

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN DECEMBER 4, 2016

ST. NICHOLAS FEASTDAY

Our *Parish Feastday Dinner* will be held **THIS Sunday December 4th**. His Eminence Metropolitan Nicolae will be with us to honor the patron Saint of our Community, the holy Bishop Nicholas.

- **On Sunday, December 4**, His Eminence will celebrate the **Divine Liturgy beginning at 10:00 am**, preceded by Matins at 9 am.
- After the Divine Liturgy, there will be a catered luncheon.
- **On Monday, December 5**, we will celebrate **Great Vespers at 6:30 pm**. As is the custom, we will welcome many clergy and faithful from neighboring Orthodox parishes. Please make every effort to attend this beautiful service.
- **On Tuesday, December 6 at 9:30 am**, we will celebrate the **Divine Liturgy for the Feast**.

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

THE FEASTDAY RAFFLE will be drawn **THIS SUNDAY**. Please keep **selling the tickets!** Turn in your ticket returns to **Dean Valoras** during the luncheon.

THE COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS

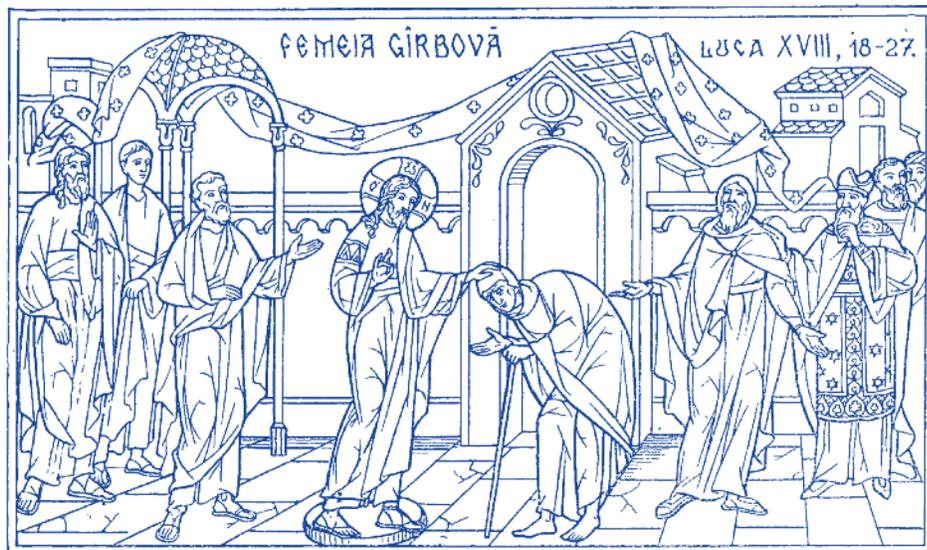
GREETERS TEAM 2:

ARTIC GAVALA AND CĂLIN GALERIU

COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP CREW B:

KARADIMITRIU/KALPIDO FAMILY

ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED



THE TWENTY SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

APOSTOLIC READING: EPHESIANS 6:10-17 ☩ GOSPEL: LUKE 13:10-17

(JESUS HEALS THE WOMAN WITH OSTEOPOROSIS)

TONE 7 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL 2

CARD is happening once again this year! The parish Christmas card is mailed to the entire membership of our St. Nicholas Family. The Christmas Card flier is available at the Church. If you'd like more information, please contact Tom FitzPatrick or Evans Tsoules in Coffee Hour or by e-mail, to tell us how to place your name. *We want our whole Community to be a part of this Christmas greeting!*

CHRISTMAS BAKING ORDERS must be in by **THIS Sunday, December 4th**.

THE 2017 CHURCH CALENDARS are here, in both English and Romanian. Pick them up at the candles. Please consider a small donation to cover the costs.

THANKS TO THE FOOD PANTRY VOLUNTEERS for working the Orthodox Food Center on behalf of our parish yesterday. Our regular com-

mitment is the first Saturday of the month from 9am to noon. This month we are also responsible for the fifth Saturday. About 4 people are needed. If you can help in this worthwhile ministry, please speak with Lisa Mielnicki or Nicole Apostola. Our next Saturday commitments are: December 31st and January 7th.

THE CHRISTMAS PAGEANT REHEARSAL will be held on **Saturday December 17th from 9:00am to 11:00am**. *Parental assistance is needed with preparing the costumes and or-*

DATES TO REMEMBER

- Sun, Dec 4 Feastday Celebration
- Mon, Dec 5 St. Nicholas Vespers, 6:30pm
- Tues, Dec 6 St. Nicholas Liturgy, 9:30am
- Fri, Dec 16 Mustard Seed Meal, 5:00 pm
- Sun, Dec 18 Children's Christmas Pageant
- Sun, Dec 25 Christmas, Liturgy 10:00 am
- Sat, Dec 31 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry
- Sat, Jan 7 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry

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A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas

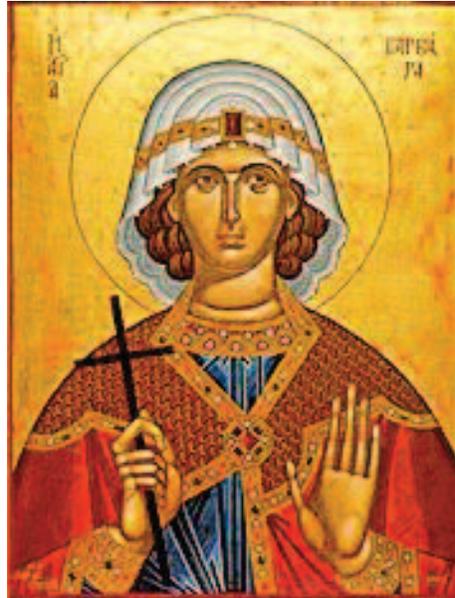
ganizing props. All Sunday School students are invited to participate in the Pageant program which will be presented to the parish on Sunday, December 18 following Divine Liturgy. Please **confirm your child's participation** by speaking with their Sunday School Teacher during coffee hour following Divine Liturgy or by email to info@stnicholaschurch.org

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

Each year Holy Trinity Nursing and Rehab gives the Orthodox community the opportunity to **provide Christmas Gifts for the facility's residents.** Our Parish is responsible for providing some of those gifts. You will be asked to purchase and wrap the gift, and bring it to the Church on Sunday, December 18th. **Eleanor Sedares (508-753-3106)** is coordinating this effort for our parish and can offer suggestions if you need ideas of what to get.

Support Holy Trinity through the United Way. It's not too late! The deadline is December 30th. Donate online at unitedwaycm.org and click on the "Donate" button in the upper right corner. Make sure to designate: **"Holy Trinity Nursing & Rehabilitation Center, Worcester, MA"** in the comments/questions window. You may also call Doreen Thornburg at United Way: 508-757-5631, ext. 210. Also, check to see if your employer has a matching gift program.

Holy Trinity Nursing & Rehabilitation Center has the following **EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES: CNA's, RN's and Dietary Aides.** Please contact Michelle Williamson, Dir. of Human Resources at: 508-852-1000.



THE HOLY GREAT MARTYR
BARBARA

A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

WE GLORIFY YOU, Lord Jesus Christ, for allowing us to know you. Everything we have belongs to you and we possess nothing of our own, for it is you who gave us all we have. By coming into our midst, you show us how to let go of everything, and by the poverty of your birth, you teach us to be attached to nothing. As we prepare for the celebration of your earthly birthday, O Christ, keep our hearts fixed only on you, so that we may always sing: Glory to God in the heights; on earth peace, and among all love and understanding.

For you are God and we give you glory together with your Father Who is without beginning, and your all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

NAMEDAYS

December 4

*The Great-martyr Barbara and
St. John of Damascus*

Barbara Jean Grniet

December 6

*St. Nicholas the Wonderworker of
Myra in Lychia*

Metropolitan Nicolae

Nicole Soumela Apostola

Rev. Nicholas Apostola

Nicholas Belishta

Nicholas Charalambides

Robert A. Clem

Nikolla Endriko

Nicholas Ermilio

Frank W. Ford

Nicholas John Johnson

Nicole Amelia Karadimitriou

Nicholas Mazanitis

Nicholas Peter Mentis

Nicolae Nace

Nicholas George Soter

Nicole Sparages

Nicholas Tonna

Nicole Marta Trakadas

Nicholas Valoras

Nikollaq Zhaka

December 12

*St. Spyridon
the Wonderworker of Tremithus*

Spiro Kelly

Spiro Kelly

Spiro Spyrou

December 15

*The Hieromartyr Eleftherios,
Bishop of Illyria*

Lillian Chachi

SUITING UP FOR THE STRUGGLE

THIS is the twenty-seventh Sunday after Pentecost. The Epistle Lesson is taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians 6:10-17. These verses form the conclusion of his letter. He is admonishing the Ephesians to be vigilant. He warns them about the trials to come, and he wants them to be prepared. He uses military language to describe what lies before them, but he is clear that this is a *spiritual* struggle against the forces of darkness.

In St. Paul's world people believed very strongly in 'spirits' and 'angels' and felt that these forces controlled their lives. While we are not necessarily held as captive as they by these ideas, even so today many people think there are forces that direct us and determine our destinies. St. Paul wants the Ephesians to trust in God and abandon the fear of being controlled by other forces. Similarly, we too need to abandon either a fatalism (somebody else controls us), or a self-sufficient spirit (we can do it all by ourselves), in order to be ready to engage the spiritual challenge in front of us.

St. Paul tells us: "be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." (v. 10-11) The first thing we need to realize is that our strength comes from the Lord. We are truly locked in a struggle, but we are being foolish if we think we can rely solely on our own strength. Our strength is grounded in God's power, not our own. We put on "the whole armor of God" so that we can withstand spiritual forces that can attack us in ways we cannot even imagine. St. Paul uses a phrase here found nowhere else in the whole Bible: "against the wiles of the devil." He is telling us clearly that the Evil One does not play fair, or, at the very least, does not play in a way that will be immediately apparent to us. Simply put, he plays dirty.

We must always be on our guard, because "our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." (v. 12) Our spiritual struggle takes place in many places, visible and invisible. St. Paul speaks here of the "cosmic powers" and the "heavenly places." Sometimes we are very limited in our vision of the struggle in which we are a part. We tend to be earth-bound. We see only the here and now.

Jesus came to rescue us not only from the here and now, but especially from the here and forever. Our outlook needs to include not just the world and life we currently see, but more importantly the world and life that God has in store for us. *This* is the struggle in which we are engaged. It is a battle, but not like the ones we see on television or even in front of us. These are spiritual battles that are waged in our heads and in our hearts. The battle is no less real just because we can't see it. We know it exists because we feel it in our own person and in those around us.

"Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day." (v. 13) We are not defenseless. God does not leave us without protection. We do have armor against the evil forces that assail us. Only, they are not the sorts of things that we usually associate with "battle." They are spiritual weapons and defenses, often the things we might associate with weakness.

"Fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness." (v. 14) How exactly does this work? St. Paul isn't talking about a belt of leather and bullet-proof armor. He's talking about truth and righteousness. The real weapons against evil — all kinds of evil — are the virtues. In the short run it may seem that guns, bullets,

bombs, and the like are the only effective weapons against evil. What we are coming to understand in a world where war pops up where you least expect it, where there are no clear battle lines, where even evil takes on the battle-cry of justice, is that the only possible defense is a "breastplate of righteousness and a belt of truth."

It is not easy in our day to be a Christian. Even some who call themselves Christians seem to preach a strange Gospel, foreign to what we have always understood it to be. Nevertheless, the Good News is just that, good news, and we must be prepared to preach it. St. Paul says that the shoes for our feet should be "whatever will make [us] ready to proclaim the gospel of peace." (v. 15) We may be asked to proclaim the gospel of peace in the world or in our families. In either case it will require us to have faith.

It is faith that is at the heart of our "defense." St. Paul says that with "the shield of faith ... you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one." (v. 16) Trusting in the Lord our God is the very foundation of strength. So many spiritual arrows and bullets are targeted toward us that without a grounded faith we would not be able to withstand. When we are in the middle of our struggle, we may feel as though we will certainly succumb, but the Lord will always support us. We have His shield in our hands.

Finally, we "take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (v. 17) The "helmet of our salvation" is like a crown on our heads. God grants us salvation to protect our heads, but also in anticipation of our victory laurel. He gives us the sword "of the Spirit" and the "Word of God" that cuts through every obstacle. Let us prove ourselves worthy of this great grace.

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA