

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN DECEMBER 2, 2018

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

WE ARE IN THE NATIVITY FAST. Let us use this time to withdraw from the noise of the "Christmas Season," in order to reflect on the great mystery of Emmanuel: God-with-us!

ST. NICHOLAS FEASTDAY

Our *Parish Feastday* is this coming week.

- **On Wednesday, December 5,** we will celebrate **Great Vespers at 6:00 PM.** As is the custom, we will welcome many clergy and faithful from neighboring Orthodox parishes. Please make every effort to attend this beautiful service.
- **On Thursday, December 6 at 10:00 AM,** we will celebrate the **Divine Liturgy for the Feast.** (Matins at 9:00 AM.)
- **On Sunday, December 9,** will celebrate the **Divine Liturgy beginning at 10:00 AM,** preceded by Matins at 9 AM.
- After the Divine Liturgy we will be serving a **light buffet luncheon.** Our **Feast Day Raffle** will be held during the luncheon. The meal costs are being sponsored in the memory of Angela Prizio Demake. At the same time we're asking for you to consider

GREETERS TEAM 4:

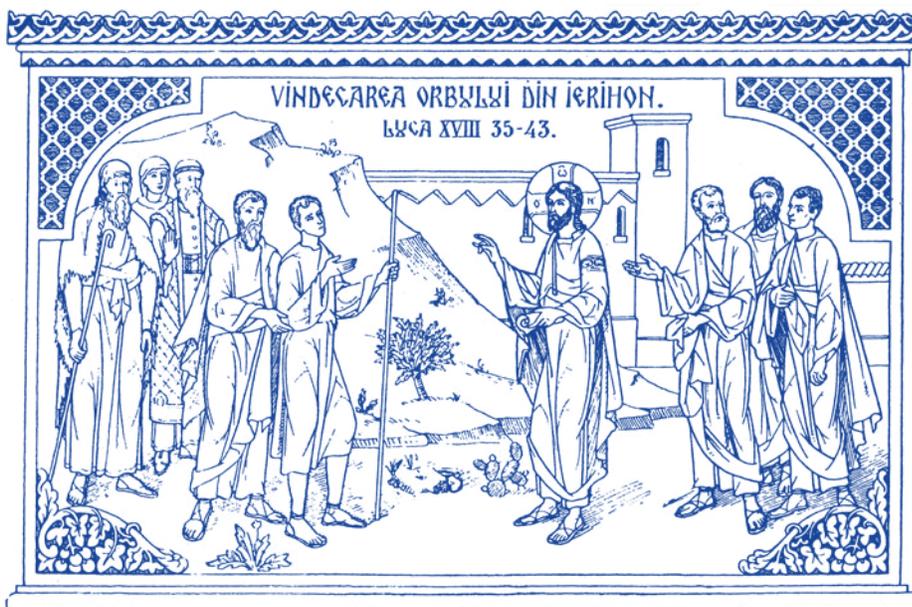
DIMITRI SAFFRON AND SEAN FAHEY

COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP:

HELP NEEDED

PICK UP A CUP - LEND A HAND

ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED



THE THIRTY FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

EPISTLE: 1 TIMOTHY 1:15-17 ☩ GOSPEL: LUKE 18:35-43

(JESUS HEALS THE BLIND MAN OF JERICO)

TONE 2 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL 5

a free will offering to support our Parish.

A PITA BAKING SESSION will be held on **Friday, December 7th.** **Questions?** See Chris Toda or Betty Anderson. **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 January 5th.

THE ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP APPEAL is underway. Our church relies upon the offering of time, talents and treasure from each of us. We ask that you prayerfully consider an offering of time, talents and treasure to sustain our beloved church for the

glory of God. *Wishing you and your loved ones a blessed Holiday Season.*

THE FEASTDAY RAFFLE TICKETS have been mailed. We still need our own parishioners to promote the Raffle by selling tickets and/or following up with those who got them by mail. **Questions?** **Tom Fitzpatrick** for tickets and ways to help: Tom.l.fitzpatrick1006@gmail.com or 508-887-1896 **OR George Demake:** gdemake@charter.net or 774-535-2821.

TODAY'S COFFEE HOUR is sponsored by **Carol Fotos**, in memory of her **husband Stephanos** fallen asleep seven years.

DATES TO REMEMBER

- Wed, Nov 14 Christmas Fast began
- Wed, Dec 5 Vespers for St. Nicholas 6:00 PM
- Thurs, Dec 6 Liturgy for St. Nicholas, 10:00 AM
- Sun, Dec 9 Feastday Celebration Luncheon
- Fri, Dec 21 Mustard Seed Meal, 5:00 PM
- Tues, Dec 25 Nativity of the Lord
- Sat, Jan 5 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry, 9 AM-noon

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A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Americas

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR HOLY TRINITY RESIDENTS. 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 these gifts. You will be asked to purchase and wrap the gift, and bring it to the Church by Sunday, December 16th. **Eleanor Sedares (508-753-3106)** is coordinating this effort for our parish and can offer suggestions if you need ideas of what to get.

MOMENT TO MOMENT: The Alzheimer's Caregiver Journey, is a presentation that Holy Trinity is sponsoring on **Tuesday, December 4th from 3:00-4:00 pm** at Holy Trinity. Learn new communication skills, how to cope with personality changes, and how to manage the impact upon the family. You'll learn how to take better care of yourself as well. **This is open to all!** Contact **Christie Sullivan** for questions: 508-852-1000, and please RSVP.

THANKSGIVING DAY AT HOLY TRINITY WAS A REAL EVENT! Listen to some of the comments we heard from residents and families: One resident said: "The kitchen outdid themselves. She said pure perfection from the decorations to the dinner she said the tables were done beautifully." Another resident said that, "Her daughter and son-in-law enjoyed the dinner, especially the green bean casserole and the squash." was delicious as well as the squash. Reporting on her husband, "who is a hard man to please," one resident said that "he said he regretted not paying for one more meal to take home." She said, "It was the best meal I have had since I have been a resident here."

A \$5,000 FOUNDATION GRANT was recently received by Holy Trinity through the efforts of a resident family

member and our staff! Holy Trinity is regularly seeking such grants. If you know of **grants for which Holy Trinity may be eligible**, please contact our Administrator: **Jerry Shaffer at 508-852-1000.**

There are concerts and cultural events regularly scheduled at Holy Trinity, especially during the month of December. Everyone is invited! Check out the list at: www.htnr.net/copy-of-events and mark your calendar. You'll have a great time and brighten the day of many a resident.

WISH-LIST ITEM: Holy Trinity is looking for donations of **large print word search books.** They could be new or used. Cash donations are also welcomed. If you're able and willing to help, please **contact: Dana Spinney,** Activities Director, at 508-852-1000 or e-mail: dspinney@htnr.net

A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

O GOD, WHO ARE GOOD TO ALL: Help us escape the sadness and anger that accompany our recollection of injuries done to us, real or imagined. Let us experience the joy that comes not only from forgiving but also from forgetting them. Clear our minds and memories of whatever we think others have done to us. Make us determined to repay it all only with good, and to give everyone the benefit of the doubt always.

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



NAMEDAYS

December 4

The Great-martyr Barbara and St. John of Damascus

Barbara Jean Grniet

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
Nicholas R. Demake
Nikolla Endriko
Nicholas Ermilio
Frank W. Ford
Nicholas John Johnson
Nicole Amelia Karadimitriou
Nicholas Mazanitis
Nicholas Peter Mentis
Nicolae Nace
Rev. Fr. Nicolae Simion
Nicholas George Soter
Nicholas Tonna
Nicole Marta Trakadas
Nicholas Valoras

December 12

St. Spyridon the Wonderworker of Tremithus

Spiro Kelly
Spiro Spyrou

I AM THE CHIEF SINNER

THE Epistle lesson for this thirty-first Sunday after Pentecost is taken from St. Paul's first Letter to his disciple Timothy: 1:15-17. This letter, along with second Timothy and Titus form a unique group: pastoral letters addressed to particular persons and who are heads of Churches. In them St. Paul takes up the challenges facing local church leaders even as he sets an overarching direction for the whole early Church.

The three verses of today's reading are not so much addressed to Timothy as they are a moment of self-reflection on St. Paul's part. In these and the few preceding verses, he looks back on his former life — what he characterized as zealous, but totally misdirected — and the degree to which God, in His mercy, had completely transformed it.

In verse 15 he gives us a statement that lies at the heart of the Christian proclamation: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." He says that this saying "is sure and worthy of full acceptance." In other words, we can rely on it and trust that it is true; we shouldn't doubt it.

One reason St. Paul states this so categorically is that, in spite of the fact that many people did accept these words as Good News, many others did not. While this shouldn't surprise us, since we often experience the same reaction today, there is an important difference between St. Paul's time and ours. People of the Roman world had a better sense of what sin is than we do today. It isn't that they were more moral than us — anyone who has read a history of the Roman Empire can testify to that. It is that even while they were sinning they could more readily recognize it as such. We have a harder time figuring this out.

One characteristic of sin is that it is always easier to recognize it in someone else than in yourself. Another rule is that sin reflects a violation of relationships: between us and God, between us and our loved ones, between us and

people we don't even know; and finally between our true selves and the mask that we put on to fool ourselves.

However, St. Paul sets us on the right trajectory for understanding sin. At the end of this verse, after telling us that Jesus has come to save sinners, he adds: "of whom I am the foremost." He judges himself first.

Remember, this whole verse is part of the prayer, attributed to St. John Chrysostom, that we say before Communion. It begins: "I believe and confess that you are the Christ the Son of the living God ..." As we pray we, like St. Paul, are asked to recognize ourselves as the "chief sinner."

While logic tells us we all can't be the "chief sinner," St. Paul's assertion isn't about logic, it's about point of view. We stop looking at the speck in the eye of another and concentrate on the log lodged in our own (cf. Matthew 7:3ff). By speaking of his own sins, St. Paul provides us with an example to follow, and the courage to embrace the "sure and worthy" news that God loves us. He says as much to Timothy in verse 16. His argument is that if we could see how God poured His mercy on Paul, after all of the things he had done against God and His Christ, then we would gain the strength to accept God's mercy and forgiveness for ourselves.

It is probably harder for modern people to accept a second characteristic of sin, that sin is a violation of relationships. In spite of the deep aloneness and isolation so many people feel, it remains difficult to break out of our narcissistic shell and truly engage those around us; to allow them and their needs to be as important to us as our own. Our airwaves are populated by endless talk shows on building relationships; innumerable books and articles are written on that same subject; millions upon millions of people search Facebook postings for friends whom they will never really meet. In spite of this the pain of

our aloneness grows. The root cause is the hard shell of our egos that prevents us from truly engaging those around us. We live virtual lives. We text the person sitting next to us rather than looking into their eyes. We crave experiences rather than relationships. This is at the heart of sin.

God did not send us an ambassador. He came Himself. He didn't ask anything of us, except our love. In fact, He gave us His love without waiting for our response. St. Paul says He did this, dying for us, while we were still His enemies (cf. Romans 5:10). It would be a sin not to love God in return.

We make a great deal about people who put themselves in harm's way for the sake of a friend or even a stranger. Police and firefighters do this all the time. Soldiers do this defending their nation. We call them heroes, and rightly so. These are people who in one instant will forget about themselves and completely give of themselves for the sake of the other. They crack open their shell of narcissism and become vulnerable, even to death.

Each of us can do the same. We don't necessarily have to die, except to ourselves, but we can take responsibility for our own actions, rather than blame someone else. We can hold our tongues while listening to someone with whom we disagree. We can suffer through painful moments in our relationships, hoping to bridge the gap that separates. We can be faithful, loyal and honest, even when others are duplicitous. We can love the ones around us more than we love ourselves. All of this is possible when we realize that we are the "chief sinner," and God loves us.

"To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen" (v. 17).

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA