

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN

JANUARY 8, 2017

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

THE BLESSING OF HOMES AT THEOPHANY will begin on Monday, January 9th, and continue until all homes are blessed. As in the past, we will be setting times to bless your home. If there is a specific time that is more convenient for you, please e-mail or call (508-335-7378) Fr. Nick to arrange it.

THANKS TO THE FOOD PANTRY VOLUNTEERS for working the Orthodox Food Center on behalf of our parish yesterday and the Saturday previous. Our regular commitment is the first Saturday of the month from 9am to noon. About 4 people are needed. If you can help in this worthwhile ministry, please speak with Lisa Mielnicki or Nicole Apostola. Our next Saturday is February 4th.

PLEASE TAKE A LOOK AT THE BAKING STATS! There's a box on the next page. A remarkable achievement and we especially need to thank **Chris Toda and Betty Anderson** for their work, as well as all of the scores of other bakers who each contributed a lot. **Thank You!**

WE HAVE HAD TWO DEATHS IN OUR PARISH FAMILY THIS WEEK.

Subdeacon Paul Feeney, husband of

GREETERS TEAM 2:
ARTIC GAVALA AND CĂLIN GALERIU

COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP CREW C:
PRIZIO FAMILY

ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED



THE SUNDAY AFTER THEOPHANY

APOSTOLIC READING: EPHESIANS 4:7-13 ⊕ GOSPEL: MATTHEW 4:12-17

(THE LORD BEGINS HIS MINISTRY)

TONE 4 ⊕ MATINS GOSPEL 7

Mary Feeney of our parish, fell asleep in the Lord on Wednesday. Born in Lowell in 1948. Among many others he leaves his wife Mary, daughter Julia, son John-Paul, and granddaughter Sofiya. Mary want you to know that Subdeacon Paul would wanted to have been remembered that: "He loved everyone friend and stranger and brought the Light of Christ into their lives." **May his memory be eternal!**

Tony Georgan, father of Ann Trakadas fell asleep in the Lord this past Thursday. He will be buried from Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Hicksville, Long Island on Monday. Ann wanted all of us to know that: "My Dad and Mom were great people; you would have a hard time finding nicer people than they. I was Blessed to have had

them as my parents." As we comfort Ann and the Trakadas family, **let us pray that the Lord will receive Tony soul to rest among the just!**

A NEW PARISH COUNCIL WILL BE ELECTED IN JANUARY, (the two-year term of the Parish Council expires this year). Please consider offering a stewardship of your time in this important ministry. We also are asking for people to serve on other Parish committees, if you would like to focus your efforts in

DATES TO REMEMBER

Sat, Feb 4 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry
Sat, Feb 18 Saturday of Souls, Lit 10am
Sun, Feb 19 Meatfare Sunday
Sun, Feb 26 Cheesfare Sunday
Mon, Feb 27 Great Lent Begins
Sun, April 16 Great and Holy Pascha

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A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas

just one area. However you'd like to serve, please speak with **Fr. Nick**.

A MEMORIAL SERVICE is celebrated today for the servant of God, **Christy Belba**, fallen asleep 40-days in the Lord. *May our loving Lord rest him with the saints!*

TODAY'S COFFEE HOUR is sponsored in memory of **Christ Belba** by his family.

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

The residents wish to thank the parishes for the wonderful Christmas gifts they brought to Holy Trinity Nursing & Rehabilitation Center, which brought them delight and comfort to their holiday season. The staff and residents are very grateful for the thoughtfulness of the parishes and *wish everyone a Blessed New Year!*

A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

GLORY TO YOU, ETERNAL FATHER, FOR SENDING US YOUR SON! Glory to you, coeternal Son, for being baptized by John! Glory to you, O life-giving Spirit, for pointing out the Son to all the world! As we celebrate these days of theophany, enable us to praise you with all your creatures, so that our lives may manifest your majesty and glory at all times, O you whose wisdom fashioned and created all things.

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.



About the beginning of our Lord's thirtieth year, John the Forerunner, who was some six months older than Our Saviour according to the flesh, and had lived in the wilderness since his childhood, received a command from God and came into the parts of the Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins. Then our Saviour also came from Galilee to the Jordan, and sought and received baptism though He was the Master and John was but a servant. Whereupon, there came to pass those marvellous deeds, great and beyond nature: the Heavens were opened, the Spirit descended in the form of a dove upon Him that was being baptized and the voice was heard from the Heavens hearing witness that this was the beloved Son of God, now baptized as a man (Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:1-22). From these events the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ and the great mystery of the Trinity were demonstrated. It is also from this that the present feast is called "Theophany," that is, the divine manifestation, God's appearance among men. On this venerable day the sacred mystery of Christian baptism was inaugurated; henceforth also began the saving preaching of the Kingdom of the Heavens.

BAKING STATISTICS

During the Fall Holidays and Events, the St. Nick's Kitchen baked and sold:

260 Pitas
2,500 Bakalva
2,800 Kourabia
3,800 Koulourakia
87 Pastry Platters
24 Holiday Breads

WOW!

NAMEDAYS

January 6

The Holy Theophany of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Francis Polymeros
Jordan Sparagos

January 7

The Holy Prophet and Forerunner John the Baptist

Rev. Fr. John Daly
Nita Dumitriu
John Ermilio
Sean Fahey
Ian Mayer
John David Thoren

January 12

St. Tatiana the Martyr of Rome

Tatiana Sofia Karadimitriou

January 17

St. Anthony the Great

Anthony Theodore Christo
Scott Anthony Maynard
Anthony Rucho
Tony Nicholas Trakadas

January 18

St. Athanasios of Alexandria

Thanas Lolo
Arthur Peterson

GROWING INTO OUR POTENTIAL

THE Lord's Epiphany at his baptism in the Jordan by John marks the beginning of his earthly ministry. Very soon after this, John will be imprisoned and put to death. Jesus will begin preaching and healing. Slowly people will recognize that Jesus is the Messiah. The Scripture readings for this Sunday following the Feast of Epiphany — the Gospel lesson is Matthew 4:12-17 and the Epistle lesson is Ephesians 4:7-13 — speak of the Lord's ministry, and the ministry given to those who have chosen to follow him.

The selected reading from Ephesians is taken from a section of St. Paul's Letter where he speaks of the unity of the Body of Christ and how each of us can contribute to building it up. He says, "each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift." (v. 7) In other words, each of us has been given something by Christ that is essential for the well-being of the whole Church. Christ shares his gifts with us. We are essential participants in Christ's work of salvation. No gift is better or more important than another. Each is needed; all are critical. Our task is to understand our gift and use it for the well-being of others.

In order to emphasize both the power and humility of the Lord Jesus he quotes Psalm 68:18 adding insights from both Jewish Biblical scholars of the time as well as his own. So he says: "When he ascended on high he made captivity [entrapment by the Evil One] itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people." (v. 8) Here is how St. Paul explains this verse: "When it says, 'He ascended,' what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things". (v. 9-10)

St. Paul wants us to appreciate how the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, God's Son, "descended" to the earth. He

came and lived among us. Some Biblical scholars say that when St. Paul says he "descended into the lower parts of the earth" this is also a reference to his death and descent to Hades to liberate the souls of the righteous held captive there. St. Paul's central point is that by both descending and ascending Jesus defeated the Evil One. "He made captivity itself a captive." And, "he gave gifts."

What are these gifts that Christ gave us? "The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers." (v. 11) St. Paul gives us other lists of gifts given us, for example in Romans 12:3-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:1-31. However, the list he gives in Ephesians has to do with the Church, particularly offices in the Church. These are not 'personal' gifts. Rather, they are gifts "for building up the body of Christ;" and, "to equip the saints [that is us, average Christians] for the work of ministry." (v. 12)

When God gives us gifts they are always meant to be used for the well-being of others. They don't belong to us; for us to use narrowly or even selfishly. This is particularly evident in the four gifts that St. Paul names here: apostles, prophets, evangelists; and pastors/teachers. Each of these gifts represents a position of responsibility within the Church. The apostles were those with a direct, first-hand experience of Jesus and given a commission to preach Him. A prophet is an inspired preacher who encourages, warns or stimulates the community. An evangelist is an itinerant preacher, proclaiming the Gospel from community to community. The pastor/teacher is the presbyter (priest) or bishop; the one responsible for ministering to and guiding the local community. These gifts, and the responsibilities that come with them, have as their sole purpose the edification, the building-up, of the Body of Christ.

The gifts and offices are given, "until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ." (v. 13) You can see from what St. Paul says that these gifts are not intended to be permanent; that is to say, they are given to us for a purpose and toward an end. The end is that all of us should come to maturity, the full stature of Christ.

Let's look at some of the phrases St. Paul gives us. He tells us that we are expected to come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God. The "unity of the faith" means that we, each of us in the Church (that is, the whole Church) and each of us in the church (that is, our home parish), come to a common and correct faith. The "knowledge of the Son of God" does not mean to "know Jesus." Rather, it means to know what Jesus knows; to think and understand as Jesus does.

When we are able to take on "the mind of Christ," we become mature. We become fully human. When we say that Jesus became fully human, we are not only saying that the Son of God became like us; we are also saying that Christ became what we were intended to be — when He created us. He has come to give us the opportunity to become fully human — but, only if we want to.

God gives us gifts to help one another. He asks us to learn, grow, and fully develop into the kind of persons who look like Adam and Eve in Paradise. He invites us to live up to our full potential. He give us the gifts we need and the grace to realize it.

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA