

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN

SEPTEMBER 13, 2009
SUNDAY BEFORE THE CROSS

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

The opening ceremonies for **Religious Education for children will be Sunday, September 20th**. Registration Forms are available at Church. We ask that you complete and return those forms ASAP so we may plan appropriately. Please speak with **Preoteasa Maria or Deb Sedares** if you have any questions.

Also, people interested in **joining the dedicated group of Sunday School teachers** are needed. Teaching our children the Faith is one of the most important ministries of the Church. The program is structured so that one would team-teach, and curriculum is provided. If you would like more information, speak with Fr. Nick or Deb Sedares.

"OLD STYLE CHURCH PICNIC"

This **Sunday, September 13th**, please join us for an **"Old Style Church Picnic"** from **noon-3pm** here at the Church. "Bring a Friend!" Lunch will include Lamb **Shish-ke-bab** with Pilaf & Roasted Vegetables, 'Mititei' - Traditional Romanian Lamb & Beef Sausage, Spinach, Leek, and Cheese "Pita," Ethnic Pastries and Delicious Sweets, and for the kids; Hot dogs, Hamburgers, and Ice Cream. In celebration of our 60th Anniversary year, friends and guests may visit the **"open house"** in

USHERS TEAM 4:
DEAN VALORAS & EVAN SPARAGES

ALTAR TEAM B



THE SUNDAY BEFORE THE
ELEVATION OF THE CROSS
(JOHN 3:13-17)

the Church.

Help is needed! As always, your help can make a daunting task to one or two people seem manageable and fun. Please join us from **9 - noon on Saturday** for set-up and food prep, and **beginning at 9 am on Sunday** for final preparations and throughout the day. Please contact **Deb Sedares** for more information.

LOOKING AHEAD

On **Saturday, October 10th**, we will host a **"Fall Cleaning E-Waste Recycling Day"** at our Church from 9 am-2pm. All items brought to the event are 98% recycled, supporting the environment and preventing hazardous waste. The cost is \$5 for most items, or a range of \$10-20 for large household appliances. Our Parish will also host a hot dog concession and car wash on that day too. Details are forthcoming.

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

You have received a letter in the mail inviting you to participate in **Holy Trinity's Treasured Generations 2009 Annual Fund**. This annual gift program helps to provide the highest quality of care that we believe every "senior citizens in residence" deserve. You may also visit www.htnr.net to give online. Please be generous.

Save the Date!! Holy Trinity is planning a special **15th Anniversary celebration** titled **"Rehabilitate with Laughter"** on **Friday, October 2, 2009, at the Manor Restaurant in West Boylston**. Stand-up comic Dave Reilly will offer a little bit of Broadway, a touch of Vegas, and a dash of improvisation. Cocktails will begin at 6:30 pm, and the show will begin at 8 pm. Tickets are \$40 for open seating and \$50 for premium seating. For reservations, You may speak with Carol Fotos in Church or e-mail: carol.fotos.47@gmail.com



DATES TO REMEMBER

- Sun, Sept 20 Religious Ed Classes begin
- Sat, Oct 10 Electronic Recycle Day & Car Wash
- Sun, Oct 18 Parish Luncheon
- Sat, Nov 21 Harvest Bake Sale and Luncheon
- Sun, Nov 22 Parish Thanksgiving Luncheon
- Sat/Sun Dec 5-6 60th Anniversary
Feastday Celebration

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A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas

NAMEDAYS

September 8

The Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos

Presvytera Maria Mossaides

September 9

The Holy Ancestors of God Joachim and Anna

Ann Marie Chachi

Ann Marie Clem

Anna Maria Collins

Ann Trakadas

September 14

The Exaltation of the Precious and Lifegiving Cross

Stavri Tanacea

September 17

The Holy Martyr Sophia of Rome

Sofia Apostol

Sophia Amyra Apostola

Sophia Banks-Binici

Sophia Mazanitis

The Holy Martyr Faith, Daughter of St. Sophia

Faith Mayer



THE ELEVATION OF THE PRECIOUS CROSS

In spite of the fact that the pagan Roman emperors tried to completely eradicate from human memory the holy places where our Lord Jesus Christ suffered and was resurrected for mankind, eventually after 300 years, by Divine Providence, the great Christian sacred remains, the Sepulchre of the Lord and the Life-Creating Cross were again discovered and opened for veneration. This took place under the Emperor Constantine the Great (306-337).

Ardently desiring to find the Cross on which our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, St Constantine sent his mother, the pious Empress Helen (May 21), to Jerusalem, providing her with a letter to St Macarius, Patriarch of Jerusalem.

Although the holy empress Helen was already in her declining years, she set about completing the task with enthusiasm. The empress gave orders to destroy the pagan temple and the statues in Jerusalem. Searching for the Life-Creating Cross, she made inquiry of Christians and Jews, but for a long time her search remained unsuccessful.

Finally, they directed her to a certain elderly Hebrew by the name of Jude who stated that the Cross was buried where the temple of Venus stood. They demolished the pagan temple and, after praying, they began to excavate the ground. Soon the Tomb of the Lord was uncovered. Not far from it were three crosses, a board with the inscription ordered by Pilate, and four nails which had pierced the Lord's Body (March 6).

In order to discern on which of the three crosses the Savior was crucified, Patriarch Macarius alternately touched the crosses to a corpse. When the Cross of the Lord touched the dead one, he came to life. Having beheld the raising of the dead man, everyone was convinced that the Life-Creating Cross was found.

Christians came in a huge throng to venerate the Holy Cross, beseeching St Macarius to elevate the Cross, so that even those far off might reverently contemplate it. Then the Patriarch and other spiritual leaders raised up the Holy Cross, and the people, saying "Lord have mercy," reverently prostrated before the Venerable Wood. This solemn event occurred in the year 326.

During the discovery of the Life-Creating Cross another miracle took place: a grievously sick woman, beneath the shadow of the Holy Cross, was healed instantly. The elder Jude and other Jews there believed in Christ and accepted Holy Baptism. Jude received the name Cyriacus and afterwards was consecrated Bishop of Jerusalem.

During the reign of Julian the Apostate (361-363) he accepted a martyr's death for Christ. The holy empress Helen journeyed to the holy places connected with the earthly life of the Savior, building more than 80 churches.

A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

O GOD, who always attend to all: Let us respond generously to those who need our time and attention, and fill us with a strong and virile compassion for all who suffer. In coming to their aid, let us give them understanding, support, and inspiration, without any trace of sentimentality. This is little enough, but help us to remember that there is no greater love than to give one's life for another — should even that be necessary!

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

LISTEN TO THE WEEKLY NATIONAL ORTHODOX RADIO BROADCAST "COME RECEIVE THE LIGHT"

BY WEB OR PODCAST: WWW.RECEIVE.ORG

THE GLORY OF THE CROSS

THIS is the Sunday before the Universal Exaltation of the Precious Cross. The Epistle Lesson is taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians, 6:11-18. In this passage, as well as throughout the whole Letter, St. Paul's emphasis is on "the Cross of Christ." In part, this explains why we read this portion of his Letter today.

St. Paul was writing the Galatians about the negative influence a group of Jewish converts to Christ was having on their community. Galatia was a province located in north central Asia Minor, present-day Turkey. The larger cities of Galatia contained a mixed population of locals as well as Greeks and Romans. Greek and Latin was the language there. In the more rural areas the population was largely Galatians, who were related to the Celts and spoke a language more akin to Celtic than the languages of their neighbors.

Today's reading is the close of St. Paul's Letter to them. It begins: "See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand." (v. 11) St. John Chrysostom believes that this indicates that St. Paul had written the whole Letter himself, rather than leave the task to a scribe. For him, this was an indication of the intense concern Paul had about the situation, and for the Galatians themselves. Modern scholars think that the first part of the Letter was given to a scribe to write and that St. Paul wrote this part by way of emphasis. Either way, St. Paul is clearly upset and concerned.

Here is the reason: "It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who receive circumcision do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh." (v. 12-13)

It might seem odd to us that what

we do today for largely medical reasons was a deeply religious question in the early Church. However, according to the Mosaic Law, the primary sign of the covenant between the Children of Israel and God was circumcision. It was and still is what defines Jews as a Chosen People. For St. Paul, to accept circumcision was to subject yourself to the Old Covenant. It was a step backward.

St. Paul's contention was that these people had no interest in truly proclaiming the Good News of Christ's coming. Rather, they wanted these Galatians to undergo a ritual that was largely for show, while ignoring the true internal spiritual transformation that should occur in those who follow the Lord. These were fundamentalists who rather than stand up for Christ — which would have probably subjected them to persecution — took the 'zealous' route that would make them look devout, but really cost them nothing. This is what's behind the statement: "they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh."

His answer to these 'missionaries' is: "But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation." (v. 14-15) By the "cross" St. Paul means the whole 'economy' of our salvation; the whole of God's plan for us culminating in the Lord's death and resurrection. He also means the cross that every Christian takes up when they decide to follow Christ. The 'world' that has been crucified to him is the world of sin and excess; the passions that lead away from God. This should be the cross that we ourselves pick up, choosing against sin and for the Lord.

St. Paul then offers a blessing: "Peace and mercy be upon all who walk

by this rule, upon the Israel of God." (v. 16) He is sending two subtle messages in this blessing. He is saying that those who follow the 'rule,' that is, who choose the newness of Christ over the 'dead end' of the Law, will receive God's peace and mercy. And, by referring to the 'Israel of God' he is at once answering his critics — the Judaizers — that he is not 'Jewish' enough, and asserting that the 'Israel of God' is now the followers of Christ.

Expressing his exasperation with the Judaizers, he says: "Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus." (v. 17) The word translated here as "marks" is, in Greek, "stigmata." Because of how we use 'stigmata' today, it has led some people to speculate that St. Paul had on his body the crucifixion wounds of Christ. However, in the ancient world this word meant something like "branding." It was used for the branding marks burned into slaves and cattle. It is more likely that St. Paul means the very real scars on his body that were the result of the multiple floggings he had received. Anyone who has seen photographs of the backs of slaves who had been flogged will immediately understand what he is talking about. His scars mark him as belonging to Christ.

He finishes this rather harsh Letter with a blessing: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen." (v. 18) The words that he chooses, and especially using as the very final word the affectionate term 'brethren' — brothers and sister — he wants to soften whatever hurt they might be feeling, and let them know that from his perspective all is healed.

As we reflect on St. Paul's words, we should recommit ourselves to take up our cross and follow the Lord as St. Paul did.

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA