

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN APRIL 3, 2016

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

TODAY IS THE SUNDAY OF THE VENERATION OF THE PRECIOUS CROSS. DONATIONS ARE WELCOMED toward the flowers that adorn the Cross today (total cost is around \$100). Please see Tim Rucho.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY of our Parish will be held on **Sunday, April 3rd**, following the Divine Liturgy.

THE PARISH COUNCIL will hold its regular monthly meeting on **Monday, April 4th at 6:30 pm**. Parish Council Members, please let George Demake know if you are unable to attend.

THE PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY for this coming Wednesday, April 6th, is at St. George Cathedral, at 6:00 pm. Bishop John will be ordaining Alex MacKoul to the holy diaconate during the Liturgy.

PITA BAKING is scheduled for **Saturday, April 9th 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, or

GREETERS TEAM 4

DIMITRI SAFFRON AND SEAN FAHEY

COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP CREW D:

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

ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED



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 3 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL 11

508-832-6271.

ELECTRONICS RECYCLING is this Saturday, April 9th from 9 am to 2 pm. Gerry Belba is coordinating, and we need about 3 people to help with traffic and coordination. Please contact him: vgbelba@msn.com.

GET YOUR BAKING ORDERS FOR EASTER IN. Pick up and fill out and order form. Pascha will be here before you know it and we need to plan our baking schedule. Questions about orders? See Betty Anderson.

VESPERS AND CONFESION 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 (e-mail Fr. Nick).

THANKS TO THE FOOD PANTRY VOLUNTEERS for working the Orthodox Food Center on behalf of our parish yesterday. 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 worth-

DATES TO REMEMBER

- Sat, April 2 Vespers & Confession, 5pm
- Sun, April 3 General Assembly, following Lit
- Mon, April 4 Parish Council, 6:30 pm
- Wed, April 6 PreSanctified Lit, St. George Cath, 6pm
- Sat, April 9 Electronics Recycling 9 am-2 pm
Vespers & Confession, 5pm
- Sun, April 10 Holy Land Presentation, after Liturgy
Jesus Christ Superstar, 2pm
- Fri, April 15 Mustard Seed Meal, 5 pm
- Mon/Tues School Vacation Week
- April 18-19 Youth Retreat
- Sun, April 24 Palm Sunday
- Sun, May 1 Great and Holy Pascha
- Sat, May 7 Orthodox Food Pantry, 9am-12pm

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A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas

while ministry, please speak with **Lisa Mielnicki** or **Nicole Apostola**. Our next Saturday is May 7th.

TODAY'S COFFEE HOUR is sponsored by **Evans & Irene Tsoules**.

UP-COMING

A SLIDE PRESENTATION AND TALK ON THE HOLY LAND will be offered by Margarite Landry and Fr. Nick after Coffee Hour on **SUNDAY, April 10th**. Both they and Presvytera Maria traveled with Fr. Timothy last year just after Pascha and toured extensively in Israel/Palestine. They will share not only their photographs, but, more importantly, their insights into the situation in the Holy Land and the position of the remaining Christians living there. Presentations with questions and answers will be no more than 45 minutes. *Plan on staying a little later on that Sundays!*

A CHILDREN/YOUTH RETREAT is planned for the first two days of **April Vacation Week, Monday and Tuesday, April 18th and 19th**. For all ages, through High School. Starts at 10:00 am and ends at 1:30 pm. Lunch and snacks provided. We're doing this in conjunction with the Ss Anagyroi parish in Marlborough; Monday, April 18th will be at Ss Anagyroi. and Tuesday, April 19th will be at St. Nicholas. There are no fees, but you will need to register, for planning purposes. Fr. Gregory Christakos (fathergreg@stsanagyroi.org) and Valarie Stamoulis (valarie.stamoulis@gmail.com) are coordinating. Contact either with questions and registration data. More information is available in a flier at the Candles.

OUR NEXT MUSTARD SEED MEAL is Friday, April 15th. We'll need help cooking and serving. **Prep** help needed (3 persons), 6pm Thursday. **Prep** help needed (2 persons), noon Friday. **Serv-**

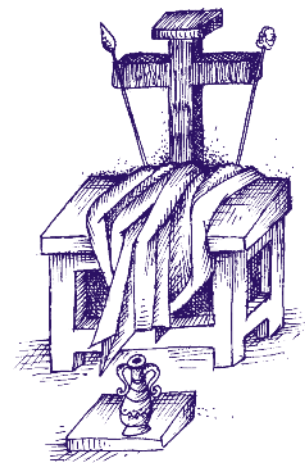
ing help needed (5 persons), 5:30pm Friday. If you'd like to help, please talk to Fr. Nick.

HOLY FRIDAY YOUTH PROGRAM will be held from 12:30 to 2:00 on Holy Friday followed by Holy Friday Vespers in which the children will participate in the service. Valarie Stamoulis is coordinating the program. A sign-up sheet will be posted at the candle stand. A snack will be provided. A letter for authorize school absence for religious observance will also be available at the candle stand. If you have any questions regarding the program or are able to offer assistance that day, please speak with Valarie (valarie.stamoulis@gmail.com).

PALM SUNDAY LUNCH

THE PALM SUNDAY LUNCHEON will be held following Divine Liturgy on Sunday, April 24. **Reservations for the luncheon are required** and can be made at the candle stand at church or by calling 508-845-0088 and leaving a message on the church phone. The menu for the luncheon will include clam chowder, meze platter, salad, baked haddock, rice pilaf, vegetable, dessert and coffee. A children's meal of cheese pizza, french fries, dessert and soft drink will also be provided. A donation of \$25.00 for adults and \$5.00 for children is recommended for those attending the luncheon. **Thanks to the generosity of Michael and Casie Soter, all proceeds from the luncheon will benefit St. Nicholas Church. Please make your reservations by no later than Sunday, April 17.**

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED to assist with setting the hall, serving the meal and clean up for the Palm Sunday Luncheon. Assistance is needed following Divine Liturgy on Lazarus Saturday, April 23 to set the tables for the luncheon. Assistance is also needed from our teens and youth on Sunday, April 24 with serving



PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGIES 2016

Wednesday, April 6, 2016
St. George Cathedral

Wednesday, April 13, 2016
St. Spyridon Cathedral

Wednesday, April 20, 2016
St. Mary's Assumption

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.

the meal. Finally, help will be needed with clean up and resetting the hall for Holy Week following the luncheon. If you can assist please speak with or contact Deb Sedares (dsedares@pinehills.com). Those helping with serving the meal are asked to report to the kitchen area following communion on Sunday. If you are interested in assisting with the meal preparation, please speak with or contact Mike Soter (mjsba39@gmail.com). Thank you for your stewardship.

**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.

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

Flowers for Epitaphion	\$500.00
Decorations for Pascha	\$350.00
Easter Candy/Gifts for our children	\$100.00

Please see Lillian Chachi or Betty Anderson to make a donation

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 disdainng 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.

NAMEDAYS

April 5

The Holy Martyr Victor

Victor Ioan Nedelescu

Victoria Wilder

April 11

St. Calinic of Cernica

Călin Galeriu

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 lose 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 the 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 for reflection.

The next verse, verse 37, brings this same 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 living

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