

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN

FEBRUARY 5, 2017

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

OUR NEXT MUSTARD SEED MEAL is **THIS COMING** Friday, February 10th. We'll need help cooking and serving. **Prep** help needed (3 persons), 12 noon 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, please talk to Fr. Nick.

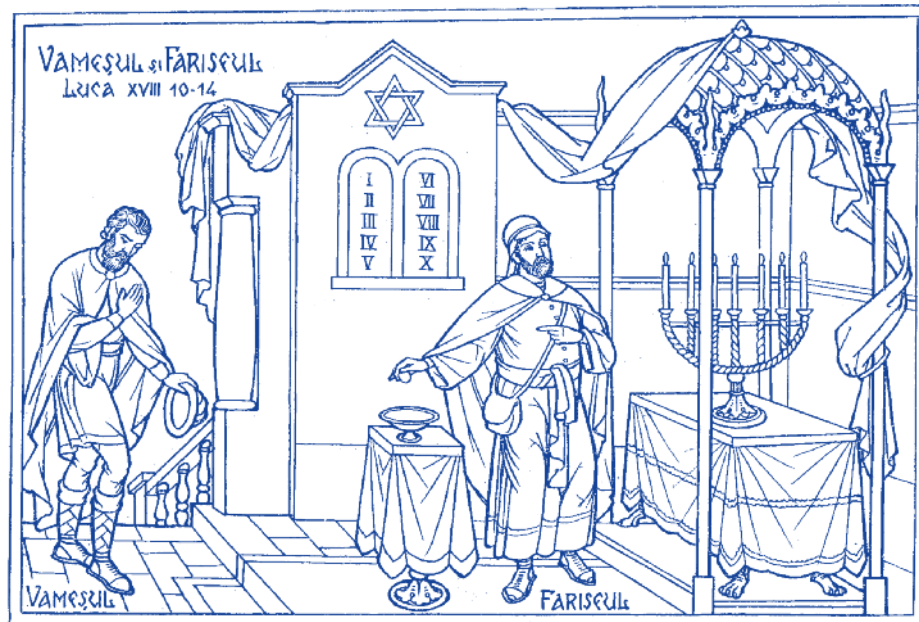
PITA BAKING. There will be a **Pita Baking Session, THIS COMING Saturday, February 11th, 9:00 am to noon.** Please mark your calendars. **Questions?** talk to **Chris Toda, 508-832-6271.** Also, let her know if you'll be coming. **Remember: There's a job for everyone!**

THANKS TO THE FOOD PANTRY VOLUNTEERS for working the Orthodox Food Center on behalf of our parish yesterday. 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 March 4th.

GREETERS TEAM 1:
V. GERALD BELBA AND
MARGARITE LANDRY

COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP CREW C:
PRIZIO FAMILY

ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED



THE THIRTY THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

PARABLE OF THE PUBLICAN & THE PHARISEE

THE TRIODION BEGINS

APOSTOLIC READING: 2 TIMOTHY 3:10-15 ☩ GOSPEL: LUKE 18:10-14
TONE 8 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL 11

THE BLESSING OF HOMES AT THEOPHANY CONTINUES. As in the past, we are setting times to bless your home. If you haven't gotten a notice yet, please talk to Fr. Nick. Also, 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.

PLEASE RETURN YOUR EXTRA HOLY WATER BOTTLES! Many of you have Holy Water bottles at home. Please return the ones you're finished using. You can give them to Fr. Nick when he comes to bless your house, or just bring to Church on Sunday.

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

TODAY'S COFFEE HOUR is sponsored by **Florence Rucho** in memory of her mother **Sophie George** as well as her brother-in-law, **John Rucho.**

DATES TO REMEMBER

Sat, Feb 4 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry
Fri, Feb 10 Mustard Seed Meal, 5pm
Sat, Feb 11 Pita Baking, 9am-noon
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

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

Holy Trinity is in need of **new or gently used IPODS and ITUNE gift cards** for the residents' Music and Memory Program. Please contact **Gina Metras**, Activities' Director at 508-852-1000 or gmetras@htnr.net.

COMMUNITY NEWS

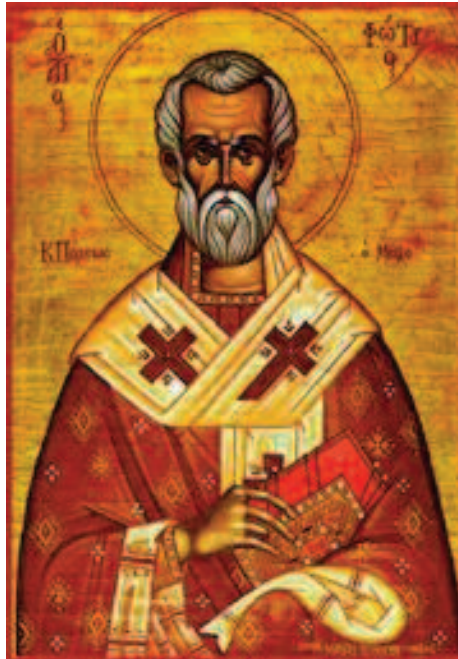
Notre Dame Academy (Catholic, college prep school for young women) is inviting seventh grade and transfer students to spend an academic day at NDA through May 1st. **If you're interested contact the Admissions Office at admissions@nda-worc.org.**

A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

O GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST: When your divine Son was brought into the temple, carried along with the offerings to be sacrificed, the blessed Simeon received him from the arms of his mother. The elder's joy, however, was tempered by apprehension, for, with the eyes of the spirit, he saw the powers of heaven in attendance, glorifying the infant saviour with great awe and reverence. Just as the divinity of your Son did not consume the elder, do not let it consume us, either, though we deserve it for our indifferent, careless, and fickle way of living. Rather, as we prepare for the night that quickly approaches, grant us forgiveness of our sins, and let peace and tranquillity restore our tired souls and bodies.

By the grace and mercy and love 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.



**ST. PHOTIOS THE GREAT,
ARCHBISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE
FEBRUARY 6**

As for the thrice-blessed Photius, the great and most resplendent Father and teacher of the Church, the Confessor of the Faith and Equal to the Apostles, he lived during the years of the emperors Michael (the son of Theophilus), Basil the Macedonian, and Leo his son. He was the son of pious parents, Sergius and Irene, who suffered for the Faith under the Iconoclast Emperor Theophilus; he was also a nephew of Saint Tarasius, Patriarch of Constantinople (see Feb. 25). He was born in Constantinople, where he excelled in the foremost imperial ministries, while ever practicing a virtuous and godly life. An upright and honorable man of singular learning and erudition, he was raised to the apostolic, ecumenical, and patriarchal throne of Constantinople in the year 857.

The many struggles that this thrice-blessed one undertook for the Orthodox Faith against the Manichaeans, the Iconoclasts, and other heretics, and the

attacks and assaults that he endured from Nicholas I, the haughty and ambitious Pope of Rome, and the great persecutions and distresses he suffered, are beyond number. Contending against the Latin error of the filioque, that is, the doctrine that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, he demonstrated clearly with his Mystagogy on the Holy Spirit how the filioque destroys the unity and equality of the Trinity. He has left us many theological writings, panegyric homilies, and epistles, including one to Boris, the Sovereign of Bulgaria, in which he set forth for him the history and teachings of the Seven Ecumenical Councils. Having tended the Church of Christ in holiness and in an evangelical manner, and with fervent zeal having rooted out all the tares of every alien teaching, he departed to the Lord in the Monastery of the Armenians on February 6, 891.



CONTINUE IN WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED AND FIRMLY BELIEVED

THIS Sunday we begin the Triodion, the Church's hymn book for Great Lent leading to Pascha. While Lent is still a few weeks off, the Fathers decided to help us get ready for it by focusing our attention through Scripture readings and hymns. Today's Gospel lesson is the parable of the the Publican (tax collector) and the Pharisee (Luke 18:10-14). The Epistle reading is from St. Paul's second letter to Timothy, 3:10-15.

Today's selected reading from St. Paul comes out of a portion of this second letter to Timothy concerned with the End-Times, that is, the Second Coming of Jesus. St. Paul is predicting what will happen to people as the time for the Lord's arrival draws near. He is particularly trying to encourage and strengthen his beloved disciple Timothy, who we learn from St. Paul's letters and in Acts, is a quiet and retiring person, not the kind of strong personality that St. Paul is himself.

The first thing that St. Paul offers Timothy is his own example. He has done this in other situations as well, for example when he tells the Corinthians that they might have many teachers but not many fathers (1 Cor 4:15); or when he tells them to "be imitators of me as I am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1). So, in a more gentle way, he says to Timothy: "You have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions, and my suffering the things that happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I endured! Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them" (v. 10-11). St. Paul had suffered in many places, but in this passage he only mentions those places that Timothy would personally remember, especially Lystra, where St. Timothy was born, raised, and first met St. Paul.

He then tells Timothy a sobering reality: "All who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (v. 12). He is speaking first and foremost

out of his own personal experience. While a committed disciple of the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem, he persecuted the followers of Christ mercilessly. When Jesus appeared to him on the way to Damascus and then became a follower of Jesus, he himself now became the one persecuted. In our own time Christian believers are being fire-bombed and killed even in their own Churches, in Nigeria, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Indonesia — only to mention a few places. For them and others a choice to openly confess their faith in Jesus Christ may very well mean a choice to suffer and die. Not so many years ago the same was true in all of the Eastern Bloc.

This is not to say that people of other faiths do not also suffer persecution — sometimes at the hands of 'Christians' — but suffering because of faith in the person and teachings of Jesus the Christ has distinguished His followers throughout the centuries, from the very beginning. Most of us have grown up in a political environment where we have never had to choose between our life and our faith. Unfortunately, from the outset, many Christians have. Regardless, it is never easy to be Christian. And, while we might not be forced by others to put our lives on the lines, we are still asked by the Lord Himself to die to ourselves in order to truly live, in Christ.

The second point, a corollary, is that: "wicked people and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived." (v. 13) One of the titles of the devil is the "Deceiver." It was through his deception that Eve took the fruit in the Garden. It was she who naïvely deceived Adam to share in it. (cf. Genesis 3:1ff) St. Paul speaks of a cycle of evil and wickedness. One feeds on the other. It becomes difficult, if not impossible, to stop. Only with God is it possible to break this cycle. (cf. Matthew 19:25-26)

St. Paul offers Timothy this instruc-

tion, both to strengthen his resolve in the face of persecution, as well as to prepare him to face the wickedness of the world. "Continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (v. 14-15).

Timothy's mother was a pious Jewish woman married to a pagan. Theirs was what we might call today a "mixed marriage." Nevertheless, she educated Timothy according to Jewish tradition; beginning from age five all Jewish children were to be instructed in the Sacred Writings. Yet even while recommending the study of Scripture, St. Paul also emphasizes the role of those people who taught him. We can infer that he meant first his mother. Just as he had offered himself as an example to follow, so too is he now reminding Timothy of his mother's example of faith. As parents we are the primary example our children look to for everything, but especially regarding our faith; the way we integrate and manifest what we say we believe in how we actually behave is what our children will remember and incorporate into their lives.

Finally he reiterates the power of Scripture to "instruct for salvation." Until recently it was common for children to memorize Scripture, and especially the Psalms. One requirement for ordination to the episcopacy is to be able to recite the entire Books of Psalms by heart. Verses of the Sacred Text that are engraved on our hearts come to our aid when we are struggling and in need of consolation. "Through our faith in Christ Jesus" the comforting words inspired by the Holy Spirit bring peace to our hearts and salvation to our souls.

Maranatha! ("Lord, come!")

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA

THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD IN THE TEMPLE

This feast, celebrated on February 2, is known in the Orthodox Church as The Presentation of Christ in the Temple. Another name for the feast is The Meeting of our Lord. Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians call the feast, The Purification of the Holy Virgin. About 450 AD in Jerusalem, people began the custom of holding lighted candles during the Divine Liturgy of this feast day. Therefore, some churches in the West refer to this holy day as Candlemas. The Feast of the Presentation concludes the observances related to the Nativity of Christ, a period that opened on November 15 with the beginning of the Nativity fast.

The story of the Presentation is told in Luke 2:22-29. Mary and Joseph were faithful Jews and observed their religious customs. An important custom was for the couple to take their first-born son to the Temple. The baby was taken to the Temple forty days after his birth and was dedicated to God. In addition, if the parents were wealthy, they were to bring a lamb and a young pigeon or a turtle dove to be offered as a sacrifice at the Temple. The custom provided that if the parents were poor, they were to offer two pigeons or two turtle doves for the sacrifice.

When Jesus was forty days old, Mary and Joseph took Him to the Temple in Jerusalem. They were not wealthy, so they took two turtle doves with them to offer as a sacrifice at the Temple. As they arrived at the Temple, Mary and

Joseph were met by a very old man named Simeon. He was a holy man and was noted as a very intelligent scholar. Simeon spent much time studying about the prophets of Israel. It was during his studies that he learned of the coming of the Messiah. The Jewish people were waiting for the Messiah to come and deliver Israel from their conquerors. From that time on, Simeon spent his time praying for the Messiah to come. He spent many years in prayer. Finally, while Simeon was praying he heard the voice of God. God promised Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah.

Simeon and Christ

Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God. When Simeon saw Jesus, he took the baby in his arms and blessed the Lord and said:

“Lord, now let Your servant go in peace according to Your promise, because my eyes have seen Your salvation which you have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory to your people Israel.”



Also, in the Temple was Anna the Prophetess. She had been a widow for many years. Anna was about eighty-four years old and spent her time in the Temple worshiping, fasting, and praying. When she saw the Christ Child she praised God and spoke of him to all who were awaiting the Messiah.

After Jesus was presented in the Temple, the family returned to Galilee to the town of Nazareth. The Bible tells us that Jesus grew and became strong, and was filled with wisdom.

