



# HOLY TRINITY

## ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



723 N BODINE ST PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123

# CHURCH BULLETIN

Vol. 14 No. 43 \* Sunday October 24, 2021 \* Editor: V. Rev. Fr. Nicolai Buga

## The 23rd Sunday after Pentecost

### Gospel Reading Luke 8: 26-39

At that time, as Jesus arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, there met him a man from the city who had demons; for a long time he had worn no clothes and he lived not in a house but among the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him, and said with a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beseech you, do not torment me." For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him; he was kept under guard, and bound with chains and fetters, but he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the desert.) Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. Now a large herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside; and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them leave. Then the demons came out of the man and

entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. When the herdsmen saw what happened, they fled, and told it in the city and in the country. Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. And those who had seen it told them how he who had been possessed with demons was healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gadarenes asked him to depart from them; for they were seized with great fear; so he got into the boat and returned. The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but he sent him away, saying, "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

### Apostle Reading Ephesians 2: 4-10

*Brethren*, God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved — and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his

grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

**Synaxarion. Sunday October 24, 2021 (The 23rd Sunday after Pentecost):** Holy Great Martyr Arethas and His Fellow Martyrs; Holy Martyrs Mark, Soterichos and Valentine. **Thursday October 26:** Holy Great Martyr Demetrius the Myrrh-streamer; **Wednesday October 27:** Holy Righteous Demetrius the New,

### HOLY TRINITY

#### ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

723 N Bodine St.  
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123

Tel. 267-549-2163

[www.holytrinityphiladelphia.co](http://www.holytrinityphiladelphia.co)

Rev. Fr. Timotei AVRAM,  
Rector

[frtimavram@gmail.com](mailto:frtimavram@gmail.com)

Rev. Deacon Petru Bogdan MANEA  
[pbmanea81@gmail.com](mailto:pbmanea81@gmail.com)



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Gospel & Apostle Readings	1
Fr. Robert Lucas: The Gadarene Demoniac	2
Fr. George Dimopoulos: "Don't Persecute Him"	3-4
Liturgical Schedule from October 20 to October 28, 2019	4
Metropolitan Sotirios of Pisidia: The Holy Glorious Martyr Demetrius of Thessaloniki	5
Fr. N. Buga: Holy Righteous Demetrius the New, Protector of Bucharest	6

## The Gadarene Demoniac

It was only back in July that we read this Gospel from St. Matthew's account, and now we get to hear it again as recorded by St. Luke!

I find it interesting to note that we hear this Gospel reading twice on a Sunday during the year, and it is read another time during the week, while the Catholic Church doesn't ever use this reading in their 3 year cycle of Sunday readings.

What I find even more interesting is that it seems that I always get to preach on this Gospel. It's a fantastic story, something that probably would make a good Hollywood movie: We have a naked man, living in a graveyard, scaring the dickens out of the townspeople, so powerful that chains could not hold him. The hero comes, sets him free, and sends the demons (creatively) into a herd of swine who rush off screaming over a cliff into the sea to drown!

There is an interesting theme in this Gospel reading that can be summed up in just one word: fear. Everyone in this Gospel story, with the exception of Jesus, was afraid. The demoniac was afraid and the townspeople were afraid. Even after he was healed the townspeople were still afraid! Fear drove the man to isolate himself in a graveyard, and he made it his business to frighten anyone who happened by. Evidently, this atmosphere of fear was a focus of life in the region of the Gadarenes.

Fear is something with which we are all familiar. Since 911 many Americans have lived in fear that terrorists will kill them. Our national discourse seems to have revolved almost entirely around fear. It is a terrible way to live. We fear poverty, starvation, cancer, crime. We even fear the truth and honesty. "What if people knew how I really felt, who I really am? Surely, they would not like me." So we run from the things that frighten us. We live in gated communities, we take lots of pills, we drink lots of alcohol, we eat lots of food, we watch lots of television, anything to take away our fear. Ultimately, all of these little fears come from the one big fear, that is, the fear of death. Which reminds me, it was Woody Allen who once said, "I'm not afraid of dying. I just don't want to be there when it happens."



It is curious that the Gospel calls us to do something quite different than we are used to doing with fear. It invites us not to run away from it. Jesus did not run away from the demoniac. He met him face to face. He did not run away from Calvary. He met death face to face. Of course, he was afraid! Read the account of his agonizing prayers in Gethsemane! But courageous people are not those who have not experienced fear, but rather those who know it intimately and who do not let it rule them. We are invited to meet our fears head-on with faith and hope in God who will never forsake us. If we do, we will discover that the monster we so feared is not so fearful after all.

We all have problems we need to face, fears that need to be admitted, sins that need reconciling and this

cannot be done by hiding from them or pretending that they do not exist. Instead of running away we need to stop and look deeply at what it is that troubles us. We need to let go, to relax, to welcome the opportunity to face these things when they arise. The Lord invites us to leave our fears behind and come to him as we are.

My brothers and sisters, as we go forward this day as Disciples of Christ, let us all rise up against our fears and follow our Lord, who beckons to us to follow Him. In just under two weeks, we will begin the Philip Fast that leads us into the Nativity of Our Lord. Use this time of the fast to seek the Lord, as did the wise men who journeyed to find our Savior. The madness is already starting, with holiday decorations on display and the media blitz of shopping, cooking, partying on all of the channels and radio stations. There is a way to combat all of this, though; keep Christ as the central focus of the season, and all else will fall into place. Don't fear the coming frenzy; instead, use the time set aside by the Philip Fast to pray and reflect over the coming holy day, and the past years blessings. That is my prayer for all of us this day. Amen.

**Fr. Robert Lucas**





## "Don't Persecute Him"

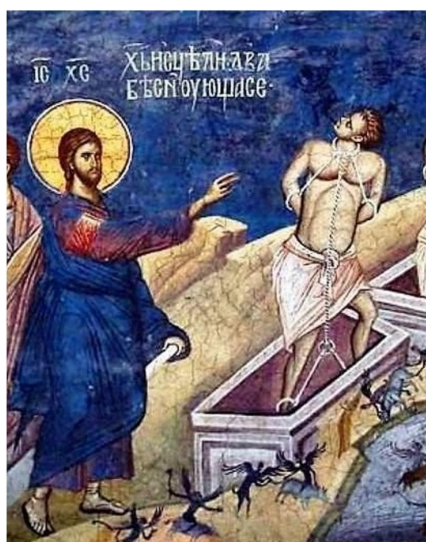
*"Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gerasenes round about besought Him to depart from them for they were taken with great fear" (Luke 8:26-39).*

One of the more polite figures of the ancient world, dear brethren, is Aristides, named the Just by his contemporaries. Aristides lived from the middle of the sixth century B.C. until approximately the beginning of the fifth century B.C. He was a political opponent of Themistocles. Aristides had wanted Athens to remain an agricultural city. But Themistocles desired to change Athens from an agricultural center to a naval power. The eternal Greek antitheses. In writing the life of Aristides, Plutarch tells us that he was a man of many virtues, and that the most outstanding was his proclivity towards justice ... "of all his virtues it was his justice that most impressed the multitude, because of its most continued and most general exercise. Wherefore, though poor and a man of the people, he acquired that most kingly and god-like surname of 'the Just.'"

Themistocles, with some of his fellow Athenians, decided to exile Aristides, accusing him of abolishing the public courts and making decisions according to his own whim ... "that Aristides had done away with the public courts of justice by his determining and judging everything in private, and that without anyone perceiving it, he had established for himself a monarchy, saving only the armed bodyguard."

The Athenians were invited to vote by writing the name of the candidate for exile on the *ostrakon*. If six thousand ballots were cast against the candidate he would be sent into exile immediately. The voting began ... "now at that time of which I was speaking," Plutarch says, "as the voters were inscribing their *ostraka*, it is said that an unlettered and utterly boorish fellow handed his ostrakon to Aristides, whom he took to be one of the ordinary crowd, and asked him to write Aristides on it. He, astonished, asked the man what possible wrong Aristides had done him. None whatsoever was the answer, "I don't even know the fellow, but I am tired of hearing him everywhere called the Just." Then Aristides turned his face to the opposite direction, lifting his hands in prayer to God.

He prayed, may no crises overtake the Athenians that should cause the people to remember Aristides. Aristides was exiled for only a short while. The Athenians felt his absence with great remorse.



There is another anecdote circulating in the communities which is very characteristic of the human thought process. A board of trustees meeting was held in one of our parishes. One of the topics for discussion was the priest; i.e., whether or not the pastor should remain with the parish. As soon as the meeting started, one of the board members was delivered into the arms of Morpheus; i.e., he fell asleep. While he was dozing, the discussion was whether or not the priest should leave. When it came time to vote, he was asked for his ballot. Suddenly he awoke, not even aware of the issue discussed, and began shouting, "I agree with the last speaker. The priest has to leave the community, and by tomorrow morning."

"Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gerasenes round about besought Him to depart from them for they were taken with great fear." The people from that district of Gerasene did not understand Him. They were overtaken by an ungodly fear and asked Him to leave. "And He went up into the ship and returned back again."

Where has man reached, allowing himself to be occupied with the interest and passion of hate? The Athenians exiled Aristides, their example of justice. The board of trustees have nothing better to do than persecute the priest. However, in both cases the examples are relative. Aristides is called the Just, but the word is elastic and relative. He was a man with human weaknesses. He should not have been exiled, but his compatriots were moved by the viciousness of envy. Envy deforms everything that it strikes. It is like a concave mirror that disfigures even the most beautiful body. A persecution by the board of trustees waged against the priest is not incomprehensible. In contrary, it is a very common thing nowadays. I mention this simply because, if they are to continue, they should not employ false accusations or vulgarity while doing it. Nor should they write about such problems, especially in foreign newspapers. And, of course, calling in the police, locking the Church, and throwing out the vestments of the priest, and making a court case out of the entire mess never helps in any way, shape, or manner.

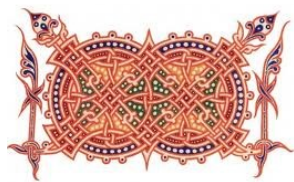
There is a proper way to handle such problems. And, if you will, the Christian way. The Church has as Her head

leader, the Archbishop. It is through the bishops and archbishops that any problems are to be aired. But, beloved brethren, in the first and second cases, the confrontation is between men. In the third case, that of the Gerasenes, the situation is very different. On one side is man, while on the other stands God. Christ is neither the righteous Aristedes, nor the A or B priest, that no matter how good and active he is, still remains a man. Here is Christ, free from sin of any kind, never permitting even a vain word to pass His lips. It is Christ who asked that famous question, "Who will accuse Me of sin?" And so it was this same Christ that the Gerasenes drove from their district, absolutely amazed by his presence. He destroyed their illegal gains, taken in from their trading in swine. They were not concerned about the man possessed by the demons — whether or not he would be well again. It was their loss of commercial profit that worried them. "So, Jesus, leave from us. We don't want you. Today you destroyed our pigs, perhaps tomorrow you will ask for our fields, and after for our children, and our cash registers, monies, properties, etc. And, finally, God forbid, you might even ask us to follow you. Leave from our place. We want to leave it as we found it." And as the Gospel says, He did not perform many miracles there.

It is not sufficient for good, per se, to stare you right in the face and demand your attention and appreciation. Rather, you must acknowledge that which is good and most of all practice it. God is able to save you, to change you. But you must desire to be saved, to be changed. For example, when the doctor prescribes certain medicines and treatments in order to cure your illness, you must either accommodate yourself to his prescriptions, or find yourself on a permanent journey leaving this world (Wisdom of Sirach 38:1-10).

My brothers and sisters, as we go forward this day as Disciples of Christ, let us all rise up against our fears and follow our Lord, who beckons to us to follow Him. In just under two weeks, we will begin the Philip Fast that leads us into the Nativity of Our Lord. Use this time of the fast to seek the Lord, as did the wise men who journeyed to find our Savior. The madness is already starting, with holiday decorations on display and the media blitz of shopping, cooking, partying on all of the channels and radio stations. There is a way to combat all of this, though; keep Christ as the central focus of the season, and all else will fall into place. Don't fear the coming frenzy; instead, use the time set aside by the Philip Fast to pray and reflect over the coming holy day, and the past years blessings. That is my prayer for all of us this day. Amen.

**Fr. George Dimopoulos**



## HOLY TRINITY'S Liturgical Schedule from October 24 to October 31, 2021

### **Sunday October 24 (23rd Sunday after Pentecost) :**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy  
11:00 pm - Sunday School  
12:00 pm - Coffee hour

### **Tuesday October 26 - Holy Great Martyr Demetrius:**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy  
12:00 pm - Coffee Hour

### **Saturday October 30- Soul Saturday:**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy  
11:00 pm - Memorial Service

### **Sunday October 31 (24th Sunday after Pentecost):**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy  
11:00 pm - Sunday School  
12:00 pm - Coffee hour

# The Holy Glorious Martyr Demetrios of Thessaloniki

In the beginning of the 4th Century, the pagan Roman emperors continued their cruel three hundred year persecution of Christians. In the midst of these hard times, lived St. Nestor, whom we celebrate today, and St. Demetrios, who was celebrated yesterday.

St. Demetrios was born and raised in Thessaloniki. His parents belonged to high society, and had taken care to give their son an extensive education. This education, along with his rare physical and spiritual gifts given by God, distinguished him in society. So much so, that his reputation reached the ears of the Emperor himself, Maximian Galerius. Acknowledging his gifts, he made him a general in the army and governor of the region.

Despite his high position, St. Demetrios did not fail as a Christian to preach and teach with a missionary zeal. He served as a light for the idolatrous Thessalonians, leading them to Christ and His truth. When the Emperor heard of this, he ordered St. Demetrios to be brought before him. The Saint then boldly confessed his faith in Christ. As a result, he was imprisoned in an old public bathroom next to the stadium. There he suffered much hardship and tortures.

In 305 AD, the lords of the city organized fights and duels in the stadiums of Thessaloniki. During one of these contests, the great gladiator Lyaeus appeared in the middle of the stadium, loudly taunting the Christians: "Whoever dares, come and fight with me! Let's see if your God will save you, who you believe to be stronger than ours!" With his sword in hand, he stood undefeated. Among those present in the stadium was a young Christian named Nestor, who was a student of St. Demetrios. He was very upset to hear these mocking words against the true God. Wanting to show the crowds the power of the God of Christians, he went to the prison where St. Demetrios was, to obtain his prayers and blessing to fight Lyaeus. With this done, he entered the stadium and challenged Lyaeus. Crying out: "God of Demetrios help me!" he defeated and killed the gladiator. This made the Emperor Maximian very angry, and he gave the order for both St. Nestor and St. Demetrios to be executed. The soldiers beheaded St. Nestor in the stadium, and then went to the



prison where they killed St. Demetrios with lances.

Naturally, these shocking events strengthened the faith of Christians, and confounded the pagans. They began to see the Christians in a different way. Later, at the tomb of St. Demetrios (where he was martyred), myrrh began to stream forth. Many people came quickly to receive this myrrh, in which many miracles were done.

My brothers and sisters, we as Christians are not facing the same level of persecutions that the Holy Martyrs mentioned today endured, although there are still countries that persecute Christians. Our own challenges are different. How do we deal with them?

St. Demetrios was a high official, and in constant danger of arrest. Despite this, he still taught the young people about Christ. He inspired them with strong faith, courage, and even the spirit of sacrifice for Christ's sake. Do

we have this same courage, or are we timid? Do we fear being thought of as "backwards?" St. Nestor refused to allow Lyaeus to mock and blaspheme Christ. How do we respond when we hear such slanderous disdain and insults towards Christ and His Church? When the Saint decided to face Lyaeus, he did not rely on his own power, but on the power of Christ. He first ran to beg St. Demetrios to intercede for him with God, and received a blessing to succeed in his struggle. When he finally confronted the gladiator, he sought the help of the true God, whom his teacher St. Demetrios believed in. So it was only natural that he gave credit for the victory not to himself, but to God and St. Demetrios, who interceded for him and gave him strength. Do we give thanks to God and those who helped us? Or do we selfishly claim glory for ourselves, bragging and boasting?

My brothers and sisters, May the Lord, by the intercessions of Sts. Demetrios and Nestor, with all the Saints, increase faith, boldness and love for Christ in our souls. May we receive many spiritual victories in the struggle against the visible and invisible enemies of Christ. Amen.

**Metropolitan Sotirios of Pisidia**

(Source: <https://myocn.net/>)



## Holy Righteous Demetrius the New, Protector of Bucharest

St. Demetrius of Basarabi (or Basarabov, in Bulgarian) is one of the most venerated saints in Romania. Also known as “St. Demetrius the New”, to distinguish him from the Great Martyr Demetrios the Myrrh-streamer, he is the protector saint of Bucharest and all Wallachia. Since his relics are preserved in the Patriarchal Cathedral in Bucharest, he is also known as Saint Demetrius of Bucharest”.

Saint Demetrius was born in Basarabi (now Basarabovo, in Bulgaria), a Romanian village on the bank of the Lom River, in north-western Bulgaria. He lived in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, during the reign of the Romanian–Bulgarian kings, Peter and Iontza Asan. His parents were probably Wallachian (Romanian) peasants. he was a simple shepherd.

A local story speaks of his gentle and sensitive nature, emphasizing his extraordinary delicacy of mind. One day – the legend says – as he went to graze the sheep, he accidentally stepped on a nest of some birds and killed the baby birds. He considered that as a high murder, so he decided not to put a shoe or sock for three years – not even on heat or frosty times - on his left foot, the one which killed the birds. According to the *Russian Orthodox Encyclopedia*, Saint Demetrius was once married but had no children. After his wife's death, he entered the monastery nearby and was tonsured a monk. , dedicating himself to fasting, prayers and vigils. He later retired to a lonely life somewhere in the forests. There he found as shelter a cave near the Lom River, where he lived the rest of his life in poverty and deep humility, through all-night vigils, fasting and constant prayer and tears.

Nobody knows how many years he lived there. Nobody knows the exact date of his passing away either. Anticipating the hour of his death, he laid down between two slabs of stone, as in a tomb, and gave peacefully his soul in God's hands. As Lom River waters began to rise in time, climbing up to the cave, the saint's body was gradually covered by water.

Nevertheless, the place of his rest has remained unknown until a sick girl, the daughter of a local peasant, had a revelation when the Righteous Demetrius appeared in her dream and said: “*If your parents would take me out*



*of the water, I will heal you!”* The young girl told her parents about the dream and shortly a lot of people, acting at the girl's advice, began to search and dig the place indicated. There, they found St Demetrius's body uncorrupted, glittering as gold between two slabs of stone. The girl was suddenly cured, regaining her health. The sacred relics were put in a coffin and placed in the church of the Bassarab village. There they worked numerous other miracles.

During the Russian-Turkish war of 1768-1774, in order to prevent them from being desecrated by Muslim soldiers, General Peter Saltykov took the relics with the intention to bring them to Kiev. But St. Demetrius decided otherwise. On its way to Kiev, in June

1774 the procession stopped in Bucharest. When arriving at the cathedral, Saltykov was persuaded by Metropolitan Gregory II of Wallachia (1760-1787), and Hagi Dimitrie, a rich Macedo-Romanian merchant, to hand over the relics as a gift to the Romanian Orthodox not only because St. Demetrius was "Wallachian", but also as a consolation for the many material damages and sufferings endured by the Orthodox Romanians during the Russian occupation of the Country (1769-1774 ). Only the right hand of the saint ended up to the Lavra Pecerska in Kiev. This is how Saint Demetrius the New remained in Bucharest, where he has worked countless miracles.

Thus, in the last decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Saint Demetrius became the patron saint and protector of Bucharest. In 1955, the Synod decided to extend the veneration of St. Demetrius the New nationwide. As a gesture of brotherly love, on October 27, 2005, Patriarch Teoctist of Romania gave at the request of Patriarch Maxim of Bulgaria an icon containing a particle of the saint's relics, which is preserved today in the monastery of St. Demetrius in Basarabov.

**Fr. Nicolai Buga**

