

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN

DECEMBER 27, 2009

THE RELATIVES OF THE LORD:
JOSEPH, DAVID, AND JAMES
HOLY PROTO-MARTYR STEPHEN

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

The St. Nicholas Sunday School presentation of the **Nativity Pageant** has been moved to this **Sunday, December 27** immediately following the Divine Liturgy.

Remember, New Year's day is also the **Feast of St. Basil the Great and the Circumcision of the Lord**. Divine Liturgy will begin at 10:00 am.

We want to **thank the people who helped to prepare the food that was served to the visitors at the Mustard Seed** on Friday, December 18th, as well as the many other times this year. The Mustard Seed is a Catholic Worker home providing dinner to those in need each day. We are grateful to be able to assist them in that effort, and plan to continue that ministry in the coming year. Please contact Fr. Nick **if you would like to help with this**.

We also want to thank everyone who worked so hard over the last few weeks baking the **pitás and pastry** for our Holiday fundraiser. We especially want to thank **Chris Toda** for her efforts, and **Melika Mossaides, Lillian Chachi, and Betty Anderson**, who collectively made over **3,000 pieces of koulourakia, kouroubia, and baklava** for the over 100 decorated pastry plat-

USHERS TEAM:
ALL TEAMS ON DUTY
ALTAR TEAM B



THE SUNDAY AFTER THE NATIVITY
(MATTHEW 2:13-23)
THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT
TONE 4 — RESURRECTION GOSPEL 7

ters sold. May God bless you all for your generosity of heart.

The coffee hour today is sponsored by **Nicola & Natasha Zhaka** in memory of their son **Ilia**.

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

We want to **thank everyone who shopped and purchased a gift for the residents at Holy Trinity Nursing Center**. Through your generosity, every resident received a gift on Christmas morning. We also want to thank **Eleanor Sedares** for coordinating this effort.



DATES TO REMEMBER

- Sun Dec 27 Sun after Christmas,
Lit at 10:00 am / Pageant
- Fri, Jan 1 New Year's Day, Lit at 10:00 am
- Sat, Jan 2 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry
- Sun, Jan 3 Sun before Theophany, Lit 10:00 am
- Tues, Jan 5 Eve of Theophany
Royal Hours, 9:30 am
Vespertal Divine Liturgy, 6:00 pm
- Sun, Jan 10 Sun after Theophany, Lit 10:00 am

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 Archdiocese in the Americas

NAMEDAYS

December 15

The Hieromartyr Eleftherios, Bishop of Illyria

Lillian Chachi
Eleftheria Mazanitis

December 17

The Holy Prophet Daniel

Dan Manescu
Dana Manescu
Dan Alexandru Nedelescu
Robert Daniel Salerno

December 20

The Fore-father of our Lord, the Patriarch Jacob

Jacob Datz

The High Priest Aaron, and all the holy forefathers

Aaron Paul Christo

The Holy Fore-bearers of Christ, Adam the first man

Adam Donabed
Adam Mayer

The Holy Prophetess Abigail, wife of David

Abigail Mayer

The Righteous Deborah, and all the holy forefathers

Deborah Rucho
Deborah Sedares

The Righteous Joshua, and all the holy forefathers

Joshua Vessio

The Righteous Noah, and all the holy forefathers

Noah Peter Christo

The Righteous Sarah, and all the holy forefathers

Sarah Maria Blanchard
Sarah Maria Bourisk

December 24

The Holy Nun-martyr Eugenia of Rome

Elgenia Pantelopoulos
Dr. Eugeniu Predoiu

December 25

The Holy Nativity of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ

Christy Belba
Christopher Blanchard
Chrysanthi Charalambides
Christopher Demake
Cristean Dumitriu
Kristjan Endriko
Cristian Ionete
Christine Kelly
Krista Leach
Cristina Mazanitis
Christian Andrew Polymeros
Christopher Rucho
Christina Soter
Christina Thoren
Christine Toda
Christina Marina Tonna
Kristina Treska
Christina Tsoules
Chris Zaruha
Cristian Zaruha

December 27

The holy and righteous Joseph, the betrothed of the Virgin

Joseph Paul Kamataris
Joseph Opio
Josephine Opio

The Holy Prophet and King David

David Zonia

The Holy Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen

Stephanie Elizabeth Demake
Stephanie Lynne Kamataris
Stephanie Keimig
Stephen Keimig
Stephen Maynard
Stephanie Anne Miner
Stephen Michael Mountzouris
Stephanie Sparages
Stephen Sparages
Steven Thoren

December 31

St. Melania the Younger, nun of Rome

Melanie Mentis



A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

THOUGH we test you at every turn, sometimes without even knowing it, Lord, you ignore our rebelliousness and continue to love and nurture us with your every gift. And still we do not learn. Help us to escape the idolatry we are so prone to and make us know, love, and serve you alone in this world, that we may be happy with in the next.

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.

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

BY WEB OR PODCAST: WWW.RECEIVE.ORG

WHEN THE FULLNESS OF TIME HAD COME

THE Epistle Lesson for the Christmas day Divine Liturgy is taken from the St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians 4:4-7. One could say that in these four verses St. Paul explains the theological understanding of the Incarnation of God's Son. In the Gospel accounts found in Luke and Matthew we find the story of Jesus' birth with which most of us are familiar, but it is St. Paul who begins to explain the significance of the event to us in ways that help us understand God's purpose. Almost every word or phrase in these four verses is replete with meaning, so let us take a moment to understand his point.

This is the entire reading: "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, of God through Christ." (Gal 4:4-7)

Now, let us look at each phrase carefully. St. Paul uses the phrase "fullness of time" twice; here, and in Ephesians. It is a wonderful phrase encompassing the expectations of both the Jewish nation and the pagan world. For those who remember the rock opera "Jesus Christ Superstar," there was a line complaining about why God had chosen to come in a time where there was no mass communication, such as in our own. Point well-taken, but missing the essence. We see how today's mass communication twists reality such that the true hero never makes it to the front page, and the pop celebrity is lionized — until they fall.

The "fullness of time" is that opportune moment when everything that could be said, has been said. People are ready, waiting and listening. In the first

century the expectation for a 'savior' hung heavily in the air. Many of the words we now use to describe Jesus were used to describe the Roman emperor or other Messiahs. It was not only the Children of Israel who were waiting for the Messiah. During the services leading up to the Lord's Nativity we read from dozens of Old Testament prophecies pointing to His coming. People were on edge, and ready: the fullness of time.

"God sent his Son." The word sent (ἐξαπέστειλεν) is a form of the word 'apostle.' This word developed a special meaning in the early Church: to send someone in the service of God's kingdom. Implicit in the phrase is that God's Son existed before His birth by Mary. God is sending the pre-existing Word on a mission.

"Born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law." We can understand "born of a woman;" God's Son is born of Mary. What requires more explanation is "born under the law, in order to redeem those ... under the law." God chose the Jewish nation to be the people through which He would make Himself and His purpose known. His "contract" (i.e., "Covenant") with them was a series of rules and regulations by which they were to live by: the Law. The Law made the Jews different from all other peoples on earth. To be "born under the Law" means that one is a Jew, whose sole purpose in life is to fulfill God's Law. No one except Jesus has ever been able to fulfill the Law. Not only was He born under the Law. His mission is to redeem His people by fulfilling the Law.

"So that we might receive adoption as children." God's entire objective, His sole purpose — what we describe as His "economy" — is to make us children. This access to the Father is not through biological means; it is by adoption. God's Son becomes one of us

so that we can share in what He is. St. Athanasius' famous phrase: "God became humans so that humans could become God" is another way of saying the same thing. Another Patristic saying is, that, we are given the possibility to become, by choice, what God is by nature. By choosing to follow Christ — to be one with Him in Baptism and the Eucharist — we have Jesus as our brother and God as our Father.

"And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" The Holy Spirit continually and eternally "proceeds" from the Father to rest on the Son. When we become children through Christ, this same Spirit is poured out on us. It is this Spirit who guides us in our prayer, even when we don't know what to pray for ourselves (cf. Romans 8:26); the Holy Spirit searches our hearts.

"So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God." Not many of us know what it is like to be a slave (although people are still slaves even in our own time!), but we all know what it is like to feel trapped, without choices or freedom to really choose. God makes us His heir and truly free. Christ is born to free us from all kinds of bondage.

Brothers and sisters, free yourselves from bondage to the passing things of this world. God has made us free in the birth of that child humbly born in a cave. We may be terrified to put our lives in God's hands, but He put His life in our hands, through Mary, His mother, and Joseph, His step-father. When we want to understand God's love for us, meditate on this: the universe's creator allows himself to be nurtured and raised by a teenage mother and a working-class father, in a "back-water" village in Galilee.

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA

CHRISTMAS & THEOPHANY

SCHEDULE

SUNDAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2009

Matins 9:00 a.m.
 Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
 Children's Christmas Program after the Liturgy

CHRISTMAS EVE THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2009

Royal Hours 9:30 a.m.
 Great Vespers 6:00 p.m.

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2009

Matins 9:00 a.m.
 Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2009

Matins 9:00 a.m.
 Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

NEW YEAR'S DAY

CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD ✻ FEAST OF ST. BASIL THE GREAT FRIDAY, JANUARY 1, 2010

Matins 9:00 a.m.
 Divine Liturgy of St. Basil 10:00 a.m.

SUNDAY BEFORE THEOPHANY SUNDAY, JANUARY 3, 2010

Matins 9:00 a.m.
 Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

EVE OF HOLY THEOPHANY TUESDAY, JANUARY 5, 2010

Royal Hours 9:30 a.m.
 Vespers Divine Liturgy of St. Basil 6:00 p.m.
 Great Blessing of Water at end of Liturgy

SUNDAY AFTER THEOPHANY JANUARY 10, 2010

Matins 9:00 a.m.
 Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.



HOUSE BLESSINGS. The blessing of homes at Theophany will begin on Friday, January 8, 2010, and continue until all homes are blessed. As in the past, we will be setting times when we will be coming to bless your home. If there is a specific time that is more convenient for you, please call Fr. Nick to arrange it (508.845.0088).

