

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN SEPTEMBER 20, 2009 SUNDAY AFTER THE CROSS

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

We would like to **thank all of the people who helped and supported our "Old Style Church Picnic"** last week. It was an enormous success, both financially and spiritually. Once all the receipts are in, we'll be able to tell you the total proceeds. *Again, thank you!*

The opening ceremonies for **Religious Education for children will be this 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.

The Memorial Service today is for the **family members of Dr. George Elias, especially his wife Elizabeth.** He and his family are also sponsoring today's coffee hour. *May their memory be eternal!*

USHERS TEAM 5:
BRIAN DONABED &
GEORGE DEMAKE

ALTAR TEAM A



SUNDAY AFTER THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS (MARK 8:34-9:1)
TAKING UP OUR CROSS AND THE DENIAL OF OURSELVES

LOOKING AHEAD

The **"Fall Cleaning E-Waste Recycling Day"** originally planned for Saturday, October 10th needs to be rescheduled due to a conflict with the date by the provider. We will update you on the new date once plans are finalized.

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

HOLY TRINITY 15TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION. Holy Trinity presents **"Rehabilitate with Laughter"**, a stand-up comedy adventure, starring Dave Reilly— *"A little bit of Broadway, a touch of Vegas and a dash of improvisation!"* **Friday, Oct. 2nd at the Manor Restaurant.** 6:30pm Cocktail Hour (appetizers and Cash Bar) 8:00pm Show Time.

\$40.00 Open Seating; \$50.00

Premium Seating. For ticket

reservations call: Carol Fotos at

508-752-0644 or e-mail:

carol.fotos.47@gmail.com. For

more information call Serena at

508-852-1000.

A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

LORD GOD: It is so easy to fall into the habits of worldliness and self-indulgence. They may appear innocent, but they only lead us further afield from you. We beg you to keep us from embarking on such a path! Put us rather on the right road, that we may reach your kingdom — within our hearts.

For you are a great and wondrous God, and we give you glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages, amen.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Sun, Sept 20 Religious Ed Classes begin

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

IT IS NO LONGER I WHO LIVE

THIS is the Sunday after the Universal Exaltation of the Precious Cross. Today's Epistle Lesson is again taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians, 2:16-20. In this passage St. Paul sums up his teachings on the relationship of faith in Jesus to adherence to the Law of Moses. One could say that in a very concise way, St. Paul compresses in these seven verses his whole teaching on this subject contained in his letters to both the Romans and the Galatians.

What lies at the heart of his teaching is that salvation comes to us through faith in Jesus the Christ. It can not come through "works of the law," (v. 16) because no one can fulfill all of the provisions or precepts of the Law. In spite of all our efforts, we remain far from perfection. However, this fulfillment of the Law was accomplished by and in Jesus. He literally embodied the Law, doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. But more importantly, He showed us that it was our willingness to follow God with our whole being, to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30), to have total faith in Him and His Christ, that allowed and allows us to be justified before God. Salvation is a free gift to us from God; all we need to do is trust completely in Him.

The reason St. Paul is so upset with the Galatians is that they have doubted that their faith in Jesus is the basis for their salvation by listening to these Jewish Christians (Judaizers). Following their teachings they are now opting for "works of the Law" as the proper means for "justification." Circumcision, that we heard so much about in last week's reading, is the shorthand for this.

St. Paul begins this part of his Letter by using the example of St. Peter

and himself — Jews of the first order. He says that even they "know that a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ." They themselves, "have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law, because by works of the law shall no one be justified." (v. 16)

We should review again the way in which St. Paul uses the word "justified." To be "justified" means to be able to stand before God (to put it in colloquial terms) without being embarrassed. It means that we have enough virtue that we can face God and not hang our heads in shame. Think about it in this way, if your employer were to call you into his or her office to question you about your job performance, could you "stand" before them with your head held high? Or, would you be hanging your head in contrition? The root word of "justified" is the Latin, "iust," which means "right." When we are justified, we stand right with God.

Now St. Paul addresses the central question plaguing the Galatians: "But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we ourselves were found to be sinners, is Christ then an agent of sin? Certainly not!" (v. 17) What he is saying here is that if we seek to be justified before God by our faith in Jesus, will we still be found sinners — that is, will we still not be freed from our deep and grievous sins? And if so, is Christ responsible for this? His answer is: "Of course, not!"

Then he moves to the next level of questions: "if I [that is, St. Paul] build up again those things which I tore down, then I prove myself a transgressor." (v. 18) Here he is referring to advocating that followers of Christ now follow the Law. The 'building up' refers to returning to the Mosaic Law as a basis for justification. The 'tearing down' refers to his advocacy for faith in

Christ. To change course would be worse for him; there is no hope in the Old Law, the only way is forward, the only sure way, faith in Jesus. He points to his own life, first as a pious Jew who followed the Law rigorously, but found salvation through faith in Jesus.

"For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God," (v. 19) St. Paul says. There are three levels of meaning in this verse. The first is that Christ was put to death by the Law; the Jewish authorities handed Jesus over to die because they contended that He had violated the Law. The second level is that Paul, and all Christians, are one with Christ in Baptism. As Christ was put to death because of the Law, so are we. Even more, we are "put to death" because we truly violate the law through our sins. So, in this sense it is very true that through the Law we died to the Law. The last level of meaning is the most important. In dying to and through the Law, we, like Christ, are resurrected. Because we become one with Christ in our Baptism, we both die and live in and through Him. We are totally transformed.

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me," (v. 20) St Paul declares. What he experiences is what we long for: the new life in Christ. We want to feel deep within us the newness that our Lord Jesus makes available to us. What we oftentimes lack is to "live by faith in the Son of God who loves" us. We keep ourselves at arm's-length, not fully embracing the commitment that would give us St. Paul's confidence. Let us strive to embrace the Lord's loving Cross, and accept the gift of everlasting life that He offers.

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA