us: "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual (or reasonable) worship." (v. 12:1) You will remember that the central aspect of Old Testament worship was the sacrificing of animals. St. Paul says that our worship of God should be us sacrificing ourselves, as a living sacrifice. Our sacrifice is the deliberate development of the gifts given us. And different from the animals which were dumb beasts, we offer up our bodies knowingly, with our mind and in our heart.

He then offers practical expressions of the gifts about which he is talking, as well as how we should use them. If it is "prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness." (v. 6-8)

The first thing that we should notice

is that these gifts given us are not for ourselves; they are for service to others. The second is that it is not simply the *doing* of a thing that matters; what is more important is *how* it is done.

St. Paul mentions seven gifts, but unlike when he writes to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 12:28ff), here he doesn't place them in an hierarchical order. Moreover, he mentions gifts in Romans that he doesn't refer to in his letter to the Corinthians, and vice versa. There are innumerable gifts of the Spirit. Let's look at the ones he presents here.

"Prophecy, in proportion to faith." We could also call this "inspired preaching." It sometimes may involve predicting the future as in Acts 11:27-28, but usually it is meant to inspire and exhort the listeners. "In proportion to faith" has a few meanings. The most important is that what the prophet says should correspond to the Faith, the belief held in common, but also to the personal faith of the listeners. It should build them up, not confuse or misdirect them.

"Ministry, in ministering." The Greek word used here is "diakonia;" this is where the title 'deacon' originates. In this context it means ministry in the sense of service. It refers to those persons responsible for distributing material aid. For most of the Church's history deacons were primarily responsible for the administration of the material goods of the Church, especially aid to those in need. The Liturgical aspect was secondary.

"The teacher, in teaching." Teacher and teaching was and is a gift distinct from prophecy, preaching, or administration. We see this clearly in our Church today. Those responsible for instruction of both children and adults play a vital role in building up the Body.

"The exhorter, in exhortation." Here St. Paul refers to what we would call the 'spiritual father or mother.' This

is the person with great spiritual maturity and wisdom who encourages people as they struggle to do God's will.

"The giver, in generosity." This is the person of means who exercises his or her generosity gently and abundantly. His or her gift is one of philanthropy, distributing private wealth with love.

"The leader, in diligence." This refers to the person who heads the community. He is to exercise this gift conscientiously.

"The compassionate, in cheerfulness." This is the person who does acts of charity, of kindness. Too often we do such things grudgingly, out of a sense of duty. St. Paul reminds us to do them not only with a smile on our face, but also from our heart. The smile is just as important as the act.

Then St. Paul sums it up in an almost staccato-like manner: "Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor." (v. 9-10)

We should never 'fake' our love. Sometimes we may have to 'work at it;' but the final objective should be for it to be real. St. Paul says that we should hate evil. Actually the word is closer to abhor than hate. Evil destroys. We destroy evil through goodness. Even as we abhor the evil we need to cling to what is good.

He says we should love one another. The Greek word is 'philadelphia;' love like brothers and sisters. We need to treat each other as a family — a healthy Christian family.

He continues with, "outdo one another in showing honor." This could also be translated, "As far as honor goes, esteem the other more highly." The greatest danger we face is our own pride. Love each other. Always put the other before us. Think no more of ourselves than we do our brother and sister. This is the greatest of spiritual gifts.

He then says (because he knows what we might get a little 'tired' at this point), "Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord." (v. 11) Notice how at each point St. Paul draws us to a higher goal. He doesn't simply say: "give;" but "with generosity;" nor "lead," but do it "with diligence;" nor "be compassionate," but do it "with cheerfulness;" nor "honor;" but "prefer one another;" nor "love," but do it "genuinely;" nor refrain from "evil" things, but "abhor" it; nor hold to "what is good," but "cling" to it; nor "love one another," but to do it "as if you were brother and sister;" nor be zealous, but be so without flagging, that is without backsliding; nor have the "Spirit," but have it "fervently," that is, be burning and awake.

The simple truth is that if one practices these virtues that St. Paul speaks of, the Holy Spirit will be drawn to us. And if the Holy Spirit is drawn toward us, all of these things will become easy for us to embody. "Serving the Lord" is akin to serving our brother and sister. It is the primary way in which we draw closer to God.

He then tells us to do three things that are at the center of the spiritual life. "Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer." (v. 12) When God sends us the answer to our prayers, or when He sends us the good things that we recognize, we should rejoice. These are given us as signs of hope to encourage us. When we suffer diffi-

culties — "tribulations" — we simply need to trust in God; be patient. God sends us hopeful signs to encourage us to be patient and trusting. Finally, we need to be constant. Our love of God should not depend on this thing or that. We need to love God in the same way we love others; even though someone we love disappoints us, we continue to love them. Our disappointment in God is often because we cannot see or understand God's love for us. While it might be difficult; we need to be even more consistent in our love and devotion as a result.

The Lord, through St. Paul's teachings, leads us to a still higher plane. "Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality." (v. 13) Recognizing the needs of others, without them asking for help, is a great gift. Not only do we have to simply 'distribute' what we have but to share it. This means biting into our own income. To drive home the point he says, "practice hospitality." Hospitality was an ancient virtue. It is even more important as a Christian virtue. It is still even more important in our day and age. To welcome the stranger into our midsts, even to our home, is to welcome Christ Himself. There was no greater sin in the ancient world than to refuse a stranger. It is even a more grievous Christian sin. We are all strangers. We need to welcome one another.

Finally, as a way of summarizing all that he has said, St. Paul tells us: "Bless

those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them." (v. 14) This is the final step. If we can learn to bless our enemies — those who inflict pain on us — then we will have 'graduated' from being simply a 'good' person, to a true Christian.

If you would like to look at this developmentally, we move from being a child, where the whole world revolves around us, to an adolescent where we only have eyes for our 'true' love; caught in various forms of narcissism.

If 'true' love moves to a full love then marriage may ensue. Marriage leads to children, and children require a 'coming out' of ourselves. We can no longer live in the closed circle of either our own ego or the simple love of one person over another. Children require us to come out of any closed circle.

The final circle from which God asks us to emerge is the circle of those familiar to us; those with whom we feel comfortable. St. Paul instructs us how to build the personal bonds that will strengthen us. He tells us, "Bless those who persecute you." And then, he wants to make sure that we understand exactly what he is saying so he says: "bless and do not curse them."

God draws us from love of family and friends, to friends and siblings in the faith, to love of our enemies. We were God's enemies and He loved and died for us. He asks us to do the same to others, if we love Him.

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA

