

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN

FEBRUARY 21, 2016

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

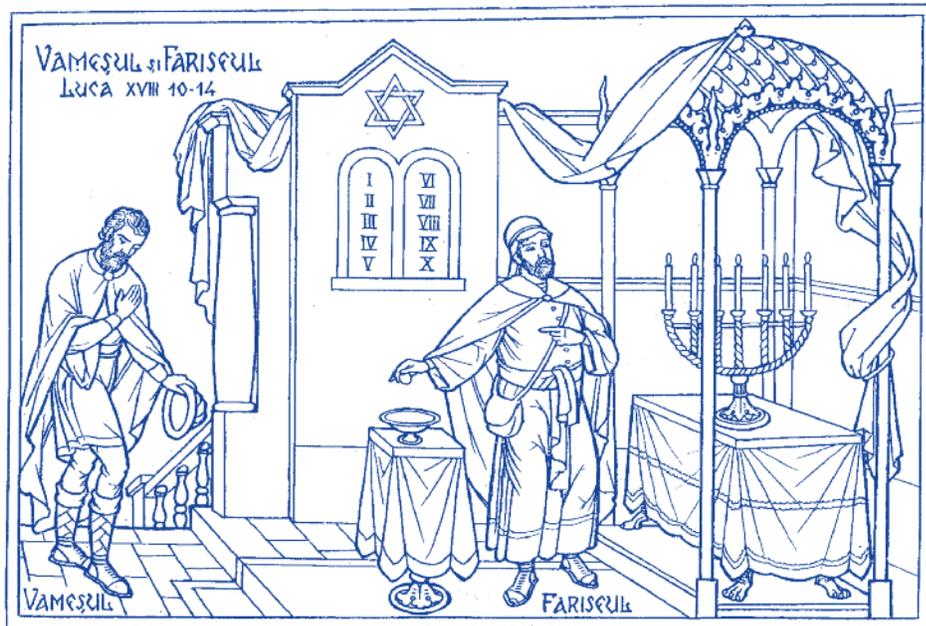
THE TRIODION BEGINS TODAY.

The Triodion is the Church's hymnbook for the period from now, through Great Lent, until Pascha. The next three weeks are meant to prepare us for Great Lent that begins on Monday, March 14th. This coming week is totally fast-free.

THE 2016 STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT package has been mailed out. Please review the materials and prayerfully consider what your family is able to offer in support God's work in our parish and our larger community. Please return the form as soon as possible. If you did not receive the materials in the mail, they are available at the candle stand.

THE PARISH COUNCIL will hold a special meeting on **Tuesday, February 23rd at 6:30 pm.** Parish Council Members, please let Fr. Nick know if you are unable to attend.

THANKS TO THE BAKERS! For the past two Saturday mornings, we have had a faithful group working hard to build our Pita supply for the upcoming holidays. *God bless all of them!* We'll be scheduling more dates soon. **REMEMBER:** All help appreciated. No experi-



THE THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE TRIODION BEGINS

EPISTLE: 2 TIMOTHY 3:10-15 ☩ GOSPEL: LUKE 18:10-14

(THE PARABLE OF THE PUBLICAN AND THE PHARISEE)

TONE 5 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL 5

ence necessary — there's a job for everyone. If you'd like to help, contact Chris Toda at: thetodas@msn.com, or 508-832-6271.

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. We want to thank **Bill and Katina Cocavessis** for generously sponsoring this month's meal! Our next scheduled meal is **April 15th.** Contact Fr. Nick if you'd like to help.

WE CELEBRATE TWO MEMORIALS TODAY: For the servant of God **John Rucho**, fallen-asleep one year; and also for **Thomas Sedares**, fallen-asleep ten years. *May our loving Lord rest their souls with just!*

TODAY'S COFFEE HOUR is sponsored by the **Rucho** and **Sedares** families in memory John and Tom.

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

THE LADIES PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY OF ST. SPYRIDON CATHEDRAL will be hosting a luncheon for the residents on Thursday, February 25th. The residents at Holy Trinity always look forward to the fabulous lunch they offer them!

HOLY TRINITY HOSPICE offers ex-

DATES TO REMEMBER

- Sat, Feb 20 Pita Baking, 9am - noon
- Sun, Feb 21 Triodion Begins
- Tues, Feb 23 Parish Council Meeting, 6pm
- Sat, March 5 Sat of Souls, Liturgy, 10am
Orthodox Food Pantry, 9am-12pm
- Mon, March 14 Great Lent Begins
- Sun, April 24 Palm Sunday
- Sun, May 1 Great and Holy Pascha

GREETERS TEAM 3
EVANS TSOULES AND TOM FITZPATRICK

COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP CREW C:
PRIZIO FAMILY

ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED

34 GOLD STREET, SHREWSBURY, MA 01545-6238 ♦ VOICE: 508.845.0088 ♦ FAX: 508.845.8850

E-MAIL: FRNICK@STNICHOLASCHURCH.ORG ♦ WEB: WWW.STNICHOLASCHURCH.ORG

A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas

ceptional care for individuals facing serious illnesses and those at the end of life. It provides individualized care for loved ones in their place of residence, whether that be at home, in an assisted living or at a nursing facility. Holy Trinity Hospice would be honored to help through your difficult time. If you would like further information, please call our office at 508-791-8200 and ask for the Hospice Director, Beth Miller or the Community Liaison, Ursula Hanus.



**A PRAYER OF
FR. LAURENCE**

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

O HEAVENLY FATHER, maker and benefactor of our life: By your inscrutable love and power you abide in the depths of our hearts, unseen and unheard, waiting for us to meet you there. But we live constantly on the surface of things, never entering the deeper waters even of our own existence. Help us to be conscious of this and to respond in a real way to this great mystery of life, for you alone hold the meaning and purpose of our existence.

By the grace and mercies and love for us of your only Son, with whom you are blest, together with your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

**WHO IS A FAITHFUL
STEWARD OF THE
CHURCH?**

A faithful steward and member of the Orthodox Christian Church, who can receive or participate as a sponsor in any Sacraments of the church implies that the person:

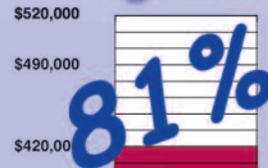
- Is baptized and christmated an Orthodox Christian
- Comes to Church regularly
- Participates in the Life of the Church
- Participates in Holy Communion regularly
- Is a financial steward of the Church
- Goes to Holy Confession regularly and when necessary



**Let's Work
Together
to be
Mortgage
Free!**

Please Join Us!

**Mortgage Fund
Progress**

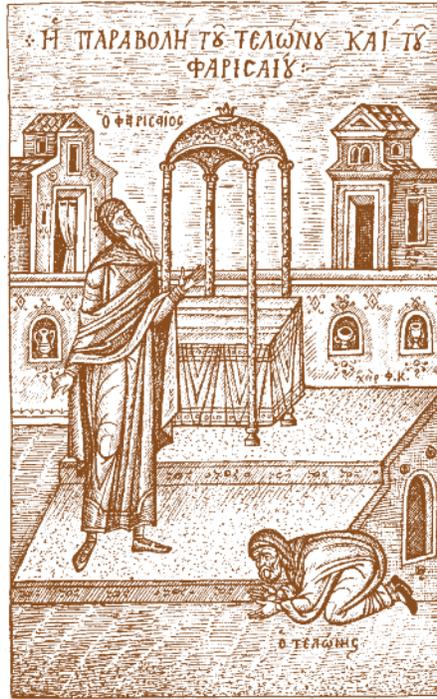


GOD, BE MERCIFUL TO ME A SINNER!

THIS week we begin the Triodion Period. The Triodion is the Church's hymnbook for the Lenten season. We will read and sing from it now until Pascha to supplement the hymns typically sung primarily in Vespers and Matins, but also in the Liturgy. The Gospel lesson for this first Sunday of the Triodion is Jesus' parable of the Publican (Tax collector) and the Pharisee (Luke 18:9-14). It is a story that shows us the innermost thoughts residing in the hearts and minds of these two people. It is a story of truth and self-deception. It is a story that is intended to prepare us for the season of repentance.

At its core it is a very simple story. The Lord tells us that "two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector" (v. 10). The Pharisee prayed in the usual manner; he lifted his eyes and hands toward Heaven and then began to recount his good works. He prays, "God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income" (v. 11-12). By contrast, the tax collector doesn't even lift his head up. Bowing low he prays, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" (v. 13) Jesus tells those listening that it was the tax collector who was justified in the eyes of God, not the Pharisee. No doubt that when he said this the Lord shocked those who heard him.

On one level the Pharisee was telling the truth. He did try to the best of his ability to follow the Law, that is, the rules of pious behavior outlined by Moses. However the Lord is asking his listeners to go beyond external behavior; he wants people to look to the heart of the matter. This is the meaning of "all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted" (v. 14). We always stand on spiritual quicksand when we think that we are better than we actually are.



This story is a parable. It is designed to paint the picture with strong lines so that we might understand the meaning. We recognize that the Pharisee is exhibiting a certain kind of pridefulness and the tax collector a particular form of humility. The challenge for us is to recognize both the pride and the humility in ourselves. How should we contemplate avoiding the one and cultivating the other?

St. John Chrysostom observes that, in a way, the tax collector is not humbling himself, but rather simply acknowledging the truth. He is stating the facts. He is honestly assessing himself, a sinner. This is the first step toward understanding what humility is: a deep, perhaps even brutally honest, assessment of yourself. No delusions, no illusions, and no excuses. It is a very difficult thing to do.

Here is something to consider: St. John Chrysostom says that if someone calls us "names" we shouldn't react at all. On some level and in some ways the accusation is more than likely true. This may in fact be the very reason we react.

We recognize a certain truth in it.

Of course this honest assessment works both ways. It is false humility not to acknowledge the gifts that we have and the good that we do. Sinners we may be, but we are not wholly without redeeming qualities. What the Pharisee said was not a lie. He did fast. He did tithe. His problem was that he compared himself to other people, and in so doing he felt as though he were better than they. Yet, to recognize that we have a particular gift, or to feel good about the fact that we've helped someone is, if we are careful, a way to grow further in goodness and holiness. But, to brag about a gift we have, or some good we've done, is self-serving and prideful. We understand this best when we see it displayed in someone else. The real challenge is to see it in ourselves.

Of course there is another dimension to consider, namely the source of our gifts. If we are gifted at something — say one is a superb athlete, clever in business, are able to sing like an angel — are we truly responsible for that gift? Are we really to be credited? Or, is it but an example of the many things God has given us? If we do good, help the poor, visit the sick, should we broadcast it, even to ourselves? Or, should we rejoice in the power given us by God to assist another?

As we prepare ourselves for our Lenten journey toward Pascha, our first task is to make this sort of spiritual self-assessment; to look into our hearts, honestly; to acknowledge our strengths and our failings; and finally to have the courage to make this simple prayer to our Heavenly Father: God, be merciful to me a sinner!

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA