

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN

MARCH 22, 2015

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

PITA BAKING, this **Thursday March 26th** at 9:00 am. The weather has taken its toll on our baking schedule, so any and all help is really appreciated. 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 THIS 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!*

THE WEDNESDAY (MARCH 25TH) LITURGY this week celebrates the Feast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos. The Vesperal Divine Liturgy will be at **St. George Cathedral** beginning at 6:00 pm. **Fr. Nicholas will also be celebrating Liturgy** that morning at Holy Trinity, beginning at 9:30 am.

GREETERS TEAM 1:

V. GERALD BELBA & CĂLIN GALERIU

COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP CREW D:

ILEANA & SEAN FAHEY, DIMITRI SAFFRON,
CHRISTOS & SPIRO SPYROU

ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED



THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT

St. John of Sinai, Author of the Ladder of Divine Ascent
APOSTOLIC READING: HEBREWS 6:13-20 ☩ **GOSPEL: MARK 9:17-32**
(Healing of the Epileptic Boy)
TONE 8 ☩ **MATINS GOSPEL 8**

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).

THE GREAT FRIDAY CHILDREN'S RETREAT will be held on **Friday, April 10 starting at 12:30 pm, and concluding with a celebration of Great Vespers at 2:00 pm.** All children grades kindergarten through 8th are welcome to attend. Younger children are welcomed accompanied by a parent. A sign-up sheet will be posted at the candle stand. Please be sure to register your child to attend. Besides assisting with the children's lessons and activities, assistance is needed with lunch, snacks and other logistics. For additional information and offers to assist, **please contact**

Valarie Stamoulis or Alysia Valoras.

DONATIONS FOR MIDNIGHT PASCHAL MEAL are requested. Please see Presvytera Maria if you would like to contribute and assist with preparing and serving the meal. Please join with your fellow parishioners to celebrate the Resurrection and break-the-fast together. All are welcome!

DATES TO REMEMBER

Wed, March 25 Annunciation Lit at St. George 6pm
 Thu, March 26 Pita Baking, 9am
 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

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A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas

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.

TODAY'S COFFEE HOUR is sponsored by **Irene Tsoules** in honor of her husband, **Evans'** nameday.

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.

THE PRAYER OF ST. EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN

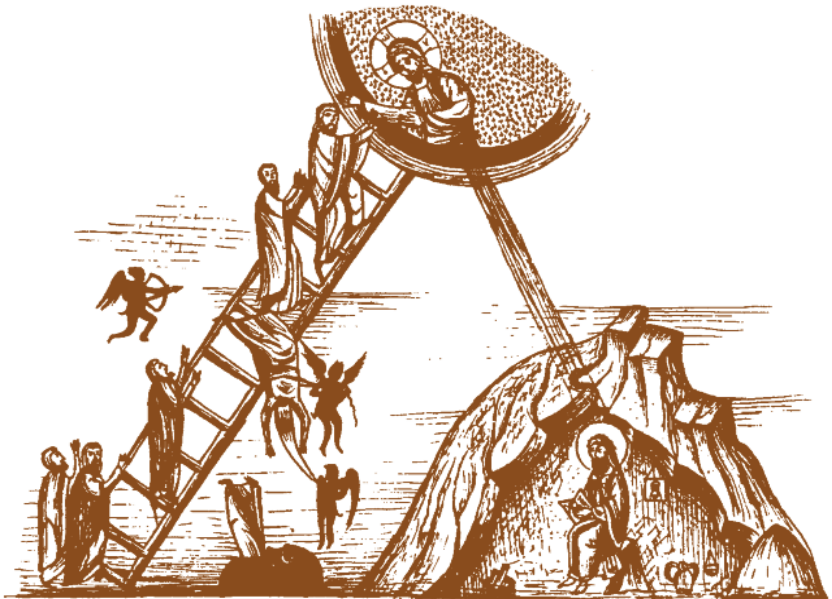
O Lord and master of my life! Dispel from me the spirit of discouragement and slothfulness, of ambition and vain talk!

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.

PALM SUNDAY DINNER

Please join us for our annual *PALM SUNDAY DINNER* following the Divine Liturgy on **Sunday, April 5, 2015**. 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 **\$25.00 for adults and \$5.00 for children**. Thanks to the generosity of two families from our parish, all proceeds from the dinner will benefit St. Nicholas Church. **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. You may also e-mail (Fr-Nick@StNicholas Church.org) or call (508-845-0088) the Church. If you can help with the luncheon, please e-mail or speak with Presvytera Maria (mzm@net1plus.com) during coffee hour.



A LENTEN PRAYER

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

GLORY TO YOU, O Father for sending us your only Son to be our salvation! Glory to you, O Christ, for dying on the cross to give us life! Glory to you, O Holy Spirit, for initiating and perfecting the mystery of our salvation! We you to bring our lenten observances to fruition. Enable us to internalize our external practices, and convert us to the truth in spite of us, showing us how to think and live correctly. Help us to hold onto confidence and endurance, so that, by doing your will, we may reap the rewards you promise. And, as we rejoice in this season of grace, enable us to remain focused on the paschal mysteries, so that our joy may be completed by seeing them fulfilled in our lives.

For you are our God, and we give you glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages, amen.

DONATIONS FOR HOLY WEEK

General donations in any amount to defray the cost of decorations for the Paschal Feast are most appreciated. Some specific needs are:

Flowers for Palm Sunday Icon	\$50.00
Palms	\$100.00
Flowers for Bridegroom Icon	\$50.00
Holy Thursday Gospel Candles	\$60.00
Wreaths for Cross (Great Friday)	\$50.00
(Resurrection)	\$100.00
Resurrection Icon	\$50.00
Bay Leaves for Holy Saturday	\$100.00
1 Gallon of Olive Oil	\$25.00
½ lb Incense	\$40.00
Priest's Paschal Candle	\$50.00
Rose Oil for Epitaphion	\$25.00
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Flowers for Epitaphion	\$500.00
Decorations for Pascha	\$350.00

Please see Fr. Nick or Lillian Chachi to make a donation

HOLY WEEK GREETERS/USHERS SOUGHT

Parishioners are needed to assist with greeting and ushering for the Holy Week services. There is a sign-up sheet on the Bulletin Board, or you can talk to Evan Stamoulis or Tom Fitzpatrick.

This is what is required: If possible (based on work and childcare schedules, etc.) it is preferred that the greeter/ushers be at the church 15 min prior to the start of the service. General duties are to assist at the candle stand (stock the candles, monitor the lit candles and dispose

of as necessary and appropriate, make change), assist or direct parishioners/ visitors with seating, and any other assistance that may be related to the particular service. Greeter/ushers should also make sure that any donations for candles, etc. are collected and accounted for. Greeter/ushers should also be sure that the candle stand is left in a neat and clean condition, that candles are restocked and as the sand is cleaned/neatened for the next service.

NAMEDAYS

March 17

St. Alexios the Man of God

Alex John Johnson
Alex Leo Toda

St. Patrick, Enlightener of Ireland

Padraic Donnchadh Peterson

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

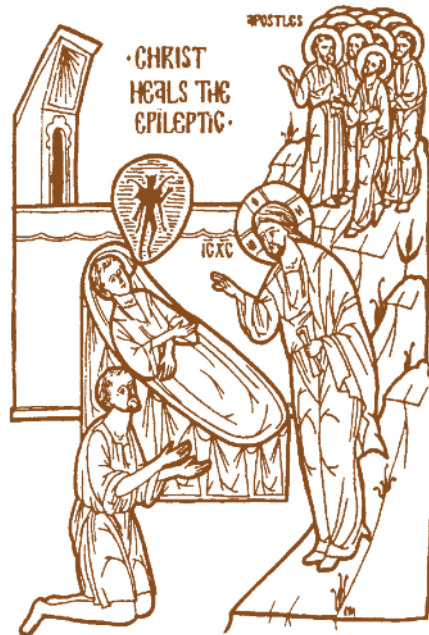
PRAYER AND FASTING

THIS is the fourth Sunday of Great Lent. We remember our father among the saints, John of Sinai who wrote the great spiritual work, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. We also continue to read from the Gospel of St. Mark. This week we hear the story of the healing of the epileptic boy (Mark 9:17-29). We read St. Matthew's telling of the same miracle (Matthew 17:14-21) earlier in the cycle. (You may read those comments on the web site under: "This Week's News," August 17.) Here I would like to focus on two specific passages that I believe pertain directly to our struggle through Lent on our journey toward the Lord's Pascha.

The miracle retold in this passage involves an epileptic boy whose father, while loving the boy deeply, is of rather limited faith. Hearing of Jesus, he brings the boy to the disciples to be healed. But they, lacking sufficient faith, were unable to help the boy. Finally, the boy is brought to Jesus himself. The Lord questions the faith of the father, and the father famously declares, "I believe; help my unbelief" (v. 24).

The three Synoptic Evangelists all accurately record that this miracle occurs after the Lord's Transfiguration as he is going toward Jerusalem and his Crucifixion. Therefore, there are things that he says to both the boy's father and to the disciples that reveal much about how Jesus himself understands the upcoming events.

When the boy's father comes up to Jesus pleading with him to heal him, Jesus, speaking not only to the father but to the whole crowd, says: "You faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you?" And then, having compassion on the boy, he says, "Bring him to me" (v. 19).



We can see how the lack of faith of both the "people" and even the disciples has tried and wearied the Lord. Moreover, from our vantage point, we can see that He clearly foresees his upcoming crucifixion and death and, in a sense, embraces it. He understands that he has taught and shown them all that they can absorb. If they do not understand now, they never will. This is an important, if somewhat painful, observation. When trying to teach someone a life-changing lesson we often think that the more we explain it, the easier it will be for them to understand. The truth is, as we see here, the lesson must be absorbed and internalized by the listener. There is very little that the teacher can do to facilitate that vital process. The Lord is telling all those within hearing distance that he has done and spoken all that he can. The rest is up to them.

The second verse I'd like to highlight is also very poignant for us during this Lenten period. When asked by the disciples why they could not cast out the spirit, the Lord says to them that "this

kind can come out only through prayer and fasting" (v. 29). The Lord is giving us an insight into the nature of the spiritual struggle before us, and the tools we'll need.

The Lord gave the disciples the power to cast out demons and heal sicknesses, but they had never really been put to the test. While I am sure they noticed that the Lord would withdraw into the desert for long periods of time to pray and fast, I am also sure they did not fully comprehend the necessity of this for the spiritual life.

When we take up the Christian life we enter into the "arena." This is a spiritual spectacle that involves the Evil One and his allies. We often speak of the "demons of Lent" that attack us more ferociously as we take up the ascetic mantle more seriously during this time of year as we prepare ourselves to partake of the Light of the Lord's Resurrection. We see in this Gospel account how even the disciples themselves were unaware of how much struggle and sacrifice it would take to do battle with the forces of darkness. We have the advantage of reading about it and being forewarned. However, this does not lessen the vehemence of the struggle.

Our comfort lies in this. Our Lord has taken up this struggle before us and for us. He tells us, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light." (Matthew 17:28-30) This is the Lord's true promise and a lesson for us. Let us pray for the wisdom to not only to receive it, but also to understand it.

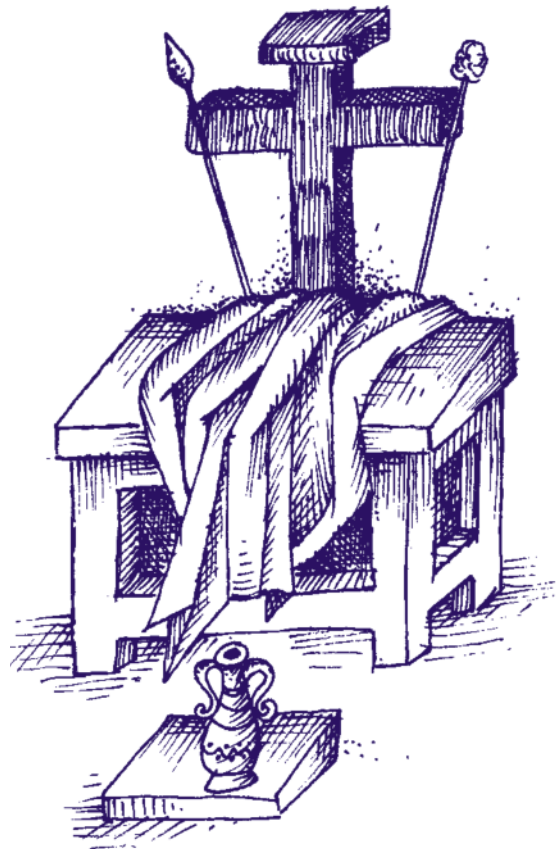
FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA

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.