

# ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN JULY 9, 2017

## THIS WEEK'S NEWS

A **PITA DOUGH ROLLING** session, **THIS COMING Saturday, July 8th**, 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!**

**THE LATEST ISSUE** of the Archdiocesan quarterly magazine, *The Faith / Credința* is available at the Candles. Feel free to take a copy home with you.

**WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO HEAR FOR A SUNDAY SERMON?** During these summer weeks, Fr. Nick will answer your questions, address comments or speak on suggested topics during the sermon. This is your chance to ask the question you've always wondered about. No question is too simple or silly, and while some questions may be difficult or complex, he'll give it his best shot. **There are forms at the candles or you may e-mail your suggestion to him.**

**WE CELEBRATE A MEMORIAL** today for the servant of God **Florika Dragoti**, fallen asleep two years. **May her memory be eternal!**

**THIS SUNDAY'S COFFEE HOUR** is

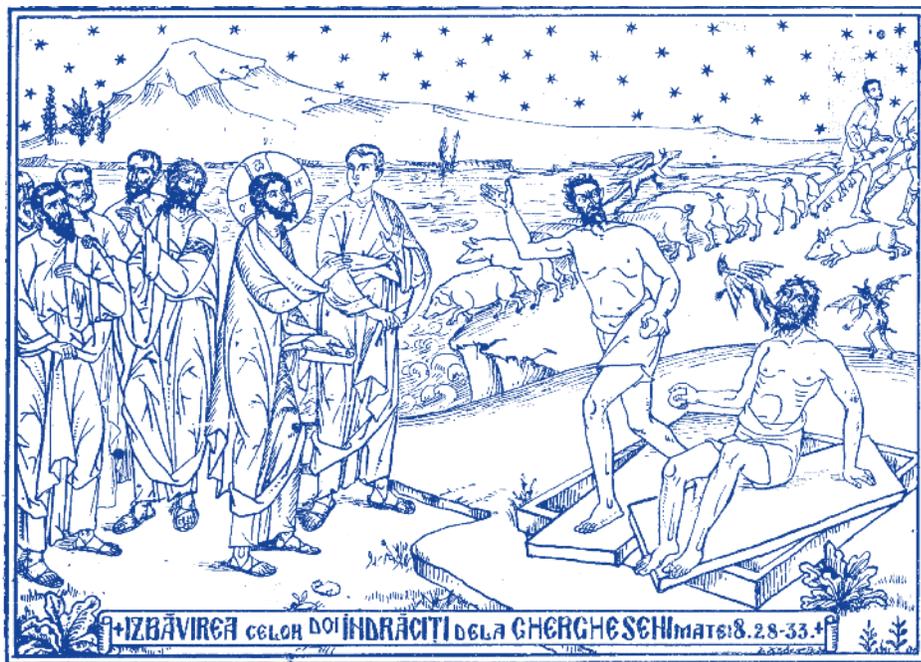
### GREETERS TEAM 2:

ARTIC GAVALA AND CĂLIN GALERIU

### COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP CREW C:

PRIZIO FAMILY

**ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED**



## THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

APOSTOLIC READING: ROMANS 10:1-10 ☩ GOSPEL: MATTHEW 8:28-9:1

(JESUS HEALS THE GADARENE DEMONIACS)

TONE 4 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL 5

sponsored by the **Dragoti family** in memory of **Florika**.

## COMMUNITY NEWS

**FREE FUN FRIDAYS** are back for the 9th season. There are more than 85 participating venues across the Commonwealth. For more information go to the Highland Street Foundation site: [www.highlandstreet.org/programs/free-fun-fridays](http://www.highlandstreet.org/programs/free-fun-fridays). The **Museum of Russian Icons** in Clinton is participating. Their **Friday is July 14th**. It's free. Visit their site: [www.museumofrussianicons.org/event/free-fun-friday/](http://www.museumofrussianicons.org/event/free-fun-friday/) for more information.

**ST. MICHAEL ANNUAL PICNIC** will be held on **Sunday, July 30th, 12:00pm - 6:00pm**, on the grounds at Romanian Avenue in Southbridge, featuring the usual

fare: Shish-Kebab, Home Made Romanian Pastries, music and many more surprises. For more information: [www.stmichaelorthodox.com](http://www.stmichaelorthodox.com)

## UP-COMING

**PARENTS PLEASE TAKE NOTE!** **Vacation Church School this summer will be August 7-9.** We will again be holding it in conjunction with Sts. Anargyroi in Marlborough. Please keep these date in mind when schedule other summer activities for your children.

## DATES TO REMEMBER

- Sat, July 8 Pita Dough Rolling, 9 am-noon
- Sun, July 30 St. Michael Southbridge Festival
- Aug 1-15 Dormition Fast
- Sat, Aug 5 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry, 9am-noon
- Aug 7-9 Vacation Church School
- Fri, Aug 18 Mustard Seed Meal, 5:00 pm

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A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Americas

**Questions?** see or e-mail: Valarie Stamoulis (valarie.stamoulis@gmail.com); cell: 617-803-3798.

## HOLY TRINITY NEWS

**SAVE THE DATE!** Holy Trinity's annual fundraiser, 11th Annual **Food and Wine Fest, Thursday, October 19, 2017.** 5:30-8:30pm at St. George Orthodox Cathedral. Watch for details to follow!

The latest issue of **Holy Trinity's "Guardian Angel Gazette"** is available on-line. It full of interesting information about our Nursing and Rehab Center. Check it out: [www.htnr.net/blog/](http://www.htnr.net/blog/)

## NAMEDAYS

**July 7**

***The Holy Martyr Kyriaki***

Kyri Sedares

**July 11**

***The Blessed Olga, Princess of Russia***

Olga Lolo

Olga Thanas

**July 12**

***St. Veronica, the woman healed by our Lord Jesus***

Veronica Pandaru

**July 16**

***The Holy Martyr Julia of Carthage***

Julia Donabed

**July 17**

***The Holy Great Martyr Marina (Margareta) of Antioch in Pisidia***

Margarite Landry

**July 20**

***The Holy Prophet Elijah (Elias)***

Elias James Christo

Irli Ilie Durmillari

Louis Evan Stamoulis

**July 24**

***The Holy Great Martyr Christina***

Christine Masterjohn

**July 26**

***The Holy Martyr Parascheve***

Premtina Thamel



The Vlachernæ Icon of the Mother of God was discovered at Jerusalem by the empress Eudokia during the time of Saint Juvenal, Patriarch of Jerusalem (July 2), and Saint Euthymius the Great (January 20). The holy icon was sent to Constantinople, where the empress Pulcheria placed it in the Vlachernæ Church, where the Venerable Robe of the Mother of God (July 2) was preserved.

This holy icon is also called the Hodigitria, or "She who leads the way." It was with this icon that Patriarch Sergius (610-631) made the rounds of the walls of Constantinople in the year 626 with Moliebens during a siege of the capital by the Avars. In memory of this and other victories, which were won thanks to the intercession of the Most Holy Theotokos, an annual celebration was established on Saturday of the Fifth Week of the Great Fast to offer Praises to the Most Holy Theotokos (Saturday of the Akathist). At first the celebration took place only at the Vlachernæ church in Constantinople. In the ninth century the Feast was included in the Typikon of Saint Sava the Sanctified, and in the Studite Rule. Later, it was included in the Lenten Triodion and made universal for all the Orthodox Church.

After the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, the Vlachernæ Icon was transferred to Mt. Athos, and in 1654 it was sent by the Athonite monks to Moscow as gift to the Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich.

The Vlachernæ Icon is celebrated on July 2, and in the Fifth Week of Great Lent (Saturday of the Akathist).

## A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

**L**ORD, OUR SOVEREIGN GOD: Let us acquire the treasure of love, for it is a grace that only your unspeakable generosity can provide. Let us understand that it is not only an act, but a state of the will, an attitude of the mind and heart, whereby we wish nothing but the very best for all others. In so doing, enable us also to perceive that emotions, the feelings we have for those we love, while all well and good, are not love, though they very frequently accompany it. Help us, Lord, to understand a little more of life.

For you are a loving God, and we give you glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

**Martyr Evangelicus**

**Bishop of Tomis, Constanța, Romania  
Commemorated on July 7**

Saint Evangelicus, a follower of the holy Apostle Andrew (November 30), is the first known bishop of the diocese of Tomis (Constanța) in Dacia Pontica (Lesser Scythia, or Dobrogea). He was active around the mouths of the Danube toward the end of the third century.

Bishop Evangelicus converted many pagans of Dacia Pontica to Christianity. He is mentioned in the account of the martyrdom of Saints Epictetus and Astion (July 8), where he is described as the founder of churches in the province. The parents of these holy martyrs were baptized by Saint Evangelicus after being converted by the priest Bonosus.

It is believed that Saint Evangelicus suffered martyrdom during the persecution of Diocletian (284-305).

## “HAVE YOU COME TO TORMENT US BEFORE THE TIME?”

**T**HIS Sunday’s Gospel lesson touches on a topic both very interesting and somewhat sensitive: demonic possession and mental illness. It is the account of the healing of the demoniacs of the Gadarenes (or, Gergesenes) found in the Gospel of Matthew (8:28-9:1). There are parallel accounts of this exorcism also found in Mark 5:1-20 and Luke 8:26-39.

Throughout the Gospels, we find many people who come to the Lord asking for healing who today we might describe as suffering from various mental illnesses, but who the Evangelists record as having, or being possessed by, a demon. Today, we view abnormal behavior through the lens of modern social and medical science, and this informs and shapes our understanding. We know how such maladies can lead a person to do many horrible things, both to themselves and to others. We could fairly describe these people as not being themselves, not being “in their right mind,” not reflecting the true essence of who they are. This Gospel passage provides us with an opportunity to look at mental illness and demonic possession from both a spiritual and social scientific perspective.

In Matthew’s account, prior to the Lord’s encounter with the demoniacs, he and the disciples had reached land after having sailed through a tremendous storm. Even though the wind and water were raging, Jesus had been sleeping throughout, but, fearing death, his disciples woke him. He rose, raised his hands, and rebuked the winds and the sea. The disciples marveled, wondering “what sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?” (v. 27)

Shortly afterward, when on the shore, the Lord encounters the demoniacs. The demons are similarly awed by Jesus, but they don’t wonder “what sort of man is this.” Unlike the disciples, they recognize him immediately. They know who he is. They say: “What have you to



do with us, O Son of God?” (v. 29) But lest we think that the demons are happy to see him, they add: “Have you come to torment us before the time?”

Knowing that Jesus is going to expel them from these men, they ask permission to enter the herd of swine feeding nearby. He says to them: “Go.” They leave the persons they had possessed, and enter the swine, who run down the steep bank and drown in the sea.

We have a number of points to consider in this encounter. First, notice that the demons need Jesus’ permission to leave the persons possessed and enter the swine. The Lord has power over them. Second, the demons bring the swine to immediate destruction. It could be that they delighted in killing the animals, or that the animals could not tolerate being under their influence. And third, everyone witnessing this event was frightened. The townspeople even begged Jesus to leave them (v. 34). The reality of demonic possession terrified them. The reality of evil overwhelmed them. But neither were they ready to accept the alternative that Jesus

offered them.

How should we understand this story? There are two points that we might take away from this miracle. First, God is always in charge. God’s grace was protecting the people possessed by the demons even while in their state of possession. We see what happened to the pigs when Jesus allowed the demons to enter them. This is what would happen to us if God allowed the demons free reign.

Second, the demons are working constantly for our destruction. Sometimes, we give them entry into our lives through our “passions:” greed, envy, even laziness and jealousy. And, they play with us. Before we know it we are under their influence. Sometimes we fall victim to the genetic or biological fissures in our bodies that make us susceptible. Addictions, mental illnesses and more are often the result of many complicated factors. We do know this though: people struggling with addictions and mental illness many times hurt and destroy themselves and others. They can feel disassociated from their actions, as though someone or something else were controlling them and causing bad things to happen. Is this not “possession?” All sickness has both physical and spiritual components.

Mark and Luke add one more interesting aspect to this encounter. Once they had been freed from their captivity, the men formerly possessed asked the Lord if they might follow him; become disciples. While they certainly would become powerful witness, he charges them rather to go back home, to their family and friends to testify what God had done for them. This is something each of us is asked to do: reflect on how God has changed your life and share that good news with those around you.

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA