

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN DECEMBER 6, 2009 ST. NICHOLAS OF MYRA THIS WEEK'S NEWS

We want to thank everyone for helping with our monthly responsibility for the **Orthodox Food Center** yesterday. Our next scheduled date is **Saturday, January 2nd**. About 6-8 people are needed to bag and distribute groceries. If you can help with this worthwhile ministry once a month on a Saturday morning from 9 am till noon, please see Nicole Peterson or Lisa Mielnicki.

It is with sadness that we inform you of the falling asleep of **Jospeh P. Doku**, the father of Fr. Mark Doku and Patricia Sedares. Call hours are on Sunday, 5-8pm at O'Connor Brothers on Park Ave in Worcester, and the Funeral on Monday, 11am at St. Mary's. *May his memory be eternal!*

LOOKING AHEAD ...

Please remember to take fliers and encourage family and friends to purchase our delicious **Pastry Platters** for Christmas and New Years. The **absolute deadline for all Christmas orders is Sunday, December 13th**. You may e-mail your order to: pastry@stnicholaschurch.org.

We have planned to prepare food and serve the visitors at the **Mustard Seed on Friday, December 18th**. The Mustard Seed is a Catholic Worker home providing dinner to about 150 people

USHERS TEAM 5:
BRIAN DONABED &
GEORGE DEMAKE
ALTAR TEAM A



THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (LUKE 13:10-17)

HEALING OF THE CRIPPLED WOMAN
TONE 1 — RESURRECTION GOSPEL 4

in need each day. Please e-mail Fr. Nick or Deb Sedares if you would like to help with either preparing food or serving

COMMUNITY NEWS

The Parish Council of **St. Mary's Albanian Orthodox Church** is pleased to announce the appointment of their new priest, **Father Timothy Cremeens**. He will soon be joined by his wife, Tammy, and their three children, Gabriel, Zoe and Magdalena. We join them in welcoming Father Timothy and his family to the community of St. Mary's and to the larger family of Orthodox Churches in Central Massachusetts.

The list of the **Orthodox Christian Mission Center 2010 Mission Teams** is complete! OCMC Teams are an opportunity to change lives and to have your life changed in return! To learn more about Mission Teams, go to www.ocmc.org or contact OCMC at (904) 829-5132 or teams@ocmc.org. Share in a Journey of Faith!

HOLY TRINITY NEWS
The **Holy Trinity Activities and**

Volunteer Department provides many fun activities and meaningful moments for our residents. Please come and join our volunteer team! The residents truly appreciate your time and company. Volunteering at our facility is a deeply rewarding Christian experience. If interested, please contact: Catherine E. Sabatini at 508-852-1000 or e-mail: csabatini@htnr.net

Holy Trinity Hospice "Transitions": **A Grief and Healing Support Group** meets every other Wednesday from 6-7:30pm. It is free and open to the public. Light refreshments served. It is held at Holy Trinity Hospice, at Washburn House, 1183 Main Street, Worcester, MA. For more info and to pre-register, e-mail David Day or call at 508-791-8200.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Nov 15th Christmas Lent Begins
Sat/Sun Dec 5-6 60th Anniversary
Feastday Celebration
Fri, Dec 18 Mustard Seed Meal
Sat, Jan 2 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry

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A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas

NAMEDAYS



December 4

St. John of Damascus

Kerry Jean Laconto

the Great-martyr Barbara and St. John of Damascus

Barbara Jean Grniet

December 6

St. Nicholas the Wonderworker of Myra in Lychia

Archbishop Nicolae

Nicholas Agretelis

Nicole Soumela Apostola

Rev. Nicholas Apostola

Nicholas Belishta

Nicholas Charalambides

Robert A. Clem

Nicholas Demake

Nicholas R. Demake

Nikolla Endriko

Frank W. Ford

Nicholas John Johnson

Nicholas Koyanu

Nicholas Krassopoulos

Nicholas Joseph Laconto

Nicholas Mazanitis

Nicole Mazanitis

Nicholas Peter Mentis

Emily Nicole Miner

Nicolae Nace

Nicholas Seferi

Nicholas George Soter

Nicole Sparages

Nicholas Tonna

Nicole Marta Trakadas

Nicholas Valoras

Nicholas Peter Zekos

Nikollaq Zhaka

December 12

St. Spyridon the Wonderworker of Tremithus

Spiro Kelly

V. Rev. Fr. Spero Page

Spiro Llambi Treska

A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

LORD OUR GOD: When we find ourselves in distresses, we always run to you, but when things go well, we forget you entirely. We are not in the least aware of the contradictions in this. No matter what, we go on behaving badly in so many instances, in so many ways, and then we act as if we had never done anything wrong. Great as our guilt and stupidity are, you are forever ready to show us your mercies, and so we beg you now to open our eyes to see our sinful behavior and correct it.

For you know the weakness of our nature, O God, and we give you glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and 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

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 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 challenge before 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 should 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 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 that we cannot 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.

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 can 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 because we can't see it. We know it exists because we feel it in our own person and 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. They are the things we usually 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 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 evil takes on the battle-cry of justice; is that the only 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. In either case it will require and especially 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 stand. When we are in the middle of our struggle, we may feel as though we will certainly succumb, but the Lord supports 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 both protect our heads and 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