

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN OCTOBER 8, 2017

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASSES are in session. Please try not to disrupt classes by walking in the coffee hour area, hallway or going to the kitchen.

PITA BAKING. There will be a Pita Baking Session, **THIS COMING Saturday, October 14th, 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!**

OUR NEXT MUSTARD SEED MEAL is Friday, October 20th. We'll need help cooking and serving. **Prep** help needed (3 persons), noon Thursday. **Prep** help needed (2 persons), noon Friday. **Serving** help needed (5 persons), 5:30pm Friday. **This month's meal is sponsored by Maria Kalpidou and Kosmas Karadimitriou** in memory of Maria's grandmother, **Maria Albani**, and the members of their family, fallen asleep. **May their memory be eternal!** If you'd like to help with the meal, please talk to Fr. Nick.

THANKS TO THE RECYCLING DAY crew. This is a real service not only to our parish, but also to the community at large. We have another date coming up:

GREETERS TEAM 4:

DEBORAH SEDARES & EVAN STAMOULIS

COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP CREW D:

ILIANA & SEAN FAHEY,
DIMITRI SAFFRON & MACLYNN TROJAN
CHRISTOS & SPIRO SPYROU

ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED



THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
EPISTLE: GALATIANS 1:11-19 ☩ GOSPEL: LUKE 7:11-16
(RAISING OF THE WIDOW OF NAIN'S SON)
TONE 1 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL: 7

Saturday, November 11th. If you're able and willing to help, please speak with **Gerry Belba.**

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 November 4th.**

PLEASE 'LIKE' OUR PARISH FACEBOOK PAGE! It's another way for us to share information about upcoming events on your time-line. We'll also be able to reach a broader audience. Just search for "**St. Nicholas Orthodox Church Shrewsbury**" and click **'LIKE.'**

UP-COMING

A GIFT BASKET RAFFLE is an additional fundraiser at our **Holiday Marketplace on**

Saturday, November 18th. We are asking for donations of **NEW** items all centered on a theme to be assembled into gift baskets. We also welcome cash donations. All items must be received by November 5th. **Questions?** contact **Tim Rucho** (tjruchov@verizon.net)

COMMUNITY NEWS

THE IVERON HAWAIIAN ICON OF THE THEOTOKOS will be at Ss. Constantine & Helen in Webster on **Monday, October 16th** from 5:30 pm, and at St. George Cathedral on Anna Street, on **Wednesday, October 18th**, from 7:00 am through the the Paraklesis service at 7:00 pm. The Theotokos has worked

DATES TO REMEMBER

Sat, Oct 14 Pita Baking, 9am-noon
Thurs, Oct 19 Holy Trinity Wine & Food Fest
Fri, Oct 20 Mustard Seed Meal, 5:00 pm
Sat, Nov 4 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry, 9am-noon
Sat, Nov 11 e-Recycling, 9am-2pm
Sat, Nov 18 Holiday Marketplace, etc.!

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A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Americas

many miracles through this Myrrh-streaming image. *It is a great blessing to have this holy image here with us.*

PROF. CANDACE HETZNER, of Boston College, will deliver the Bishop Flanagan Lecture at **Assumption College on Wednesday, October 18th at 7:00 pm**. The title of her talk will be: *“An Orthodox College?”* She will address the question as to why has Christian Orthodoxy done so little to establish institutions of higher learning in the United States, and argue that many features of the theology of the Church, as well as Orthodox Christian experience in its various jurisdictions, would provide a rich culture for intellectual and spiritual development for both students and the Church itself. Now is the time for the Orthodox Church to invest in a robust Orthodox college. Admission is free. **Location: Testa Science Center, Room 006, Fuller Auditorium.**

ARCHDEACON SERAPHIM of St. George Cathedral will be ordained to the Holy Priesthood on October 22nd. He has served at St. George for over 25 years. We wish him well, and say with a loud voice: *Axios!*

NOTRE DAME ACADEMY is holding an open house on **Thursday, Oct 22nd at 7:00 pm** for prospective students (young women grades 7-12). For info: www.nda-worc.org, or call: 508-757-6200 x229.

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

HERE IT COMES! Another great **FOOD & WINE FEST** benefiting Holy Trinity Nursing & Rehab Center. Terrific food, music, wine and friends while supporting a great facility. Can't ask for more! Thursday, Oct. 19th, 5:30-8:30 at St. George Cathedral, 30 Anna St., Worcester. **For tickets see either Irene Tsoules or Margarite Landry.**

A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

O GOD, MIGHTY LORD, of all who are true to you: Enable us to learn from the painful emptiness that so often assails us. Help us to understand that only you can fill that emptiness, but only if we truly desire it. Help us to love you and acknowledge your name. Assist us in our struggles to attain some wisdom and understanding, enabling us to attain a life that grows richer in quality with every day that passes. And grant that we may taste your saving power.

For you deserve all glory, honor, and worship, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

NAMEDAYS

October 7

The Holy Martyr Sergius in Syria
Sergis Eleftheriou

October 18

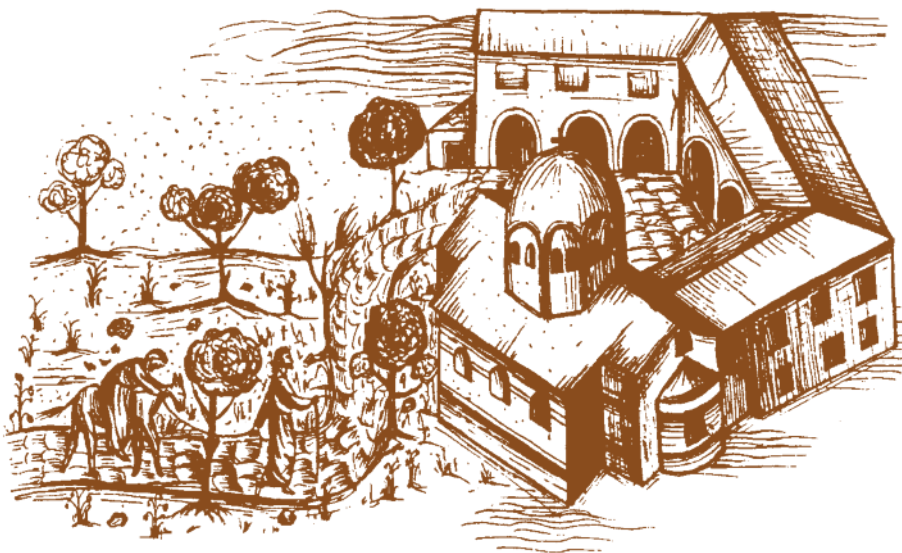
The Holy Apostle & Evangelist Luke
Fr. Luke Veronis

October 20

The Great-martyr Artemius of Antioch
Artemie Gavala
Artemis Gouvelis

October 26

The Holy Great-martyr Dimitrios of Thessalonika
Rev. Fr. Dimitri Moraitis
Dimitri Soterios Apostola
Dhimitra Belica
Dimitri Daniel Christo
James L. Christo
James Demake
Dhimitri Disho
Dimitraq Lolo
Dimitraqi Lolo
Dimitri Michael Saffron
James Seferi
James Evan Stamoulis
James Trakadas
James Vlamis



WE CHOOSE

PEOPLE ARE FUNNY. Have you ever noticed how when things are going wrong in our life we begin to look for scapegoats? We tend to place the blame for our successive low points on those around us: our enemies, our friends and even our family. Or we choose something more encompassing like fate or even God. Actually, when things are going really badly it is usually God who takes the blame. We usually look everywhere to find the source of our misfortune except where we should: ourselves.

There is a basic spiritual principle we might want to keep in mind: in the final analysis we are the ones who choose. We decide, not others, not fate, and remarkably, not even God. How we ultimately navigate the twists and turns of our life does not depend on anyone other than ourselves. We can surrender ourselves to ‘fate’ or ‘chance’ or ‘luck’ or ‘misfortunes’, but even in surrendering, we decide. No matter what might befall us, we are still in control of how we receive whatever good or ill has been dealt us. In the deciding we will find out the kind of person we will be, and this will shape us.

Those of you who know me might begin to wonder what kind of water I’ve been drinking. You know that I believe economic, political and social forces are always pushing and pulling us. They sometimes present opportunities or limit our choices. Some are advantaged and some disadvantages. These forces and more exert great pressure on each of us. Where we are born. Who our parents are (or aren’t). Where you go to school. Who your friends are. These and more are profoundly influential. I haven’t changed my understanding of how these externals impact us. But, this is not the whole story.

We are living in a turbulent period

of history. I guess one could say this of almost any time period, but some are calmer than other. It’s hard not to think that perhaps the Chinese curse: “May you live in interesting times”, has been visited upon us. We do not get to decide when and where we are born. We only get to decide how we will face whatever difficulties and joys we encounter. How we shoulder these will test our mettle. Will we find comfort and strength in the wisdom in our Lord’s Gospel? Or, will we look for it elsewhere?



St. John Chrysostom has a small (small, at least, by his standards) treatise entitled: “No one can harm the person who does not injure himself.” In this work he speaks of what it means to be a human being; what truly injures a person; what virtue is and what makes a person virtuous. I feel the need to quote him at length. I usually avoid long quotes when writing these reflections, but at times I think important for all of us to come in direct contact with these great people that we usually only reference from a distance. Most of us know of St. John only through the Liturgy that bears his name. But his even those works still accessible to us today — yes even in English — could fill a whole section in any library. We all should read more directly from the great spiri-

tual people who devoted themselves to God’s Word over the millennia, to sharing the Good News with all would wanted to hear it. It is inspiring to listen to these persons in their own voice. As you read, you’ll find that our concerns were their concerns. The things we are feeling and suffering are not new, but have been experienced by human beings from the time of Adam and Eve. So, listen to Chrysostom in his own words, as he preached to his own congregation:

“Let us determine what the virtue of a person is, and let us regard that alone as an injury which is destructive to it. What then is the virtue of a person? Not riches that you should fear poverty; nor a healthy body, that you should dread sickness; nor public opinion, that you should view an evil reputation with alarm; nor life simply for its own sake, that death should be terrible to you; nor liberty, that you should avoid being enslaved: but carefulness in holding true doctrine, and rectitude in life. Of these things not even the devil himself will be able to rob a person, if he or she who possess them guards them with needful carefulness. And, that most malicious and ferocious demon is aware of this. For this reason he robbed Job of everything, not to make him poor, but that he might force him into saying something against God. And, he tortured his body, not to make him sick, but to upset the virtue of his soul.”

Let me caution you, St. John Chrysostom doesn’t speak in short sentences. He was trained by the greatest pagan rhetorician of his day. Public speaking was both art and entertainment, and St. John was a master, hence the title: Chrysostom (Golden-mouth). So, be patient as you read, but be entertained as well. Notice the twists and turns of phrase and the subtle allusions

he makes. Today thousands show up at rock concerts and sporting events. It may be hard to imagine, but people showed up in the thousands just to listen to him. We are still reading his sermons one thousand and seven hundred years later. He was (and is) something.

Now, let's look at the passage above. Chrysostom points out that we often define who we are through the externals of our life. We judge ourselves through the eye of our neighbor, or at least what we think they might think of us. We want a nice house, beautiful possessions, a handsome body, great wealth, a good job so that we can gain people's respect. To our shame, we often use these externals of life to judge others, so, it is not unreasonable to think that other people use these same criteria to judge our worth. "Keeping up with the Joneses" is not a new phenomenon. People pretend and exaggerate on social media to impress. It's commonly understood that lots of postings are simple lies. To some degree, the world-wide economic and political crises that we seem not to be able to escape are caused by people and nations wanting to live beyond their means in order to make a "good" impression. "Vanity of vanities" (Ecclesiastes 1:2), "all is vanity," as the saying goes.

As a remedy, Chrysostom introduces us to different kind of way of thinking about these things captured in a word: virtue. Virtue is an idea that has almost passed from our consciousness. If we use the word at all it usually has to do with moral behavior. In Chrysostom's world virtue had to do with the measure a person's worth. In speaking of your own virtue, it meant how you measured your own worth, as against what you said you believed. When Chrysostom speaks of 'virtue' he's talking about the measure of person's worth or integrity. He reminds us our worth is not in the externals, but resides in the

very depth of the heart. It shapes how we behave and act.

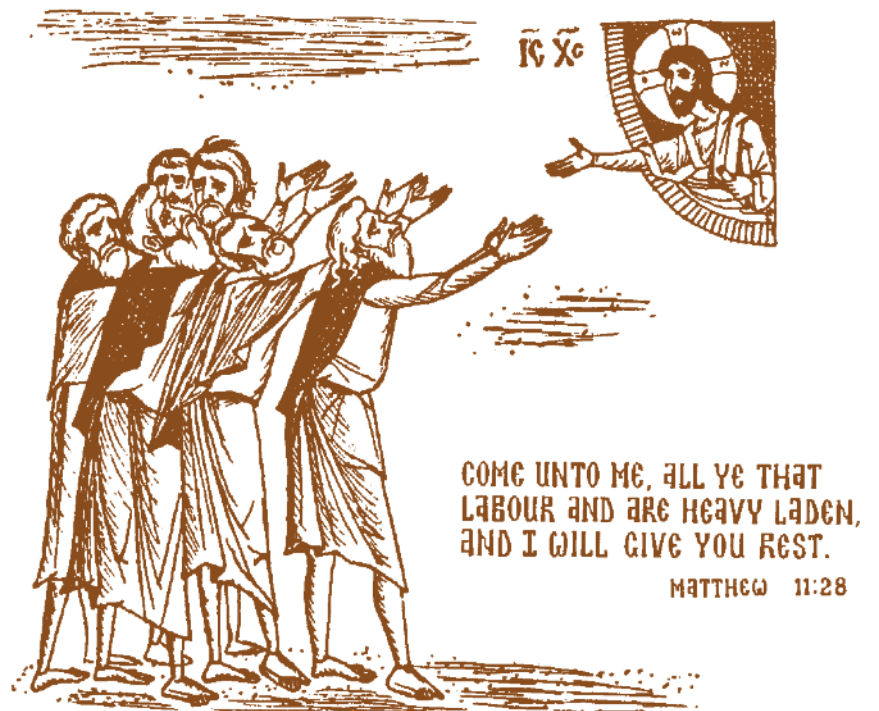
We are also living in a time where our collective material wealth is on the increase, yet the way in which this collective wealth is shared is uneven at best. The disparities are very troubling. Some have substantial wealth, but many more have lost a job or have had to take a cut in pay. Others are working two or three jobs to make ends meet. Even as the economy seems to have improved for many, life remains tenuous for many others. Given the outlook, I am sure many of us have all asked ourselves: what if all my possessions were taken away, as in the case of Job? Who am I then? How much do these 'things' really define who I am? Do I become less of a person because I am poor or sick, unemployed or underemployed? Where should I look when I want to understand myself, in my 'things' or in my soul's virtue?

A person is really injured or harmed not when some evil happens to them,

but when they allow that offense to touch their soul. At first this may seem ridiculous. Each of us has felt the touch of evil and how it can effect us. However, St. John Chrysostom is not primarily concerned with the evil intent, but rather concentrates his gaze on how we either allow or resist an attempt by person or event to touch and effect us. He tells us that it is how we respond that really matters.

St. John was himself a person who suffered many hardships at the hands of Christian rulers and Church authorities. He wasn't speaking in the abstract, giving advice without having had the experience. In fact he died during his second harsh exile after having been tortured and starved. But he never speaks of his own sufferings, rather he points to the life of St. Paul as an example.

"Didn't [St. Paul] suffer so many distresses that even to make a list of them is no easy matter? He was put in prison, loaded with chains, dragged here and there, scourged by the Jews,



stoned, lacerated on the back not only by thongs, but also by rods, he was immersed in the sea, oftentimes beset by robbers, involved in strife with his own countrymen, continually assailed both by foes and by acquaintances, subjected to countless intrigues, struggling with hunger and nakedness, undergoing other frequent and lasting mischances and afflictions: and why do I have to mention all these? He was dying every day: but yet, although subject to so many and such grievous sufferings, he not only uttered no blasphemous word, but rejoiced over these things and gloried in them: and on one occasion he says 'I rejoice in my sufferings,' and another time 'not only this but we also glory in afflictions.' If then he rejoiced and gloried when suffering such great troubles, what excuse will you have, and what defense will you make if you blaspheme when you do not undergo even the smallest fraction of them."

Being the consummate preacher that he is, Chrysostom answers the question that's taking shape in our minds, even before it reaches our lips.

"But some will say he was Paul, and called by Christ. Yet Judas also was one of the twelve, and he too was called by Christ; but neither his being of the twelve nor his call profited him, because he had not a mind disposed to virtue. But Paul although struggling with hunger, and at a loss to procure necessary food, and daily undergoing such great sufferings, pursued with great zeal the road which leads to heaven; whereas Judas although he had been called before [Paul], and enjoyed the same advantages as he did, and was initiated in the highest form of Christian life, and partook of the holy table and that most

awful of sacred feasts, and received such grace as to be able to raise the dead, and cleanse lepers, and cast out devils, and often heard discourses concerning poverty, and spent so long a time in the company of Christ himself, and was entrusted with money of the poor, so that his passion might thereby be soothed, (for he was a thief), even then did he not become any better, although he had been favored with such great condescension. For since Christ knew that he was greedy and destined to perish on account of his love of money he not only did not demand punishment of him for this at that time, but with a view toward softening down his passion he was entrusted with the money of the poor, that having some means of appeasing his greed he might be saved from falling into that appalling gulf of sin, checking the greater evil before hand by a lesser one."

And so, St. John places two powerful examples before us. Consider, two people with profound opportunities, and each with their own flaws. Paul (Saul) persecuted Christians zealously. Judas had light fingers. Christ embraces them both with mercy and pours out his grace over them. So, while different in personality, they are similar in opportunity.

Paul, who in spite of all that he suffers, or perhaps because of it, becomes a great missionary, and with God's grace transforms human history.

Judas, who in spite of all the grace poured out on him, rejects this great love and loses everything, especially his soul.

What separates them is not the gift given, but how they responded to it and used it. Actually, if we looked at these

two situations as the world might look at them, it is Paul who is the loser. He had the hard life: sickness, prison, exile, beatings, and finally execution. Judas, because he was greedy and ungrateful, even with the advantages he had, but taking no care for his virtue, loses not only his physical existence but his spiritual one as well.

Each of us confronts hardships in our life; most of us never even approach the difficulties encountered by Paul and the other Apostles, or Job and the other prophets and saints. But through their vigilance, perseverance, and faith they didn't allowed those injuries to touch them. Rather each trial became an opportunity to glorify God. At the same time, as with Judas, no one is able to help persons who will not help themselves: by being temperate, mustering all their resources, and placing their sights on heavenly things.

Chrysostom concludes this short reflection by repeating what he had said at the outset: if any person is harmed and injured it is because of what they suffer at their own hands, not at the hands of others, even if there are countless numbers who injure and insult. "So if a person does not injure him or herself, not all the creatures who inhabit the whole earth and sea if they combined to attack would be able to hurt one who is vigilant and sober in the Lord. Let us then, I beseech you, be sober and vigilant at all times, and let us endure all painful things bravely that we may obtain those ever-lasting and pure blessings in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory and power, now and ever and through all ages. Amen."

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA

