

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN

DECEMBER 11, 2016

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

THANKS TO ALL WHO WORKED AND SUPPORTED THE FEASTDAY CELEBRATION. A lot of people contributed to his effort, but a special thanks goes to **Tim Rucho and Deb Sedares** who planned and organized the event. It was a wonderful time for the whole community. We were also blessed to have with us our spiritual leader, His Eminence **Metropolitan Nicolae**. His presence among us made the Feastday all the more special.

We also want to thank **Dean Valoras** for spearheading the Raffle. His smile and energy helped to make it a success. And thanks to all those who bought and sold tickets. The Feastday **Raffle realized approximately \$9,000** after prizes and expenses. Congratulations to the winners!

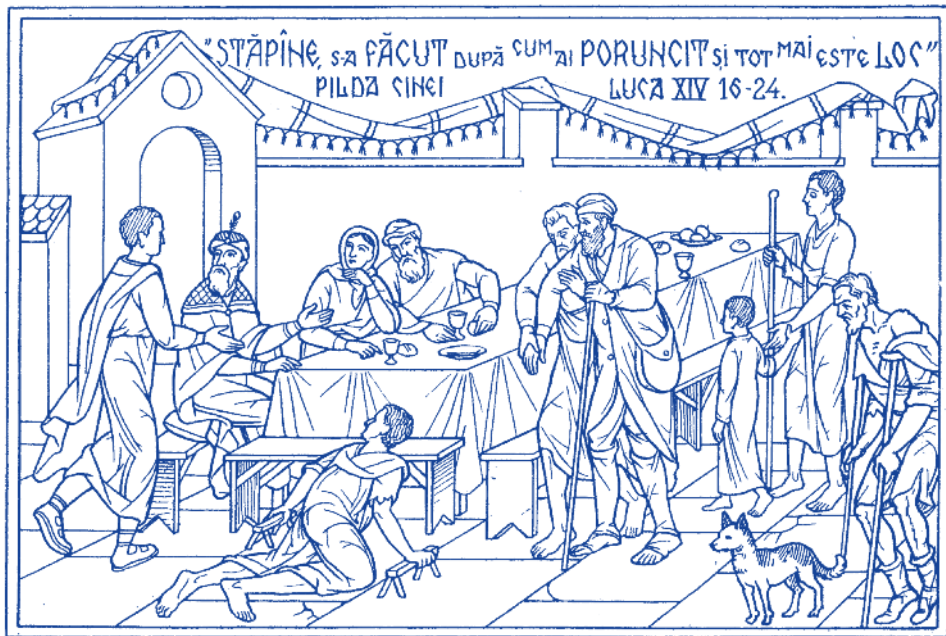
\$2,500 Thomas Fitzpatrick
\$500 Seyedah Daneshmand
\$500 William Tsoules
\$500 Chris Hartopillis
\$500 Fr. Nicholas Apostola
\$250 Pandeli Tuppa
\$250 Alexandra Soter

OUR NEXT MUSTARD SEED MEAL is **THIS** Friday, December 16th. We'll need help cooking and serving. **Prep**

GREETERS TEAM 3:
EVANS TSOULES AND TOM FITZPATRICK

COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP CREW C:
PRIZIO FAMILY

ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED



THE TWENTY EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (SUNDAY OF THE HOLY ANCESTORS)

EPISTLE: COLOSSIANS 3:4-11 ⊕ GOSPEL: LUKE 14:16-24
(THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT BANQUET)

TONE 8 ⊕ MATINS GOSPEL: 3

help needed (3 persons) Thursday. **Prep** help needed (2 persons), noon Friday. **Serving** help needed (5 persons), 5:30pm Friday. **This month's meal is sponsored by Mary Cocaine.** God bless her and her family! If you'd like to help, please talk to Fr. Nick.

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

THE COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS CARD is wrapping up this week. If you'd like to be included on this Christmas greeting, please see either **Tom FitzPatrick or Evans Tsoules** in Coffee Hour today. **We want our whole Community to be a part of this Christmas greeting!**

THE 2017 CHURCH CALENDARS are here, in both English and Romanian. Pick them up at the candles. Please con-

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

sider a small donation to cover the costs.

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



A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

BLESSED ARE YOU, Lord God of our fathers, for giving us your only Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ, as our refuge and stronghold, that evil might never master our lives nor the enemy enslave us! Now, as we offer you these prayers in watchfulness and expectation, enable us to call on your holy name, filled with understanding and love. Prepare us for the celebration of your Son's birthday by renewing in us a spirit of true dedication and discipleship, and grant that we may always enjoy your saving power.

For you are one to have mercy on us and save us, O God, and we give you glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

NAMEDAYS

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

December 17

St. Dionysios of Zakynthos, Bishop of Aegina

Denise Sparages
The Holy Prophet Daniel
Dan Manescu
Dana Manescu
Dan Alexandru Nedulescu
Robert Daniel Salerno
Dana Tsoules

CHRIST IS ALL AND IN ALL

As we approach the feast of the Lord's birth we might also want to keep in mind the full line of holiday celebrations ahead — climaxing with the Lord's baptism in the Jordan — his Epiphany. In the weeks before Christmas the Apostolic readings are taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians, which will be interrupted for readings specifically chosen for each feastday. (We take up again the Letter to the Colossians following Theophany.) This Sunday we read Chapter 3, verses 4-11 from this Letter.

To refresh your memory, Colossae was a community composed largely of Gentile converts, but also with a substantial Jewish component. Some of them were falling under the influence of gnostic teachers — what today we might call “new age” thinkers. There was a lot of syncretistic thinking and behavior, a kind of mix-and-match approach to the spiritual life. Paul wanted to address what he saw as the dangers of these tendencies straight on.

This Letter has two distinct parts. Paul starts out by addressing questions of faith. There were real doctrinal problems in the Colossian community, and he wanted to get them back on the right track. The verses we read today are the opening thoughts to the second part: how Christians ought to live. In order to make his point about the new life that Christ offers us, he draws on imagery and language from the Baptismal rite. He bridges his discussion of doctrine and faith to his thoughts on Christian living by reminding the Colossians of their baptism. Very probably, much of what St. Paul wrote to them was part of their catechetical instruction when they were preparing for baptism.

I should say one more thing. Often when the portions of St. Paul's letters are read during the Liturgy, people can be left a little perplexed, wondering what it meant. St. Paul intended his Letters to be read as a whole, and even studied. It

may be hard to appreciate the fact that they are usually very pastoral and even emotional, when we only hear them in small snippets, dare I say, sound bites. This week's reading is a good example. He uses the images of death in the waters of Baptism and the new life in Christ which we have been given. But the selected reading only gives us the first part. We have to wait until another Sunday to get the second. So if you don't understand the whole context, the opening verses can be a little jarring. Listen to what he says:

“Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life. But now you must get rid of all such things — anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth.” (v. 3:5-8)

If you have attended a baptism recently, you probably recognize many of these phrases from the first part of the service, the exorcisms. When we hear these words read again, it reminds us of the “old man” we left behind when we embraced Christ. Think about that moment in the baptismal service where, after having renounced Satan and joined Christ, the person who is to be baptized is led by the priest toward the font. Now listen to the next verses from today's reading:

“[Y]ou have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator.” (v. 9-10) These verses echo what he wrote to the Galatians: “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” (v. 3:27) We sing these words at every baptism and at every Divine Liturgy that was traditionally a day for baptisms, like Pascha, Theophany and

Christmas. It is a regular reminder of our baptismal commitment and vow.

In order to emphasize this change we undergo in Christ — the “new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” (v. 10) — he speaks of the disappearance of social barriers in the Christian community, such that, “there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!” (v. 11). He says something similar in Galatians: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” (3:28)

Because so many people who called and call themselves Christians have behaved in discriminatory and even horrific ways toward other human beings “different” from them, it can be easy to forget that Christianity and the Church has been the greatest liberating force in human history. One doesn't need to look very hard to see how over the millennia people who were poor and marginalized were able through the Church to rise out of their situations in societies that were frozen by social position and class. As Christians we need to remember St. Paul's words and help to make our parish communities examples of the new humanity that we find in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Christian faith is regularly criticized as a regressive force in our modern world. All religious faith is often characterized as a source of division and even war. It is true that faith is a powerful motivating force, and sometimes people act badly, thinking it is what God wants. But we know that Christ came to restore humanity, not to destroy it. We know that we are called to renew and reshape ourselves according to the image of him who created us. Let us act on it. Each of us needs to listen to God's call and let it permeate our hearts.

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA