

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN MARCH 15, 2015 THIS WEEK'S NEWS

PITA BAKING, this **Thursday March 19th** at 9:00 am. The weather has taken its toll on our baking schedule, so any and all help is really appreciated. Thanks to all who helped with making dough last Saturday and with pita baking this past Thursday. Questions? **Please talk to Chris Toda.**

HOLIDAY PITA AND PASTRY ORDERS, are being accepted now. Please reach out to your family and friends to let them know that they may place orders for delivery for either the Western Easter (April 5) or for Pascha (April 12). Pick up an order form at the candle stand. All orders for either holiday must be received by Sunday, March 22. We are baking to order so do not assume that there will be "extra" pita and pastry for sale. Orders may also be placed with Betty Anderson or Chris Toda. *Remember we also take orders throughout the year for any special occasions such as weddings, showers, baptisms, birthdays, graduations or other celebrations!*

DONATIONS ARE WELCOMED toward the flowers that adorn the Precious Cross today. Please see Tim Rucho.

THE PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGY sponsored by the Council of Eastern



THE THIRD SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT

THE VENERATION OF THE PRECIOUS CROSS

APOSTOLIC READING: HEBREWS 4:14-16; 5:1-6 ☩ GOSPEL: MARK 8:34-38; 9:1
TONE 7 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL 7

Orthodox Churches will be at **St. Mary Assumption** on this coming Wednesday, March 18th at 6:00 pm.

VESPERS AND CONFESSION will be held each Saturday evening at 5:00 pm during Great Lent. Fr. Nick will be available for confession each week after Vespers, and before Vespers by appointment (call or e-mail Fr. Nick).

PALM SUNDAY LUNCHEON will be held **following Divine Liturgy on Sunday, April 5**. A traditional baked fish dinner will be served. An alternative Lenten non-fish menu for children and others will also be offered. Donations for the Luncheon are \$25 for adults and \$5 for children. **Reservations are strongly encouraged** so that we can properly plan for the dinner. A sign-up sheet is located at the candle stand or see Eleanor Sedares during coffee

hour to make reservations. If you can help with the luncheon, please e-mail Presvytera Maria or speak with her during coffee hour.

ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY will be held on **Sunday, April 19th** following Divine Liturgy. In addition to the usual reports, we will be voting in a new Parish Council to serve a two year term. Please make plans to attend.

DATES TO REMEMBER

- Sat, March 14 Vespers/Confession, 5pm
- Wed, March 18 PreSanctified Lit at St. Mary 6pm
- Thur, March 19 Pita Baking, 9am
- Sat, March 21 Vespers/Confession, 5pm
- Wed, March 25 Annunciation Lit at St. George 6pm
- Sat, March 28 Vespers/Confession, 5pm
- Wed, April 1 PreSanctified Lit at St. Spyridon 6pm
- Sat, April 4 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry
- Sun, April 5 Palm Sunday Luncheon
- Fri, April 10 Great Friday Children's Program, 12:30
- Sun, April 12 Great and Holy Pascha
- Sun, April 19 General Assembly following Liturgy

GREETERS TEAM 4:
DEBORAH SEDARES & EVAN STAMOULIS

COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP CREW C:
PRIZIO FAMILY

ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED

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A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas



TODAY WE CELEBRATE a memorial for the servants of God **Victoria & Gregory Chachi**. *May their memory be eternal!*

TODAY'S COFFEE HOUR is sponsored by **the Chachi Family** in memory of Victoria and Gregory. And also, in memory of **Alexandra Yanka**, recently departed, by **Audrey and George Fatsy**. *May our Lord rest their souls among the just!*

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

Holy Trinity Nursing & Rehabilitation Center & Holy Trinity Hospice are Orthodox Charities and rely on your donations to continue the mission of providing the best care possible.

NAMEDAYS

March 17

St. Alexios the Man of God

Alex John Johnson

Alex Leo Toda

St. Patrick, Enlightener of Ireland

Padraic Donnchadh Peterson

Patricia Thanas

March 25

The Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos

V. Gerald Belba

Lea Christo

Mary Anna Dymek

Vangjush Lolo

Evan Sparages

Evan Stamoulis

Lynne Tonna

Evans Tsoules

A LENTEN PRAYER

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

TODAY, **CHRIST JESUS**, like David, we again ask you to forgive us all our sins, but especially those against the virtue of love. Forgive us for so often failing to love our neighbor, by disdainful of our peers and resentfully resisting those who have any authority over us, by defaming our brothers and sisters as arrogant while elevating ourselves as models of humility, and by failing to love them and care for them while demanding unreasonable attentions for ourselves. Forgive us, O Lord, for our constant readiness to notice their every fault and failing while minimizing our own. Pardon us all of these, O Christ, and the countless other ways we sin against love, ways we cannot even remember. During these lenten days, turn us around and make of us true lovers, lest we find ourselves rejected from the paschal banquet.

For you, O Christ, deserve all glory, honor, and worship, together with your eternal Father, and your all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages, amen.

THE PRAYER OF ST. EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN

O Lord and master of my life! Dispel from me the spirit of discouragement and slothfulness, of ambition and vain talk!

Instead, give me the spirit of prudence and humility, of patience and charity.

Yes, my king and Lord, let me look at my own sins and refrain from judging others: For you are blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

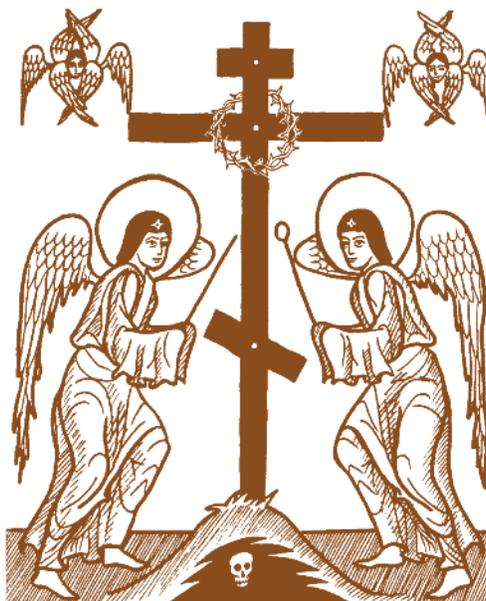
WHAT IS OUR SOUL WORTH?

THIS is the third Sunday of Great Lent, its mid-point. By this time Lent is becoming a routine for many of us. Perhaps we're tiring and loosing focus. Some of us may be weakening in our resolve. Whatever the reason, the Church, out of Her experience, now presents to us the Savior's Cross in order to strengthen us. Some of the Fathers liken it to an oasis in the desert, a kind of respite. We've been struggling to keep the Fast and this serves as a "rest-stop" on our way toward Pascha. Others say it serves as a reminder of our ultimate goal, and so strengthens us in our spiritual resolve.

The Gospel lesson for this Sunday (Mark 8:34-9:1) is the same as that for the Sunday following the Elevation of the Cross in September. [*I've reproduced the reflection for that Sunday on the next page.*] In that reflection I focused primarily on verse 34. Here I would like to reflect on the rest of the passage.

In verse 35 the Lord sets up this correlation: "those who want to save their lives will loose it, and those who lose their life for my sake and for the sake of the gospel, will save it." Here, brothers and sisters, is the central Christian paradox. We have to choose! Do we cling primarily to the things that surround us, the things that we can touch and feel? Or, do we overcome this desire and choose the Kingdom of God? This choice is not as clear as one might think. The present life is good and sweet. The world around us was created by God as good (cf. Genesis 1:25). It was intended for us, from the beginning, to be enjoyed. But at the same time, our first love always should be God.

In the Garden of Gethsemane the Lord himself struggles with this very question (Matthew 24:36ff). He, who is Life itself, knows fully what it means to



die. He appreciates the beauty of this existence in its fullness without being tempted by thinking this is all that is. He knows of a beauty far surpassing this plane of reality. Nonetheless, he struggles in the Garden, asking his Father to "let this cup pass" (Matthew 24:39). It is in full knowledge of what will be asked of him that the Lord tells his disciples, and us, that we also will have to choose.

In verse 36 he presents the question more sharply. He says, "For what will it profit a person to gain the whole world and to forfeit their life [soul]? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life [soul]?" In some translations the word "life" is used for "soul." Of course, they are they same thing. We are not alive if we do not have a soul. But, we also understand that the soul has an existence beyond this current life. This realization should give us all pause.

The next verse, verse 37, brings this point home more directly. He says, "What can a person give in return for their soul?" We struggle in this life for any number of things. Most of us struggle simply to have a comfortable life and

something to pass on to our children. But, what the Lord asks of us here is: are such things what are most important? If pressed for an answer, would we say food, or home, or clothing, or iPhone are more important than our soul? Yet, this is how the question will be asked, not only at the Judgment, but also in those moments when we pass from this existence. How will we decide when the choice is in front of us? We need to think about it constantly.

Then, in verse 38, the Lord sets up another correlation. He says, "those who are ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." We are asked not only to follow the words of the Lord, we are asked to stand up for them. We are asked to live by them both privately and publicly. To be a follower of Christ always requires testimony. Not the testimony of force or violence, but the quiet testimony of our lives, lived with a hand extended toward the other.

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA



HOW MUCH IS YOUR LIFE WORTH?

THE Gospel lesson for the Sunday following the Feast of the Elevation of the Precious Cross adds the personal dimension to our understanding of what it means to call ourselves Christians. The Gospel lesson for the Sunday *before* the Feast of the Cross (taken from St. John, 3:13-17) spoke of what God, in the person of Jesus Christ, was doing for us through His sacrifice on the Cross. *This* Sunday's Gospel lesson found in St. Mark (8:34-9:1) speaks to how we should respond to God's great act of love.

The passage opens with an invitation. The Lord says: "If any want to become my followers ..." (v. 34). Even when we hear what it will mean to "become a follower," we shouldn't lose sight of this first important point: the Lord is *inviting* us. He doesn't command. He doesn't threaten. He asks. He says, "if."

The rest of the verse is where we find out what it means to follow Christ. It is a real challenge and often difficult to hear. The Lord tells us that if a person decides to accept His invitation, "... let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." Usually we run through the verse quickly, treating it all as a single statement, but it actually contains three separate actions. Let's take a look each, one at a time.

What does it mean to "deny" oneself? The Lord does not mean to simply refrain from doing something that we would like to do — although this is certainly part of it. Jesus is talking about looking at ourselves in the same way we would look at another person who we do not know at all. He is asking us to give ourselves the same sort of critique and spiritual scrutiny that we might give a perfect stranger as we look at them from a distance. The original Greek word that we translate as "deny" is actu-



ally much stronger. It has a meaning closer to "renounce" oneself than "deny."

We need to develop a certain distance from ourselves if we want to grow spiritually. For example, often we can clearly discern the issue or problem that another person is facing, while it remains unapparent to them. This is true on both the physical and spiritual planes. When a parent wants to help their child get the best education possible, they will select the tutor who will push the child to his or her limits. We know that a physical therapist can push someone with an injury beyond what they thought they were capable of. Only someone with distance and spiritual insight can push you to recognize and confront such things. We need to regulate and train ourselves like a drill sergeant would. This is what the Lord means when he says we must deny ourselves.

The second is to take up our cross. We commonly describe some genuine

difficulty or tragedy as our "cross," and properly so, because it is certainly a burden that we carry. However, here the Lord is talking more specifically about the cross that leads to death. In the passage just before this Jesus was talking to His disciples about His impending Crucifixion, but they didn't understand him. They wanted Him to save His own life. By speaking of the cross here He explains to His followers what the price of discipleship is. We must be prepared to die for the Gospel. We must be prepared to die to ourselves — to our passions, our self-interest, and our will. Sometimes this will also mean our very life itself.

Finally, we are told to follow him. Even if we deny ourselves to the point of death, this alone will not "save our lives" if we do not follow Christ. Many misguided and perhaps evil people have lost themselves to a cause, even to the point of death. The self-denial and acceptance of one's cross, without following the ultimate truth can lead to destruction. In our own day we have been afflicted with countless "suicide" terrorists who cause pain, suffering and death to innocent people, all the while considering themselves "martyrs." It is by following Christ, by learning from His example, that self-denial and the burden of the Cross find true meaning, become life-giving.

The Lord tells us to put our lives in proper and true perspective, and then to choose correctly. "What will it profit a person to gain the whole world and forfeit their life [soul]? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?" (v. 36-37) Our Lord invites us to walk the path of life; but ultimately, it remains our choice.

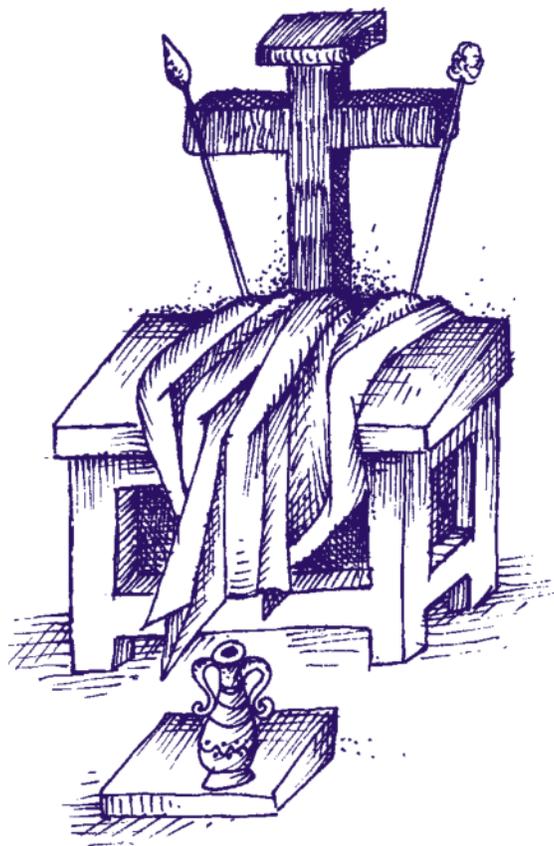
FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA

PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGIES 2015

Wednesday, February 25, 2015
St. Nicholas Church

Wednesday, March 4, 2015
St. Spyridon Cathedral

Wednesday, March 11, 2015
St. George Cathedral



Wednesday, March 18, 2015
St. Mary's Assumption

Wednesday, March 25, 2015
St. George Cathedral

Wednesday, April 1, 2015
St. Spyridon Cathedral

Each Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts will begin at 6:00 p.m. The faithful should prepare themselves for Holy Communion in the usual way: prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and regular confession. There will be a modest 'pot-luck' lenten meal offered after the Liturgy. People are encouraged to bring something to share with others.