

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN

JANUARY 3, 2010

SUNDAY BEFORE THEOPHANY

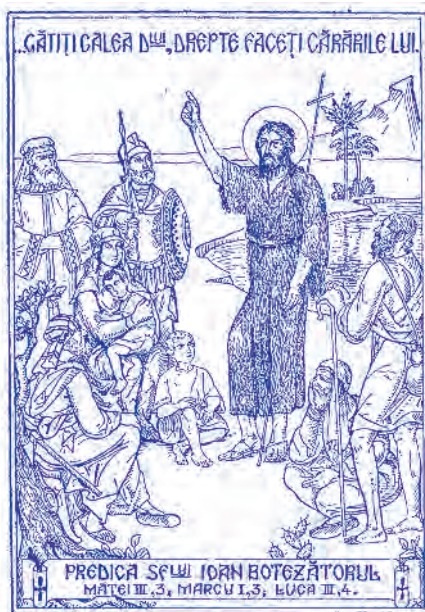
THIS WEEK'S NEWS

We will be celebrating the **Lord's Epiphany** this week. On the **Eve of Holy Theophany, Tuesday, January 5**, Royal Hours at 9:30 am, and the **Vespers Divine Liturgy of St. Basil at 6:00 pm** followed by the Great Blessing of Water

Help is needed to staff our monthly responsibility at the **Orthodox Food Center on Saturday, January 2**, from 9 am - noon. About 4 people are needed. Likewise, donations of food are always needed, and may be dropped off at the Food Pantry housed at St. Spyridon Cathedral. If you can help in this worthwhile ministry, please speak with **Nicole Peterson or Lisa Mielnicki**.

Our Church is participating in a special program for teenagers called S.T.O.P which means **"Students Together Opposing Prejudice."** S.T.O.P is an inter-faith initiative to educate young people on how to identify and confront stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. It begins Thursday, January 14, 2010, from 6:45-8:30, and will continue for 7 sessions. Locations will rotate among houses of worship in the Shrewsbury/Westboro area. There are 3 participants from our Church already, and we invite you to join us! For more information, contact **Tim Rucho** at 508-754-0062 or tjruchov@verizon.net

USHERS TEAM 4:
DEAN VALORAS & EVAN SPARAGES
ALTAR TEAM A



THE SUNDAY BEFORE THEOPHANY (MARK 1:1-8)

TONE 5 — RESURRECTION GOSPEL 8

New Experience Theater (N.E.T. Works) Productions Inc. in conjunction with the **Shrewsbury Ecumenical Council** is sponsoring **"You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown!"** at Southgate Theater, 30 Julio Dr., Shrewsbury. This show is a whimsical journey through many antic-filled snippets in the lives of the 5 year old Charlie Brown cartoon characters. The dates are **Friday and Saturday, Jan. 22, 23, 29, 30 at 7:30 pm**. The cost is \$15 general admission, \$12 senior/student. Matinees are Sunday, Jan. 24, 31 at 2:00 pm. The cost is \$10 matinee general admission for all. A portion of the proceeds will benefit St. Anne's Food Pantry in Shrewsbury. You may purchase tickets from Fr. Nick or contact Chris White at 508-842-0867.

There is a **Parish Council** meeting on **Monday, January 4th** at 6:30 pm.

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! If interested, please contact: Catherine 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 6-7:30 pm 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.

Did You Know? Holy Trinity Hospice provides specialized care to those who are terminally ill in their home.

ARCHDIOCESE NEWS

The Archdiocese has launched a new **monthly e-bulletin** with news from within the Archdiocese and throughout the world. We have printed copies available.

We also have copies of **Archbishop Nicolae's Pastoral Letter** at the Lord's Nativity in English and Romanian.



DATES TO REMEMBER

Sun, Jan 3 Sunday before Theophany
Mon, Jan 4 Parish Council, 6:30 pm
Tues, Jan 5 Royal Hour for Theophany 9:30 am
Vespers Liturgy, 6:00 pm
followed by Great Blessing of Water
Sun, Jan Sunday after Theophany

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A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas

NAMEDAYS

January 1

St. Basil the Great

Bryan Donabed
William Keimig
Ronald William Laconto, III
Vasia Lolo
Vasilika Lolo
William Polymeros
Dr. Ross Porter
Vasil Rucho
Valarie Stamoulis

January 3

St. Genevieve of Paris

Genevieve Apostola

January 6

The Holy Theophany of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Francis Polymeros
Jordan Sparages

January 7

The Holy Prophet and Forerunner

John the Baptist

Dr. John Andronic
John Banks-Binici
Joanna Boukalis
John G. Cosmas
Rev. Fr. John Daly
Nita Dumitriu
Ian Mayer
Jonathan Paul Maynard
John Rucho
John David Thoren
John Tonevski



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 you 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

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. On January 6th we will celebrate God's self-revelation at Jesus' Baptism by John in the Jordan, even while it is the Lord's second-coming to which Paul is referring in this verse.

Knowing that Timothy is worried, if not grieving, 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 the 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 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 faithfully; 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 is rejoicing 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 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.

Here 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 true reflections of who 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 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 sleep of death. 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.

In just a few days 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 as a dove. This is joy for all who have longed for his appearing!

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA