

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN

APRIL 19, 2015

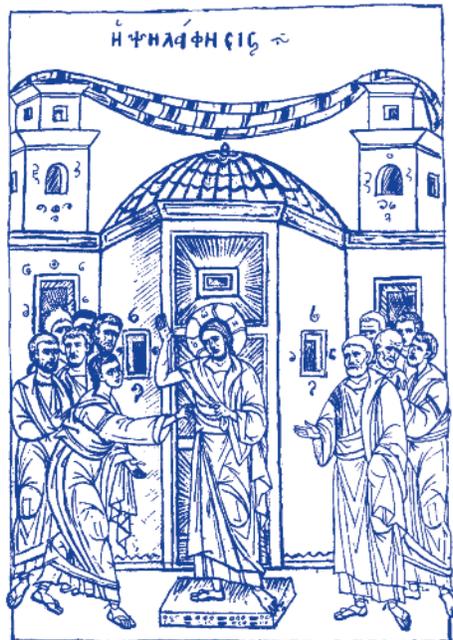
THIS WEEK'S NEWS

ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY will be held **TODAY 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 plan to attend.

THANKS TO THE E-RECYCLING TEAM led by **Gerry Belba** for their effort this Saturday. This is a win-win: our parish helps contribute to the environmental health of our broader community, while earning a little money for the parish.

THANKS TO THE MUSTARD SEED VOLUNTEERS! Those who cooked and those who served the meal this past Friday! The Mustard Seed is a Catholic Worker home providing dinner to about 150 people in need each day. Our next scheduled meal is **June 19th**. Contact Fr. Nick if you'd like to help.

Fr. Nick and Presvytera Maria are leaving for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land next week. During this period, we will have the distinct joy to have Fr. Nicholas Manikas serving our community. Fr. Nick and Presvytera Effie are long-time friends to our St. Nicholas parish. Please welcome them warmly. If there is a pastoral need while Fr. Nick is away, please



ANTIPASCHA:

ST. THOMAS SUNDAY

APOSTOLIC READING: ACTS 5:12-20

GOSPEL: JOHN 20:19-31

TONE 1 ☩ RESURRECTION GOSPEL 1

contact: Deb Sedares (508-509-6678), Evan Stamoulis (781-366-3946), or Tim Rucho (508-336-0062) for assistance.

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.

A NOTE OF THANKS ...

We want to thank the members of our Parish who helped especially through this Paschal season: those who planned and prepared the wonderful food from the first Lenten meal, to the Palm Sunday Luncheon through the Paschal Agape Meal; the ushers, the altar servers; those who set-up and cleaned the facility; the baking crew, who produced pitas and pastries that brightened the holiday tables throughout the region; the religious education instructors and those who coordinated the Great Friday children's retreat; our chanters: Tim Rucho and George Demake. There are so many who always help and contribute in ways small and large. Take a moment next time you see an act of kindness and service and personally thank the individual.

Christ is Risen!

GREETERS TEAM 3:
EVANS TSOULES AND TOM FITZPATRICK

COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP CREW B:
KARADIMITRIOU/KALPIDO FAMILY

ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED



DATES TO REMEMBER

Sun, April 19 General Assembly following Liturgy
Sat, May 2 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry
Tues, May 19 Holy Trinity General Assembly

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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,

ETERNAL PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING TO YOU, O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for this wondrous feast whereon you raised him to the glory of new life at your right! As we offer you our hymns and canticles in praise of his victory over death, we beseech you: Grant us the faith of the myrrhbearing women, but not their fright; the hope of the apostles, but not their fear; the straightforward attitude of Thomas, but not his hesitation; and the openness of the Samaritan woman, but not her weakness. At all times and in all things enable us to please you, so that your mercy and compassion may rest on us in this world and in the next.

For you deserve all glory, honor, and worship, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

NAMEDAYS

April 11

St. Calinic of Cernica

Călin Galeriu

April 17

The Life-giving Fountain

Zoica Nedelcu

Zoitza Tsongalis

April 19

The Holy Apostle Thomas

Thomas Chachi

Thomas Fitzpatrick

Robert T. Sedares

Thomas R. Sedares

Thomas Spataro

April 21

The Holy Martyr Alexandra the Queen

Alexandra Dymek

Alexis George

Alexandra Mentis

Sandra Nedelescu

Casie Soter

Alexandra Valoras

April 23

The Holy Great-martyr George the Wonderworker

George Belba

George M. Bourisk

George Demake

Gjergji Disho

Gheorghe O. Galica

George Grniet

George Soter

George Symock

George Tonna

George James Trakadas

April 25

The Holy Apostle and Evangelist Mark

Rev. Fr. Mark Doku

Mark Soter

Mark Stamoulis

April 30

The Holy Apostle James, brother of John the Evangelist

James Collins

May 1

The Holy Prophet Jeremiah

Jeromy Grniet

May 5

The Great Martyr Irene of Thessalonica

Irene Mountzouris

Irene Tsoules

May 9

The Holy Martyr Christopher

Christopher Masterjohn



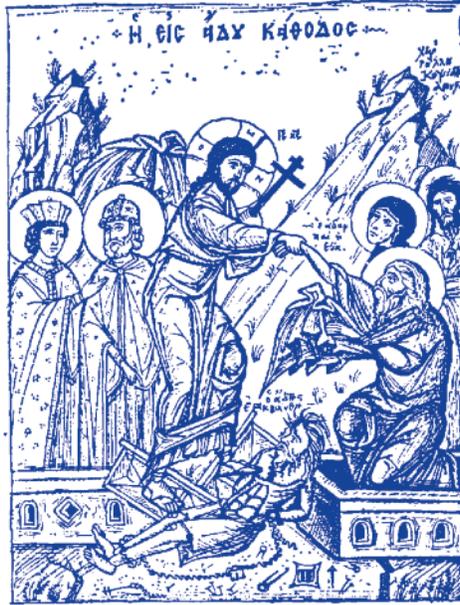
PASS - OVER

WE'VE all had the experience of someone close dying. Perhaps they have even suffered greatly. We all know of people who are in deep pain, either physically, or more often emotionally. Suffering seems to be the natural course of life. We of course hit high points; there is joy in life, but even the moments of joy can become soured in the inevitability of pain and death. Watching the news, reading about national and international problems that seem to defy solution only tends to intensify the agony we feel around us. Despair, especially in these turbulent times, hangs in the air like smog, choking life and inhibiting growth.

Christ is risen from the dead! What powerful words, what joy. But they've become such a cliché. We exchange the greeting saying: "Truly He is risen!" yet its impact doesn't really find expression in our life. The words are charged with life. They have the power to electrify. But in a flash it's over and we are back to the routine.

Where do despair and depression come from? Their roots are in our feeling of helplessness, of drifting aimlessly. Our life can become an endless routine devoid of purpose. We go through the motions without any goal, or worse yet, with a bankrupt goal. We say to ourselves, "I'll put up with this so I can get a better job," or "We'll keep going like this just until the kids grow up." But if and when we reach the goal, there is little fulfillment, and an abundance of emptiness. Our life becomes meaningless because the things that we thought would give it meaning are only shadows.

Christ is risen from the dead! Now there is something with meaning. No matter how some have attempted to cheapen, to detract from, Christ's resurrection, the awesomeness of it continues to attract us. It has been almost 2,000 years, yet we still cling to it. Wouldn't it be wonderful if it were true, if He really



did come back from the dead? If He really did stop the interminable cycle of hopelessness? It is more than simply a "That's Incredible" fascination with us. It assumes life and death proportions.

But many of us, as we reflect on Christ's resurrection, find it hard to relate it to our present condition. The words are magnetic, the concept is electric, but its meaning in 21st century America escapes us. I personally do not think that it was any easier twenty centuries ago to understand Christ. He was as difficult to accept then as now, because what He asks us to believe is contrary to all the laws and principles of this world.

Christ is risen from the dead! Perhaps the point is too obvious, but in His coming back from the dead, Christ has reversed the 'natural' order. He made the impossible a reality not only for Himself, but also for all those who believe in Him. He cuts through external forms piercing the real meaning of things. Everyone was expecting the Messiah to be an earthly king. Even the disciples expected Christ to set up His rule upon His entry into Jerusalem. Who would have suspected that this same crowd that greeted Him with

palms would end up crucifying Him? But even more, who would have suspected that this dead Messiah would come back from the tomb and alter the course of nature?

What Christ did was to change the inner reality. He did establish His kingdom, but as He said, it is within each one of us. He could have become the political King of Israel, inaugurating not only a revolt against the Romans, but also instituting all kinds of broad social programs. But He did not choose that road, because in the end that approach is bankrupt if there is no change in our internal condition. We change from the inside out. We accept the truth of Christ and it transforms us. And even though this truth stands in opposition to all we consider logical and normal, in the end it conquers, just as Christ, through His humiliating death, conquered Death.

Christ is risen from the dead! Christ who rose from the dead offers this same resurrection to each one of us. He offers to share the Life which He possesses with us. All our fears, all our greed, all our anger, all our envy, every evil which we perpetrate against our fellow humans melts in the warmth of Christ's love for us. We know that Christ is risen. We know that we too will rise. We know that no one in Christ dies.

Our belief in this Passover from death to Life is central. It is the primary life-event for the Church and for each one of us. It changes all our relationships. In the Resurrection we celebrate life, we celebrate hope, we celebrate the love of our God for us.

Christ is risen! Who can despair? Christ is risen! Who can fear death? Christ is risen! Who can hate their brother and sister? Christ is risen! And we are pulled up by Him. His hand is extended. Who can refuse it? Christ is risen!

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA

DO YOU LOVE CHURCH; OR DO YOU ENJOY GIMMICKS?

Orthodox Christians have just completed the holiest week of the year. Holy Week and Pascha has truly been a spiritual journey as the Church reflects upon the final days of Jesus' earthly ministry while remaining vigilant to His promised return. Services throughout Holy Week are filled with rich symbolism and often evoke deep emotions in worshippers. Today is Bright Monday – the second day of Pascha, and for those who made the most of last week, not only are you a bit tired; you are also most likely feeling a bit of “Church withdrawal” after such an intense spiritual week in Church. But what is it that you are missing – Church or gimmicks?

Allow me to explain the term gimmicks in this context. Many, if not all, Orthodox Churches (I can only speak to the American religious context here) over the years have included special events, such as Communion breakfasts, Holy Friday retreats, even “reenactments” at the Tomb of Christ often include young girls or women “acting” the role of the myrrh-bearing women at the Tomb. These events are meant to “attract” youth to Church, while teaching about the events that lead up to the Passion of Christ. I use the term gimmicks since these activities are not actually part of the ancient liturgical patterns of the Orthodox Christian Holy Week. They have been added into an already intense week of prayer, fasting, confession and Holy Communion. I refer to them as gimmicks since they are designed to “get them to Church” SO THAT hopefully they will gain an appreciation for the awesomeness of Holy Week. After twenty-four years of Holy Week ministries (both as a lay youth director and now ordained Priest) I have noticed that the long-term result has been less than positive.

As the youth “age out” of such events, many stop attending the very services in which the gimmicks were in-

cluded. Reflect for the moment on Holy Friday “Retreats” in your own experience. These retreats normally conclude with the “Taking down from the Cross” Service on Holy Friday afternoon. The youth who have been at the retreat all day gather around the Cross of Christ, many times even helping the Vespers by holding white sheets and throwing flowers on Christ's Tomb, and “participate” in Church. Parents and grandparents are “gleaming with pride” that their kids are “in Church” for Holy Friday. They even used special excuse letters from the Priest at school so their children's absences were not held against their status as star students! Now “look around the Church” and reflect on all the generations of youth who had participated in such events of the decades. Where are they now? I would suggest that if they are not in Church, then the gimmick didn't work.

The rich liturgical traditions of the Orthodox Christian Holy Week are filled with deep meaning and are themselves designed to cause reflection and commitment, but they can become quite boring in today's modern fast paced, high tech, entertainment driven, short attention span society, which is why the gimmicks have been added in the first place. They were never meant for harm to the Church. I get that, I really do. But did they have their affect? Do our youth learn to love Church or just the gimmicks?

For Orthodox Christianity to be a long-lasting lifestyle, it must be loved. Orthodox Christianity isn't easy. It isn't casual. It isn't entertaining. It most definitely is NOT fast paced or for the short attention span. It IS holy. It IS deep. It IS about learning to love spending time with God. So do you love Church or the gimmicks? Only Church will keep you close to God for the long term. Eventually every Orthodox Christian needs to learn to “just enjoy worship in Church”

or they will spend a lifetime seeking out new and more creative gimmicks. Of course this phenomenon is not limited to Holy Week, as many Churches feature “youth Sunday” where the teens serve as ushers, youth choirs sing the liturgical responses, and the Priest teaches a “youth” sermon. These all have the same purpose of Holy Week gimmicks, and if we are being honest, have had the same long-term result ... nothing.

— Rev. Athanasios C Haros

Disclaimer: *You may currently be attending a Church which has solved this dilemma. If that is the case, BRAVO! For the rest of us, let's learn to love Church!*

Fr. Athanasios Haros is pastor of Transfiguration of our Savior Greek Orthodox Church, in Florence, SC. This article appeared on the website: www.liveanewlifeinchrist.org where you may find more of his reflections.

