

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN FEBRUARY 7, 2010

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

PARISH FELLOWSHIP LUNCHEON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7TH

We are hosting a **Parish Fellowship Luncheon on Sunday, February 7**, directly after Liturgy. The menu will be a roast chicken dinner served family style, including roasted potatoes, vegetables and salad. The price will be \$15.00 per adults and \$5.00 for the child's meal of homemade macaroni & cheese and French fries. To make a reservation, speak with Eleanor Sedares; call the Church, 508-845-0088 or e-mail info@StNicholasChurch.org

We also ask you to **consider a contribution towards the expenses of the luncheon** which will enable the Church to realize a greater profit. If you have it in your heart to be a "luncheon sponsor" please speak to Deb Sedares or Fr Nick

Lastly, your help is needed on the day of the luncheon to serve and clean as well as on the day before for food preparations. Please visit the volunteer bulleting board during coffee hour and sign-up for times you can help. Thank you!

PARISH NEWS

The **Divine Liturgy for the Saturday of the Souls is this Saturday, February 6th** at 10 am.

Also, this **Saturday, February 6th** is

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



MEATFARE SUNDAY

EPISTLE: 1 CORINTHIANS 8:8-9:2

GOSPEL: MATTHEW 25:31-46 (THE LAST JUDGMENT)

tone 2 — RESURRECTION GOSPEL 2

our responsibility to staff the Orthodox Food Center. 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 speak with **Nicole Peterson or Lisa Mielnicki**.

The regular **monthly parish council meeting** (usually the first Monday of the month) has been rescheduled for Monday, **February 8th at 6:30 pm**. Please let Deb Sedares know if you are unable to attend.

We will host the first of the **Lenten Pre-Sanctified Liturgies** sponsored by the Council of Eastern Orthodox Churches here at our Church, on **Wednesday, February 17 at 6 pm**. Help will be needed with preparing Lenten foods for the pot-luck that follows, as well as with set-up/clean-up. **Please tell Preoteasa Maria how you can help.**

We will be preparing food to serve the visitors at the **Mustard**

Seed on Friday, February 19th. The Mustard Seed is a Catholic Worker home providing dinner to about 150 people in need each day. You can participate in this ministry in the following ways:

- Help with the **meal preparation** on Friday morning at 9:30 am, please contact Deb Sedares (dsedares@pinehills.com).
- Help **transport the meal** to the Mustard Seed (Meet at the Church at 5:00pm) please contact Fr. Nick

DATES TO REMEMBER

- Sat, Feb 6 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry
Saturday of the Souls, Liturgy 10am
- Sun, Feb 7 Parish Luncheon after Liturgy
- Mon, Feb 8 Parish Council Mtg. 6:30pm
- Mon, Feb 15 Great Lent begins
- Wed, Feb 17 Pre-Sanctified Liturgy at St. Nick's
- Fri, Feb 19 Mustard Seed Meal
- Sat, March 6 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry
- Sun, March 28 Palm Sunday
- Sun, April 4 Great and Holy Pascha
- Sat, April 24 Spring Dance

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A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas

A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

O IMMUTABLE savior: like bees lazily buzzing about from one flower to another, so do we go from one resolution to another, multiplying them but seldom persevering in anything we begin — that we actually promise — to do. Is this, at least in part, because at times we subconsciously resist you? Within us is a confusion of desires, hopes, and fears which we use to keep our distance from you, thereby defeating the workings of your Holy Spirit within us. Teach us that it is not just a matter of renouncing things; we must renounce our very selves.

For you alone are God and you call us to yourself, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages, amen.

- Help **serve the meal** (promptly at 5:45). We especially encourage teens to participate in this ministry
- If you have committed to help serve, and are unable to do so, please let Fr. Nick know ASAP.
- We also invite **donations** to cover the \$250 cost of providing that meal.

If you have not already done so, we ask you to consider your **Stewardship Pledge offering** prayerfully, fill out the pledge form, and submit it today. You may obtain the 2010 Stewardship Pledge Form at the candle stand. For more information, contact Deb Sedares or Fr. Nick.

Today we celebrated a Memorial Service for the servants of God **Thelma Zekos** fallen asleep one year and **Elizabeth Elias** fallen asleep three years.

May their memory be eternal!

COMMUNITY NEWS

St. George Orthodox Cathedral is hosting their 10th Annual **Hafli on Saturday, February 13**, at the Cathedral Auditorium, 30 Anna Street, Worcester. Doors open with mazza at 7:30pm, music and dancing from 8:30 -12:30pm. The cost is \$30.00 adults, and \$20.00 ages 7-16. For tickets, contact HAFLI2009@gmail.com or call Andre Houssan at 508-667-7099.

St. Mary's Women's Guild is celebrating their 55th Anniversary in 2010 with a **Valentine's Day Luncheon** on Sunday, February 14, 2010, following the Divine Liturgy in the Church Hall. Adults: \$15.00 Children 12 & under: \$5.00. For reservations please contact Jean George at 508-852-0277 or Dorothy Prifti at 508-829-9339.

Rev. Fr. Peter-Michael Preble of St. Michael's in Southbridge is producing a half hour radio program titled "**Shepherd of Souls**" which will be airing at **1pm on Sunday afternoons** on WARE 1250am in Ware. The signal is strong and should reach Worcester and the surrounding areas.

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

Volunteers needed for Saturdays and Sundays at Holy Trinity Nursing and Rehab Center, during the hours of 1:00pm to 3:00pm. Please call Catherine Sabatini at 508-852-1000 or email 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, call David Day at 508-791-8200.

Did you know? Holy Trinity Nursing

and Rehabilitation Center is JCAHO approved ... this is the level of standard Hospitals need to meet in order to remain certified.

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.

The 2010 Archdiocesan Almanac has arrived. The cost is \$10, available at the candle stand.

WHO IS A FAITHFUL STEWARD OF THE CHURCH?

A faithful steward and member of the Orthodox Christian Church, who can receive or participate as a sponsor in any Sacraments of the church implies that the person:

- Is baptized and christmated an Orthodox Christian
- Comes to Church regularly
- Participates in the Life of the Church
- Participates in Holy Communion regularly
- Is a financial steward of the Church
- Goes to Holy Confession when necessary

NAMEDAYS

February 20

St. Theodore of Tyre

Theodore Belba
Theodora Collins
Theodhoraq Lolo
Teodor Nedelcu
Theodore Peter Tonna
Theodore Russell Tonna
Vjollça Treska
Derek Wilder

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

BY WEB OR PODCAST: WWW.RECEIVE.ORG

FOOD WILL NOT COMMEND US BEFORE GOD

THIS is the third and last preparatory week before Great Lent — the Sunday of the Last Judgment, also known as Meatfare (since we refrain from eating meat the next day.) The Epistle lesson is taken from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, 8:8-9:2. In this section St. Paul takes up the question of eating meat that has been offered to idols. He gives us two important principles that flow out of his understanding of what happens when a person accepts Christ and is incorporated into Him. The first is that we become free from servitude to the Law, to the world and to the Evil One. The second is that in Christian morality, charity (*agapé*) is above everything else.

St. Paul is answering a question addressed to him by the Corinthian community. They wanted to know if it were permissible for a Christian to eat meat that had been offered in sacrifice to a pagan god; and, if so, in which circumstances? This was a complicated issue. Usually, only a small portion of an animal was actually used as the sacrificial offering. The rest remained the property of the priests of the temple. This is how they supported themselves. As you might imagine there was a great deal remaining and this was sold to the butchers for purchase in the marketplace. You could never be certain if the meat you were buying had been offered to a pagan god.

There was another problem, one having to do with social relations. Very often a Christian would be invited by family or friends to some important event, like a birthday or a marriage — a family festival. These could be held in the pagan temple where there were special rooms available for such occasions. The food offered there had been given in sacrifice to the pagan god. Even if these events were held at home, the meat certainly had been offered in sacrifice. For a person of conscience

this presented a real dilemma. For a recent convert from paganism, this represented a severe temptation, a kind of back-tracking. For a Jewish convert, to eat meat sacrificed to a pagan god was unthinkable; Jews would have died before they would ever do such a thing. We Orthodox Christians face similar dilemmas. We are often invited to events and celebrations that fall on fasting days; this happens especially during the Christmas holiday season. While not necessarily as severe a matter of conscience as in the pagan world, we too are presented with the choice of either breaking the fast or offending our host. This is the issue the Corinthians have asked St. Paul to address.

Here it would be helpful if we read the entire section, from verses 8:8-13: "Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if any one sees you, a man of knowledge, at table in an idol's temple, might he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall."

The two questions around food ("fasting") have to do with our own *understanding* of 'food' in our greater relationship with God, and with our brother's or sister's *sensibility* regarding the same question. Food itself is absolutely neutral. God is not interested in what we eat; or in St. Paul's phrase: "Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do." In a very

deep sense the fasting rules we follow are arbitrary. To adopt total vegetarianism certainly makes sense, but this will not put us in a better stance before God. What puts us in a better position before God is the quality of our heart, not our stomach.

So, St. Paul tells the Corinthians, do you think you have a superior 'knowledge' such that you can eat idol-meat? You are destroying your fellow Christian who is 'weaker' and sees your license as a scandal; or, sees your license as a temptation.

If I knew my brother or sister were an alcoholic and that by drinking in front of them I would tempt them back to drink — even though I thought that I could regulate my own drinking — would my drinking in front of them be acceptable? Do I not have an obligation toward them? Is it not *agapé* love that is required of me?

St. Paul tells the Corinthians: "if food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall." It is not only God that we need to be concerned with when we fast, it is also our brother and sister. We are 'fasting' together. We are struggling and striving together. We are each supporting one another. The old Latin saying obtains here especially well: *Unus Christianus, nullus Christianus* — One Christian, No Christian. We cannot be an individual Christian; we are Christians together, in community.

The holy fathers and mothers of our Church have given us the gift of the Fast. We are to use it for our own discipline, self-control, and spiritual progress. We are also to use it for the benefit of our brothers and sisters. Let not our zeal scandalize them. But also, let not our own weaknesses lessen our resolve to strive toward holiness and communion with God.

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA