

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN JANUARY 5, 2020 THIS WEEK'S NEWS

THE BLESSING OF HOMES AT THEOPHANY. PLEASE NOTE we will be scheduling House Blessings differently this year. Fr. Nick will be blessing houses through January and February. If you would like him to bless your home, **please contact him either by e-mail (frnick@stnicholaschurch.org) or on his cell: 508-335-7378** in order to set up a time.

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 February 1st.

COFFEE HOUR SPONSORS ARE NEEDED for the coming weeks. Please speak with Presvytera Maria if you would like to sponsor one.

THE 2020 CHURCH CALENDARS are here, in both English and Romanian. Pick them up at the candles. Please consider a small donation to cover the costs.

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

Visit Holy Trinity's website www.htnr.net to view the **December Newsletter**, and click "Newsletter" on the homepage.

JOIN THE RESIDENTS FOR SEASONAL CRAFTING with the student of Claremont Academy, **Sunday, January 12th at 2:00p.m.** Families and friends are all invited.

GREETERS TEAM 3:
SEAN FAHEY AND MARGARITE LANDRY

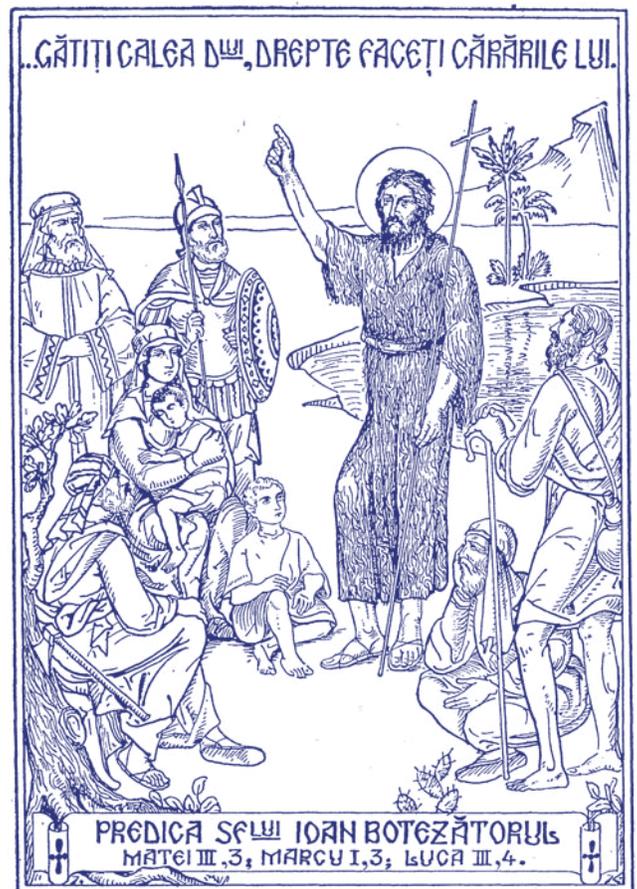
COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP:
HELP NEEDED
PICK UP A CUP - LEND A HAND

ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED

There will be a **COFFEE SOCIAL** on **Thursday, January 23rd at 2:00 pm**, sponsored by St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church. As always, families and friends are invited!

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.

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 prayer.



THE SUNDAY BEFORE THEOPHANY
EPISTLE: 2 TIMOTHY 4:5-8 ⊕ GOSPEL: MARK 1:1-8
TONE 4 ⊕ MATINS GOSPEL 7



DATES TO REMEMBER

Sun, Jan 5	Sunday Before Theophany Great Blessing of Water
Sat, Feb 1	Staff Food Pantry, 9AM-NOON
Sun, Feb 9	Triodion begins
Sat, Feb 22	Saturday of Souls
Mon, March 2	Great Lent begins
Sun, April 19	Great and Holy Pascha

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A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Americas

NAMEDAYS

January 1

St. Basil the Great

William Dino Cavanaugh
William Cocavessis
William Polymeros
Valarie Stamoulis
William J Tsoules

January 6

**The Holy Theophany of our
Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**

Francis Polymeros

January 7

**The Holy Prophet and Forerunner
John the Baptist**

Rev. Fr. John Daly
Nita Dumitriu
John Ermilio
Sean Fahey
Ian Mayer
John David Thoren

January 12

St. Tatiana the Martyr of Rome

Tatiana Sofia Karadimitriou

January 17

St. Anthony the Great

Anthony Theodore Christo
Scott Anthony Maynard
Anthony Rucho
Tony Nicholas Trakadas

January 18

St. Athanasios

Patriarch of Alexandria

Thanas Lolo
Arthur Peterson



A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

LORD, OUR GOD, LIGHT OF ALL THE WORLD: The brilliance of this feast of lights dazzles the eyes of our souls. For today you enlighten us with the intimate knowledge that you are three in one. Today, you enlighten us by the appearance and manifestation of the Lord Jesus in the Jordan. Today, you enlighten us with the understanding that your salvation is for all peoples without exception. Therefore, by the never-fading radiance of your light, rescue us from the power of darkness and make a place for us in your kingdom. Fill us with your glory and reveal the splendor of your presence to every nation, that we may all find forgiveness of our sins and true freedom.

For you are indeed our God, the Father of lights, and we give glory to you, your co-eternal Son, and your all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.



*When the Lord descended today
into the waters of the Jordan,
He cried aloud to John:
“Do not be afraid to baptize me:
for I have come to save Adam the first-formed man.”*

— Kontakion of the Forefeast

LONGING FOR HIS APPEARANCE

THE Epistle Lesson for the Sunday before Theophany is taken from St. Paul's Second Letter to Timothy 4:5-8. This letter was probably written by Paul while under arrest in Rome, and the tone of it reads like a last will and testament. He knows there is almost no possibility of release. On the contrary, it is very likely that he will be put to death. The reason this passage is chosen to be read today, just before Theophany, is a phrase in verse 8 where St. Paul speaks of those who long for the appearance of Christ, His epiphany. Even though it is the Lord's second-coming to which Paul is referring in this verse, it still has meaning when we think about God's Self-revelation on January 6th at Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan by John's hand.

Knowing that Timothy is worried, if not grieved, over St. Paul's situation, he wants to offer words of both encouragement and comfort. He says to Timothy, "always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully" (v. 5). He wants Timothy, who in many ways he considers his heir in ministry, to focus on the task at hand, namely his ministry. He tells him to "be sober." Other translations use words such as 'watchful' and 'steady.' What St. Paul is saying is that Timothy should be absolutely resolute, unaffected by winds that may blow.

He then advises him on the difficulties of ministry. He doesn't mince words; he tells him directly: "endure suffering." Ministry has always had its challenges. In times of persecution it can mean imprisonment, torture and even a horrible death, the kind of death St. Paul himself was facing. Even in peaceful times grief and affliction can come even from 'faithful' members of one's own community. St. Paul is offering Timothy some very practical advice for someone who wants to preach the Gospel.

"Do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully." Here he is speaking of preaching the Gospel faith-

fully; being true to the message given us by the Lord Himself.

Then St. Paul turns to his own situation. He wants Timothy to understand that he is clear about what will happen to him and rejoices in it. It is the fulfillment of his life. St. Paul uses two different metaphors to help Timothy understand. The first is the holy sacrifices offered to God, and the second is the sacrifice of a warrior or athlete.

"I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come" (v. 6). A libation is a liquid offering, usually wine or oil. Unlike other kinds of sacrifices or offerings where usually only a portion was offered up, a libation was poured out totally. St. Paul is telling Timothy that his whole life has been such an offering. He is also telling him that he realizes the time for his total sacrifice is at hand.

And then he introduces the image of an athlete: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day." Any athlete knows what it means to compete. He or she must train. Training means sacrifice — giving up things that one might like to do, in order to achieve the desired goal. This is not the only place where St. Paul compares the physical example of an athlete to the commitment and discipline needed for the spiritual struggle. It is very apt, because it gives concrete form to a contest that is by definition ethereal. It helps us to understand the importance of regular and faithful spiritual "training" using the exercises given us, such as prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. By putting our faith into practice through these and other similar activities we enable our whole person to become a true reflection of whom God created us to be.

However, in this verse St. Paul is speaking not of the beginning of the

race, but its end. Having "kept the faith," he tells us, "there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing" (v. 8). In St. Paul's day, the winner of the race received a laurel crown. In the spiritual race he envisions not a crown of leaves, but one woven with the branches of virtue.

He says that this same crown awaits not only him, but "all who have longed for his appearing." I said at the outset that this verse is the reason why this reading is chosen for today, to prepare us for the Feast of the Lord's Epiphany. The Greek word "epiphany" (appearance or manifestation) was frequently used to describe the "manifestations" of pagan gods, or emperors making divine claims. St. Paul uses it to speak of the Lord's Incarnation or, as in this case, His Second Coming.

Each morning at the opening of the Matins service we sing: "God is the Lord, and has revealed (epiphany) Himself to us! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" (Psalm 118). God revealed Himself not only in the past: to Abraham and the Patriarchs, to Moses and the Prophets, to the Apostles and the Saints. He reveals Himself to us each morning, each time we awaken from the death of sleep. In this same Psalm we say, "I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the Lord" (v. 118:17). To know God is to live. God reveals Himself so that we can share in His life.

Soon we will celebrate that event where God reveals Himself in the fullness of His Tri-Personal reality: Father, Son and Spirit. Jesus in the Jordan hears the voice of His Father while the Holy Spirit descends on him as a dove. This is joy for all who have longed for his appearing!

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA