

# ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN MARCH 6, 2016

## THIS WEEK'S NEWS

**THE PARISH COUNCIL** will hold its regular meeting on **Monday, March 7th at 6:30 pm**. Parish Council Members, please let George know if you are unable to attend.

**PITA BAKING** is scheduled for **Saturday, March 12th from 9:00am to noon**. We need 12-15 people, so that the work is evenly distributed and we can finish with prep and clean-up in 3 hours. All help appreciated. No experience necessary. If you'd like to participate, contact Chris Toda at: [thetodas@msn.com](mailto:thetodas@msn.com), or 508-832-6271.

**THANKS TO THE FOOD PANTRY VOLUNTEERS** for working the Orthodox Food Center on behalf of our parish this past Saturday. Our regular commitment is the first Saturday of the month from 9am to noon. About 4 people are needed. If you can help in this worthwhile ministry, please speak with Lisa Mielnicki or Nicole Apostola. Our next Saturday is April 2nd.

**VESPERS AND CONFESSION** will be held **each Saturday evening at 5:00 pm during Great Lent, beginning March 12th**. Fr. Nick will be available for confession each week after Vespers, and be-

### GREETERS TEAM 5

DEBORAH SEDARES & EVAN STAMOULIS

### COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP CREW A:

MARGARITE LANDRY,  
CHRISTINE MASTERJOHN

ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED



### MEAT-FARE SUNDAY

APOSTOLIC READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 8:8-9:2 ☩ GOSPEL: MATTHEW 25:31-46

(SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT)

TONE 7 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL 7

fore Vespers by appointment (e-mail Fr. Nick).

**THE PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGIES** sponsored by the Council of Eastern Orthodox Churches will begin on **Wednesday, March 16th at 6:00 pm here at St. Nicholas**. **We will be hosting the Lenten meal** following the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on that evening. **Donations of prepared Lenten foods are needed as well as help with set up, serving and clean up** following the service. There will be a sign up sheet at the candle stand for donations. Please see Presvytera Maria or Chris Toda during coffee hour today! **ALSO**, persons wishing to receive Holy Communion must prepare themselves in the usual manner, including fasting from at least noon. You are also invited to remain for a "pot-luck" Lenten meal after that service.

**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 2016 ARCHDIOCESAN YEAR-BOOK / ALMANAC** has arrived and is available at the candles.

**MISSION SUNDAY**. In just a few more days our great Lenten journey begins! As this beautiful season approaches,

### DATES TO REMEMBER

- Mon, March 7 Parish Council Meeting, 6pm
- Sat, March 12 Pita Baking, 9am-noon  
Vespers & Confession, 5pm
- Sun, March 13 Mission Sunday
- Mon, March 14 Great Lent Begins
- Wed, March 16 PreSanctified Lit, St Nicholas, 6pm
- Sun, March 20 Sun of Orthodoxy Vespers, St. George
- Sat, April 2 Orthodox Food Pantry, 9am-12pm
- Sun, April 24 Palm Sunday
- Sun, May 1 Great and Holy Pascha

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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,

**O**MERCIFUL FATHER: You have enabled us to live through another day by your ineffable goodness. As daylight fades into darkness, we pray, once more, that you will send us your unfailing light, our Lord Jesus Christ. Let his brilliance bring meaning to our lenten passage. Enlighten our minds and hearts, so that the observance of these days will not be empty ritual but the renewal of our lives. Therefore, as we struggle to win greater control of the body, let us also be renewed in spirit.

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

please **remember that March 13th is also Mission Sunday.** What better way to approach our March toward Pascha than to pray for and support the Church's mission to share the salvation of Christ with the world! On March 13th, please say a prayer for Orthodox Missions and Orthodox Missionaries serving around the world, consider volunteering to serve as part of an Orthodox Mission Team, and support this eternal work of the Church with a gift to the Mission Center. For more information or to get involved, visit [www.ocmc.org](http://www.ocmc.org), e-mail: [missions@ocmc.org](mailto:missions@ocmc.org), or call 1-877-463-6784.

**THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY** is **March 20th.** All of the clergy and faithful of our area will gather at 6:00pm at St. George Cathedral to celebrate Great Vespers marking the Feast. Please plan on attending! Click here for more information.

**TODAY'S COFFEE HOUR** is sponsored by the **Sofia Apostol.**



## 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!

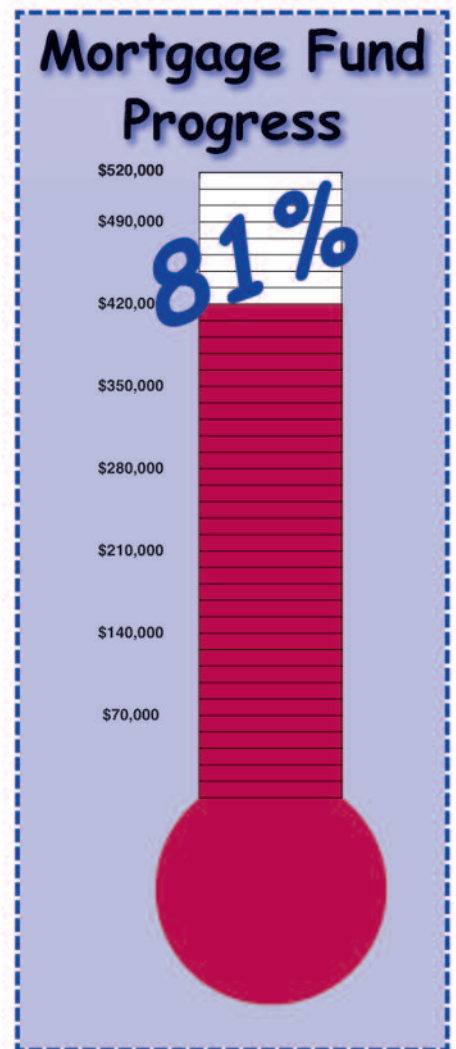
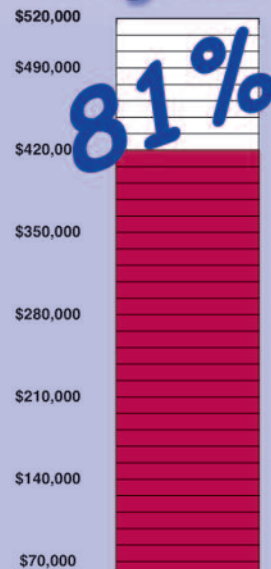
**I**nstead, give me the spirit of prudence and humility, of patience and charity.

**Y**es, 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.

# Let's Work Together to be Mortgage Free!

## Please Join Us!

### Mortgage Fund Progress



# FOOD WILL NOT COMMEND US BEFORE GOD

**T**HIS is the third and last preparatory week before Great Lent — the Sunday of the Last Judgment, also known as Meatfare (since we refrain from eating meat beginning the next day.) The Epistle lesson is taken from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, 8:8-9:2. In this section St. Paul takes up the question of eating meat that has been offered to idols. He gives us two important principles that flow out of his understanding of what happens when a person accepts Christ and is incorporated into His Body. The first is that we become free from servitude to the Law, to the world, and to the Evil One. The second is that in Christian morality, charity (*agapé* love) stands above every other principle.

Here, St. Paul is answering a question addressed to him by the Corinthian community. They wanted to know if it were permissible for a Christian to eat meat that had been offered in sacrifice to a pagan god; and, if so, in which circumstances? This was a complicated issue. Usually, only a small portion of an animal was actually used as the sacrificial offering. The rest remained the property of the priests of the temple. This is how they supported themselves. As you might imagine, there was a great deal remaining and this was often sold to the butchers for purchase in the marketplace. You could never be certain if the meat you were buying had been offered to a pagan god.

There was also another problem, one having to do with social relations. Very often a Christian would be invited by family or friends to some important event, like a birthday or a marriage — a family festival. These could be held in the pagan temple where there were special rooms available for such occasions. The food offered there had been given in sacrifice to the pagan god. Even if these events were held at home, the meat certainly had been offered in sacrifice. For a person of conscience this presented a real dilemma. For a recent

convert from paganism, this represented a severe temptation, a kind of back-tracking. For a Jewish convert, to eat meat sacrificed to a pagan god was unthinkable; Jews would have died before they would ever do such a thing. We Orthodox Christians face similar dilemmas. We are often invited to events and celebrations that fall on fasting days; this happens especially during the Christmas holiday season. While not necessarily as severe a matter of conscience as in the pagan world, we too are presented with the choice of either breaking the fast or offending our host. This is the issue the Corinthians have asked St. Paul to address.

Here it would be helpful if we read the entire section, from verses 8:8-13: “Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if any one sees you, a man of knowledge, at table in an idol's temple, might he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall.”

The two questions around food (“fasting”) have to do with: our own *understanding* of ‘food’ in our greater relationship with God, as well as our brother's or sister's *sensibility* regarding the same question. Food itself is absolutely neutral. God is not interested in what we eat — or, in St. Paul's phrase: “Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do.” In a very deep sense the fasting rules we follow are arbitrary. To adopt total vegetarianism certainly makes sense, but this will not put us in

a better stance before God. What puts us in a better position before God is the quality of our heart, not the content of our stomach.

So, St. Paul tells the Corinthians, do you think you have a superior ‘knowledge’ such that you can eat idol-meat? You are destroying your fellow Christian who is ‘weaker’ and sees your license as a scandal; or, sees your license as a temptation.

If I knew my brother or sister were an alcoholic and that by drinking in front of them I would tempt them back to drink — even though I thought that I could regulate my own drinking — would my drinking in front of them be acceptable? Do I not have an obligation toward them? Is it not *agapé* love that is required of me?

St. Paul tells the Corinthians: “if food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall.” It is not only God that we need to be concerned with when we fast, it is also our brother and sister. We are ‘fasting’ together. We are struggling and striving together. We are each supporting one another. The old Latin saying obtains here especially well: *Unus Christianus, nullus Christianus* — One Christian, No Christian. We cannot be an individual Christian; we are Christians together, in community.

The holy fathers and mothers of our Church have given us the gift of the Fast. We are to use it for our own discipline, self-control, and spiritual progress. We are also to use it for the benefit of our brothers and sisters. Let not our zeal scandalize them. Yet, equally importantly, let not our own weaknesses lessen our resolve to strive toward holiness and communion with God.

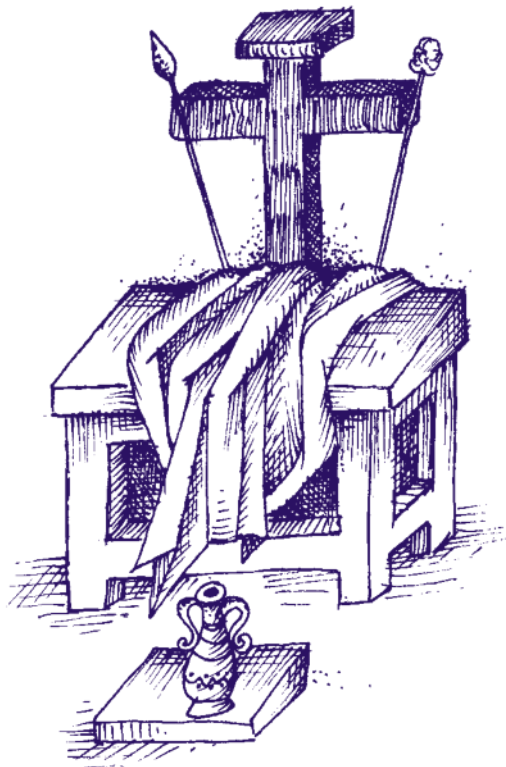
FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA

# PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGIES 2016

Wednesday, March 16, 2016  
St. Nicholas Church

Wednesday, March 23, 2016  
St. Spyridon Cathedral

Wednesday, March 30, 2016  
St. George Cathedral



Wednesday, April 6, 2016  
St. Mary's Assumption

Wednesday, April 13, 2016  
St. Spyridon Cathedral

Wednesday, April 20, 2016  
St. George 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.