



Parish Information Bulletin

SUNDAY 6 DECEMBER
St Nicholas, the Wonderworker

10th Sunday of Luke, Luke 13: 10-17

- **8.00am**
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

SATURDAY 12 DECEMBER
St Spyridon, the Wonderworker

- **8.00am**
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

SUNDAY 13 DECEMBER

Epistle Reading: Colossians 3: 4-11
Gospel Reading: Luke 14: 16-24, Matt. 22: 14

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Fr Athanasios and
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at the Church every
Monday to Friday
between 4.00 and 6.00pm
for Holy Confession and
any spiritual need.

"The giver
of every good
and perfect gift
has called upon us
to mimic
His giving,
by grace,
through faith,
and this is not of
ourselves."

St. Nicholas
of Myra

St Nicholas the Wonderworker Commemorated December 6

The true greatness of beloved St Nicholas is hidden in the shadows of legend, obscuring the identity of one of the most endearing of our Saints.

Nothing is known of the early life of Nicholas, except that he was born at the turn of the fourth century, during the reign of the Emperor Diocletian in Asia Minor. St Nicholas was a Bishop of Myra, in that area which is now Turkey. Of a quiet and studious nature, he attended the Synod of Nicaea in 325 AD. On that momentous occasion he was so withdrawn that he is not even mentioned in the account of the proceedings recorded by St Athanasios the Great; however, his behind the scenes activity did add to the lustre of this memorable convocation. His importance was recognised by the Emperor Justinian, who had a magnificent cathedral erected in his memory in Constantinople.

Prior to his elevation as Archbishop, St Nicholas suffered imprisonment, harsh treatment and torture at the hands of the enemies of the Church. It was not until the reign of the Christian Emperor Constantine that he was able to lead the normal and peaceful life of a prelate. His leadership in Myra, which did not offer very hospitable surroundings for the Christians of the day, was so effective that his fame and popularity gave rise to many legends that were well intended but served only to screen the true character of this very real and industrious saint who laboured for Christ all the years of his life, echoing the truth of Christianity uttered centuries before by the Apostles.

So great was St Nicholas' popularity that he became the symbol of protection of children, which led to many of the legends about him. After his death by natural causes at a venerable age, the legends and myths multiplied, but they only demonstrate how dearly loved he was for his great work. He became not only the patron Saint of children, but also of merchants, sailors, and scholars, and was a protective symbol for travellers against highwaymen.

In a fascinating and daring enterprise in the late eleventh century, the residents of Bari, Italy, where Nicholas' popularity had grown with the years, hatched a plot to recover the remains of St Nicholas from Turkey. Through guile and ruse they were able to outwit the unwary but dangerous natives of Asia Minor and succeeded in removing the body of the Saint and transporting it to Bari. There it was paraded in triumph through the streets before being properly enshrined on 9 May 1087 AD, after which a magnificent basilica was erected in his honour.

-Fr George Poulos

Saint Spyridon The Wonderworker Commemorated December 12

Saint Spyridon was bishop of Tremithus in Cyprus. He was of peasant origin and, according to tradition, has suffered at the Diocletian prosecution. After becoming Bishop, he attended the First Ecumenical Council at Nicea and was also present at the Council of Sadica.

A large number of legends about his life were early in circulation. According to one of them, some thieves trying one night to rob him of his sheep, discovered their hands tied miraculously behind their backs. A tradition relates the incident at the Council of Nicea, by which Saint Spyridon, being theologically unistructed, wished to prove the existence of the Holy Trinity. After praying, he took a piece of roof tile and squeezed it forcefully in his palm. Water was seen running down, the soil remaining in his palm, and air ascended upwards. In his simple language, Saint Spyridon explained the analogy to the delegated bishops. Another story relates how as a result of reciting the Creed at Nicea, a heathen philosopher was converted who had previously mocked at the Christian faith.

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Saint Spyridon is considered one of the most miraculous Saints of the Greek Orthodox Church. When he died, he was buried in Tremithus, but his remains were taken to Constantinople about the end of the 7th century on account of an impending barbaric invasion, and kept there until the fall of Constantinople (1453). They were then taken to north-western Greece and finally, in 1456, to the island of Corfu in Kerkyra. Today they are found in a large church dedicated to him and attract a great number of pilgrims from all Christian lands.

On certain days, the remains are taken in procession within the city of Kerkyra and many miraculous cures are attributed to him. He is the patron Saint of the island of Corfu. His feast day in the Orthodox Church is on December 12.

A Woman Healed on the Sabbath

In today's Gospel Reading we have heard the story about a sick woman who was healed by Our Lord Jesus Christ on the Sabbath Day. We may ask ourselves a question: what was the fault of *"a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years?"* (Luke, 13. 10-17) Our Church offers us to put it in another, more soul-saving way and instead of asking: "For which fault?" and "Why?" – inquire ourselves: "For what purpose?"

Being still in Eden, the humans turned around from God, from His Divine Joy and eternal Life, and, consequently, as a result, had to face sufferings and death. In this sense, of cause, every infirmity, every suffering comes from Satan, who deceived people. *"Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward,"* – says Saint Job, the Long-Suffering (Iov 5.7).

Jesus Christ calls us to repent in order to save our souls and not to perish... He calls us to "change our mind", to make an effort and choose Life and not death! But how hard it is for us, who *"have been snared by Satan for many years"*, to start this struggle! Our Lord cures the suffering woman and He forgives our sins not because we deserve this forgiveness, but because He is Love and His love embraces all of us!

It is very hard for a man, who is experiencing misery from his own sins, to perceive this ultimate goodness of God. The ruler of the synagogue from today's reading, for example, is trying to defend and endorse the literal execution of the law. He does not even realize that by doing that he calls to obey not the God's law, but his own personal understanding of this law... Being so deeply mistaken, the head of the synagogue in reality demands everyone to comply and adhere to the law of his own...

The meaning of one of the Commandments of the Old Testament is in the fact, that it is essential to give people one Day as the Day of God's Remembrance. People need to have the ability to live at least one day a week not for themselves, but for God, and in the long run – for other people, for God's love towards others...

Jesus Christ came to this world not to trespass the law, but to fulfil it (Mat.5.17). He calls us to repentance and to the change of our way of thinking. He wants us to see the true meaning of the Commandment about the Sabbath, answering thus to the reproaches for healing on the Consecrate Day: *"Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?"* (Luke 13.15-16)

The woman, who was cured from her infirmity, received from Jesus Christ not only alleviation of the sufferings of her body, but also, as the gift of Faith, redemption from the sufferings of her soul. *"He laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God"* (Luke 13.13).

Let us, brothers and sisters in Christ, always remember that only Jesus Christ is able to free our souls from the burden of sins and from the devil's ensnarement; only God possesses power to liberate and make us strait! Amen.

-St. Mary's Dormition Orthodox Church, Shiskovtzi.

St. Nicholas of Myra: Children, I beseech you to correct your hearts . . .

"Children, I beseech you to correct your hearts and thoughts, so that you may be pleasing to God.

Consider that although we may reckon ourselves to be righteous and frequently succeed in deceiving men, we can conceal nothing from God.

Let us therefore strive to preserve the holiness of our souls and to guard the purity of our bodies with all fervor.

Ye are the temple of God, says the divine Apostle Paul; *If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy."*

— St. Nicholas of Myra, *The Great Collection of the Lives of the Saints*
by St. Demetrius of Rostov