

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN DECEMBER 9, 2018

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

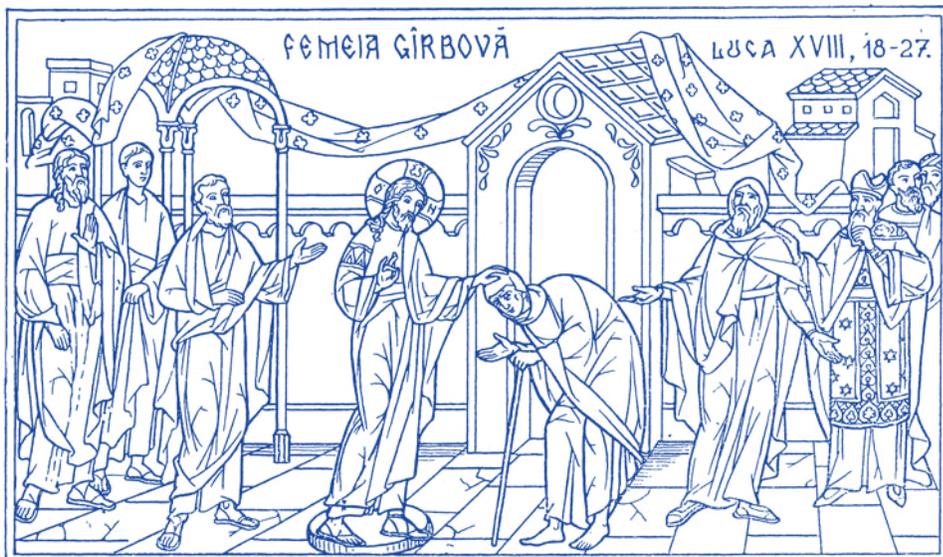
WE ARE IN THE NATIVITY FAST. Let us use this time to withdraw from the noise of the "Christmas Season," in order to reflect on the great mystery of Emmanuel: God-with-us!

ST. NICHOLAS FEASTDAY

We are celebrating our *Parish Feastday TODAY*, honoring the *patron Saint of our Community, the holy Bishop St. Nicholas*. Following the Divine Liturgy we'll have a *light buffet 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 a free will offering to support our Parish.

ALSO, WE WILL HOLD THE DRAWING FOR THE FEASTDAY RAFFLE during the Luncheon. If you haven't purchased your tickets, please see **George Demake or Tom Fitzpatrick** right after Liturgy.

OUR CHILDREN & YOUTH CHRISTMAS PROGRAM will be held on **Sunday, December 23rd**. Preparation and rehearsal will occur **during Religious Ed on Sunday the 16th**. All of those who are interested please attend on that Sun-



THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

APOSTOLIC READING: EPHESIANS 6:10-17 ☩ GOSPEL: LUKE 13:10-17

(JESUS HEALS THE WOMAN WITH OSTEOPOROSIS)

TONE 3 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL: 6

day. **Questions?** see **Valarie Stamoulis or Deb Sedares**.

DON'T FORGET to send in your **2018 Stewardship contribution**. If you haven't done so already, please send it in as soon as possible.

THE 2019 CHURCH CALENDARS are here, in both English and Romanian. Pick them up at the candles. Please consider a small donation to cover the costs.

THE COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS CARD is happening once again this year! The parish Christmas card is mailed to the entire membership of our St. Nicholas Family. The Christmas Card flier is available at the Church. *We want our whole Community to be a part of this Christmas greeting!*

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR HOLY TRINITY RESIDENTS. If you have volun-

teered to purchase gifts for the Residents, please make sure to bring them to the Church by next Sunday, December 16th. **QUESTIONS?** **Eleanor Sedares (508-753-3106)**.

SPONSOR A MUSIC CONCERT AT HOLY TRINITY! If you and your family would like to sponsor a music concert for the residents, please contact **Dana Spinney**, Activities Director, at 508-852-1000 or e-mail: dspinney@htnr.net *For a small donation of \$100-\$150, you can bring an uplifting afternoon of music and celebration.*

DATES TO REMEMBER

- Wed, Nov 14 Christmas Fast began
- Sun, Dec 9 Feastday Celebration Luncheon
- Fri, Dec 21 Mustard Seed Meal, 5:00 PM
- Sun, Dec 23 Children & Youth Christmas Program
- Tues, Dec 25 Nativity of the Lord
- Sat, Jan 5 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry, 9 AM-noon

GREETERS TEAM 5:

DEBORAH SEDARES & EVAN STAMOULIS

COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP:

HELP NEEDED

PICK UP A CUP - LEND A HAND

ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED

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A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Americas

This Sunday, December 9th at 2:00pm the students of Claremont Academy will work with the residents on Seasonal Crafting projects. Everyone is invited! **There are more events open to all.** 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.

IT'S ALWAYS GREAT TO HEAR AN ENCOURAGING WORD. A resident who recently was leaving Holy Trinity to go home said, *"The staff worked diligently to keep [the building] clean. The people here are among the best you could find and the building and outdoor areas have a sense of place that is wonderful."* Thank you!

DIVINE LITURGY is celebrated every Wednesday morning at 9:30am. And please always keep Holy Trinity Nursing Home, it's staff, directors, residents, and families in your prayers. And remember: you can always visit!

NEVER FORGET: Holy Trinity Nursing and Rehabilitation Center is an Orthodox Charity and relies on your donations to continue its mission of providing the best care possible.

A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

WE GLORIFY YOU, Lord Jesus Christ, for allowing us to know you. Everything we have belongs to you and we possess nothing of our own, for it is you who gave us all we have. By coming into our midst, you show us how to let go of everything, and by the poverty of your birth, you teach us to be attached to nothing. As we prepare for the celebration of your earthly birthday, O Christ, keep our hearts fixed only on you, so that we may always sing: Glory to God in the heights; on earth peace, and among all love and understanding.

For you are God and we give you glory together with your Father Who is without beginning, and your all-holy, good, and life-giving 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 Kelly

Spiro Spyrou

December 15

The Hieromartyr Eleftherios,

Bishop of Illyria

Lillian Chachi

December 17

The Holy Prophet Daniel

Dan Manescu

Dana Manescu

Dan Alexandru Nedelescu

Robert Daniel Salerno

Dana Tsoules



SUITING UP FOR THE STRUGGLE

THIS is the twenty-seventh Sunday after Pentecost. The Epistle Lesson is taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians 6:10-17. These verses form the conclusion of his letter. He is admonishing the Ephesians to be vigilant. He warns them about the trials to come, and he wants them to be prepared. He uses military language to describe what lies before them, but he is clear that this is a *spiritual* struggle against the forces of darkness.

In St. Paul's world people believed very strongly in 'spirits' and 'angels' and felt that these forces controlled their lives. While we are not necessarily held as captive as they by these ideas, even so today many people think there are forces that direct us and determine our destinies. St. Paul wants the Ephesians to trust in God and abandon the fear of being controlled by other forces. Similarly, we too need to abandon either a fatalism (somebody else controls us), or a self-sufficient spirit (we can do it all by ourselves), in order to be ready to engage the spiritual challenges in front of us.

St. Paul tells us: "be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." (v. 10-11) The first thing we need to realize is that our strength comes from the Lord. We are truly locked in a struggle, but we are being foolish if we think we can rely solely on our own strength. Our strength is grounded in God's power, not our own. We put on "the whole armor of God" so that we can withstand spiritual forces that can attack us in ways we cannot even imagine. St. Paul uses a phrase here found nowhere else in the whole Bible: "against the wiles of the devil." He is telling us clearly that the Evil One does not play fair, or, at the very least, does not play in a way that will be immediately apparent to us. Simply put, he plays dirty.

We must always be on our guard, because "our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." (v. 12) Our spiritual struggle takes place in many places, visible and invisible. St. Paul speaks here of the "cosmic powers" and the "heavenly places." Sometimes we are very limited in our vision of the struggle of which we are a part. We tend to be earth-bound. We see only the here and now.

Jesus came to rescue us not only from the here and now, but especially from the here and forever. Our outlook needs to include not just the world and life we currently see, but more importantly the world and life that God has in store for us. *This* is the struggle in which we are engaged. It is a battle, but not like the ones we see on television or even in front of us. These are spiritual battles that are waged in our heads and in our hearts. The battle is no less real just because we can't see it. We know it exists because we feel it in our own person and in those around us.

"Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day." (v. 13) We are not defenseless. God does not leave us without protection. We do have armor against the evil forces that assail us. Only, they are not the sorts of things that we usually associate with "battle." They are spiritual weapons and defenses, often the things we might associate with weakness.

"Fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness." (v. 14) How exactly does this work? St. Paul isn't talking about a belt of leather and bullet-proof armor. He's talking about truth and righteousness. The real weapons against evil — all kinds of evil — are the virtues. In the short run it may seem that guns, bullets,

bombs, and the like are the only effective weapons against evil. What we are coming to understand in a world where war pops up where you least expect it, where there are no clear battle lines, where even evil takes on the battle-cry of justice, is that the only possible defense is a "breastplate of righteousness and a belt of truth."

It is not easy in our day to be a Christian. Even some who call themselves Christians seem to preach a strange Gospel, foreign to what we have always understood it to be. Nevertheless, the Good News is just that, good news, and we must be prepared to preach it. St. Paul says that the shoes for our feet should be "whatever will make [us] ready to proclaim the gospel of peace." (v. 15) We may be asked to proclaim the gospel of peace in the world or in our families. It either case it may not be well received, and will require us to have faith.

It is faith that is at the heart of our "defense." St. Paul says that with "the shield of faith ... you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one." (v. 16) Trusting in the Lord our God is the very foundation of strength. So many spiritual arrows and bullets are targeted toward us that without a grounded faith we would not be able to withstand. When we are in the middle of our struggle, we may feel as though we will certainly succumb, but the Lord will always support us. We have His shield in our hands.

Finally, we "take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (v. 17) The "helmet of our salvation" is like a crown on our heads. God grants us salvation to protect our heads, but also in anticipation of our victory laurel. He gives us the sword "of the Spirit" and the "Word of God" that cuts through every obstacle. Let us prove ourselves worthy of this great grace.

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA