

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN SEPTEMBER 29, 2019

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

A **PITA BAKING** session is scheduled for this coming Saturday, October 5th, 9:00 AM. All help welcomed and needed. **Questions?** See Chris Toda.

FOOD PANTRY. Help is needed to staff our monthly responsibility at the Orthodox Food Center **this Saturday, October 5th, from 9 AM-NOON.** About 4 people are needed. Likewise, donations of food are always needed, and may be dropped off at the Food Pantry housed at St. Spyridon Cathedral. If you can help in this worthwhile ministry, please speak with **Lisa Mielnicki** or **Nicole Apostola**.

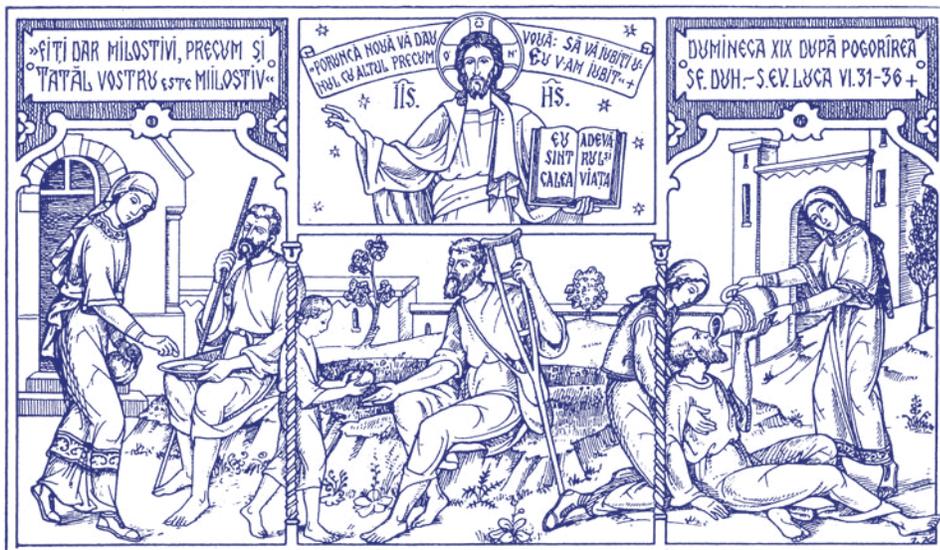
THE PARISH COUNCIL will hold its regular monthly meeting on **Thursday, October 3rd at 6:30 pm.** Parish Council Members, please let George Demake know if you are unable to attend.

DONATIONS FOR HURRICANE RELIEF may be directed to the International Orthodox Christian Charities at: **www.iocc.org.** The IOCC is one of the top ranked relief organizations in the world, especially noted for its low overhead, directing most of the donations toward those in need. Help those who are suffering through our Orthodox Christian relief organization!

GREETERS TEAM 1:
MACLYNN AND DIMITRI SAFFRON

COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP:
HELP NEEDED
PICK UP A CUP - LEND A HAND

ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED



THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

APOSTOLIC READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 11:31-12:9 ☩ GOSPEL: LUKE 6:31-36

(THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT — LOVE OF OUR ENEMIES)

TONE 6 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL 4

WE'VE COMMISSIONED A **PROSKINITARION** for the Relics and Icon of St. Nicholas that our parish received from the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Italy through His Grace Bishop Siluan, and Fr. Daniel Ene. Fr. Nicolae Simion of Wakefield is sculpting this wood-carved Icon stand which we hope to be ready for the Feastday. The cost is \$3,000 and we are asking for donations to cover the cost. If you have any questions, and/or would like to donate toward it, speak with Fr. Nick or Tim.

TODAY WE REMEMBER three persons recently fallen asleep:

✿ **Theodore Belba**, fallen asleep 40 days.

✿ **Vasilika Lolo**, fallen asleep 1 years.

✿ **Dimitri Cico**, fallen asleep 9 days.

May our merciful Lord rest them among the righteous!

COFFEE HOUR THIS SUNDAY is sponsored by the

Belba family in memory of Theodore Belba and the **Lolo family** in memory of Vasilika Lolo.

RELIGIOUS ED

ST NICHOLAS CHURCH SCHOOL and our Youth are a central part of our parish. We need you! If you are interested in teaching or assisting with Church School this year and/or working with the Youth of our parish on activities and programs geared to them, please see **Valarie Stamoulis**. The first day of Church School is **Sunday, October 6th. Every child is welcomed!** **PARENTS:** please complete the **REGISTRATION FORM** found at the candle stand.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Thurs, Oct 3 Parish Council, 6:30PM
Sat, Oct 5 Staff Food Pantry, 9AM-NOON
Pita Baking, 9AM-NOON
Sun, Oct 6 First Day of Religious Education
Sat, Nov 23 Holiday Bake Sale
December 7-8 70TH Anniversary celebration

34 GOLD STREET, SHREWSBURY, MA 01545-6238 ♦ VOICE: 508.845.0088 ♦ FAX: 508.845.8850
E-MAIL: FRNICK@STNICHOLASCHURCH.ORG ♦ WEB: WWW.STNICHOLASCHURCH.ORG

A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Americas

If you would like more information, speak with Valarie. Providing vibrant and meaningful opportunities for our Youth to learn about their Orthodox Faith and traditions, and work and play together is key to ensuring that our Orthodox Faith and the community of St. Nicholas remains vital for generations to come.

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

Holy Trinity Nursing & Rehabilitation Center's **25th Anniversary Dinner Dance Celebration will be held on Saturday, November 9, 2019.** For more information, you may start by picking up the *Anniversary Flyer*, the *Dinner Reservation Form*, and the *Program Book Ad Form* found at the candles. If you'd like to purchase tickets or have more questions talk to: **Deb Sedares** (Dsedares@pinehills.com) from our Parish, or at Holy Trinity: **Kristina Mironidis** (kmironidis@htnr.net) at 508-852-1000.

THE LATEST ISSUE of the *Holy Trinity Times* is available at www.htnr.net.

Holy Trinity provides a comprehensive **rehabilitation program of Physical, Occupational and Speech/Language Therapies.** Call 508-852-1000 for more information.

Holy Trinity **Thanksgiving Food Drive for the Orthodox Food Pantry**, October 14th – November 14th **All donations are greatly appreciated!**

DIVINE LITURGY is celebrated every

A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

THE demons that abuse us at their whim are beyond counting, O God! They continue to nag at us, forever trying to trip us up by wearing down our resistance more and more, and we must confess that frequently they succeed. But we acknowledge our share of guilt, Lord, and our wrongdoing fills us with dismay. Therefore, come quickly to our aid and reinforce our perseverance.

For you are good and full of love for us, O God, and we give you glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Wednesday morning at 9:30AM. And please always keep Holy Trinity Nursing Home, it's staff, directors, residents, and families in your prayers.

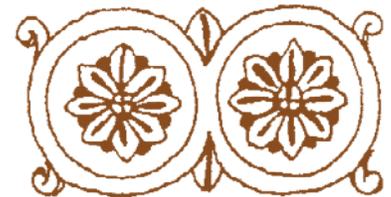
HOLY TRINITY is a non-profit skilled nursing and rehabilitation center and a project of the Council of Orthodox Churches of Central MA. Please keep Holy Trinity in your prayers and in your charitable plans. Contributions to the Treasured Generations Annual Fund can be made at www.htnr.net and volunteers are welcome to be a part of Holy Trinity by contacting: Dana Spinney, Activities Director, at 508-852-1000 or e-mail: dspinney@htnr.net.

OUR TIME AND GOD'S TIME

Time is a precious thing. Unlike almost anything else in our lives we cannot make more of it, no matter how hard we try. God gives us the gift of the Liturgy as a small window into His eternity. We might chuckle a little when we think about how it is that we schedule an event that is "outside of time," at a very specific time. Nevertheless, for our parish the Liturgy normally begins, every Sunday, at 10:00AM. And we normally conclude our celebration by 11:30AM.

Some of us, perhaps remembering the long services of our youth, have adopted the very bad habit of coming into Liturgy late; some later than others. However, at St. Nicholas we keep a rather punctual schedule. You can expect (give or take 5 minutes):

10:00 AM Divine Liturgy Begins
10:20 AM Epistle/Gospel Lessons
10:40 AM Great Entrance
11:00 AM Holy Communion
11:30 AM Dismissal



NAMEDAYS

September 17

The Holy Martyr Faith, Daughter of St. Sophia

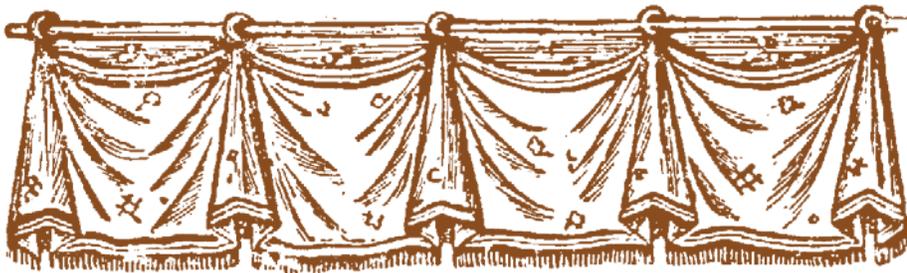
Faith Mayer

The Holy Martyr Sophia of Rome

Sofia Apostol

Sophia Amyra Apostola

Carol Fotos



MY POWER IS MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS

THE Epistle lesson this week, the nineteenth after Pentecost, is taken from St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians (11:31-12:9). In it St. Paul describes a vision of God that he had at the very outset of his Apostleship, and the profound effect it had on him. Using an experience from his own life, he instructs us in one of the great mystical paradoxes — that God's power is revealed to the world, not through our strengths, but through our weaknesses.

These Letters of St. Paul to the Corinthians present us with something of a conundrum. As I said when commenting on First Corinthians, all we have are St. Paul's responses; we do not have what the Corinthians initially wrote, and might have written back, either individually or collectively. Some passages seem to belong to a "third" letter that St. Paul refers to in the two texts that we have. In both letters there are places where the tone seems to shift erratically, suggesting that these sections may have been "pasted" into what we currently have. Without belaboring the point, in both First and Second Corinthians St. Paul feels that the authenticity of his Apostleship is being attacked. In the passage we read today, as well as in the verses that precede and follow it, St. Paul decides to address this issue directly in order to defend his ministry.

When reading the passage, the first thing that we might notice is the change in the personal pronoun. St. Paul almost never uses "I" when writing to the Churches. Rather, he uses "we," in order to impress on them that this is not a personal understanding of the Gospel, but one accepted by all Christian believers. However, in this section he speaks in the first person singular. If we sense the shift in language, certainly the original readers of his words did as well.

The second thing that he does is to speak of his weaknesses, of his sufferings. He doesn't point out his accomplishments. (This is never very effective

anyway. Do you believe the person who tells you how great they are?) Rather, he reminds them of how much he has endured for them and for the sake of the Gospel. He is so disappointed in their lack of trust in him that he feels the need to swear an oath: "The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed forever, knows that I do not lie" (v. 11:31). And then he begins to tell them a story he has told no one else.

"At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas guarded the city of Damascus in order to seize me, but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped his hands" (v. 32-33). This part they already knew, but then he begins to speak of the vision he had. "I must boast; there is nothing to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into Paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter" (v. 12:1-4).

Over the centuries there has been some speculation about the kind of experience that St. Paul had. What we can say for certain is that no one really knows. Even St. Paul couldn't describe it; words failed him. He had a vision of God that leaves the person receiving it entirely speechless. For him it was a powerful experience of the "Other" such that he had no reference points whatsoever. He is telling the Corinthians and us that this experience of God is true evidence of his Apostleship. The Church, simply put, believed him.

Now notice how he relates the ecstatic experience in the "third" person. He doesn't want it to appear as though he is bragging. He tells them: "On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my

weaknesses" (v. 5). He wants the Corinthians and us to believe his words on their own merit, not because of who it is telling them the story. It is God's truth—the truth of who and what Jesus the Christ is—that matters. Nevertheless, he says, "Though if I wish to boast, I shall not be a fool, for I shall be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me" (v. 6).

Then he tells us how God has tempered his 'vision': "And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me" (v. 7-8). There are three points in these two verses that we should note. First, St. Paul makes it clear that the experience described above was not the only revelation he had. He speaks of "the abundance of revelations." Second, God tempers Paul's ecstasy with real obstacles—"a thorn in the flesh." Some think that this was an actual bodily ailment; St. John Chrysostom thinks it was his persecutors both inside and outside of the Church. Either way, Paul saw this as God's continuing attempt to keep him humble. And third, that after having prayed multiple times for it to be lifted from him, he reconciled himself to the deeper spiritual reality. He heard and understood God's word: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (v. 9).

We need to truly mediate on St. Paul's words: "I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (v. 9). So often we think that our own resourcefulness, our own zeal, our own intellect, will prove God's truth. The reality is that God's truth becomes clear to others when we don't stand in the way.

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA