

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN

APRIL 10, 2016

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

A SLIDE PRESENTATION AND TALK ON THE HOLY LAND will be offered by Margarite Landry and Fr. Nick after Coffee Hour **TODAY, 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!**

THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING, canceled last Monday due to the snow, will be held on **Monday, April 11th 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 13th, is at St. Spyridon Cathedral, at 6:00 pm.

OUR NEXT MUSTARD SEED MEAL IS THIS COMING Friday, April 15th. We'll need help cooking and serving. **Prep** help needed (3 persons), 6pm

GREETERS TEAM 5
DEBORAH SEDARES & EVAN STAMOULIS

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

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 4 ☩ **MATINS GOSPEL 1**

Thursday. **Prep** help needed (2 persons), noon Friday. **Serving** help needed (5 persons), 5:30pm Friday. If you'd like to help, please talk to Fr. Nick.

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.
THANKS TO THE BAKERS!

We're not done yet, but with all of the help of the women and men over the past months, we're on our way to filling all of the holiday orders.
God bless all of those who helped in every way!

THANKS TO ELECTRONICS RECYCLING CREW!
 Thanks to Gerry Belba and all those who helped!

VESPERS AND CONFES-

SION 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).

UP-COMING

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,

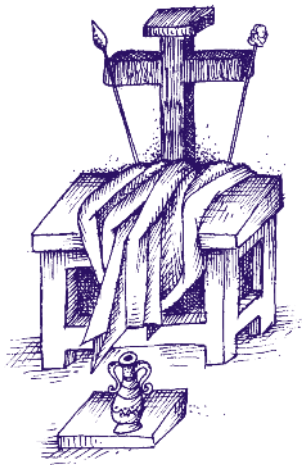
DATES TO REMEMBER

Sun, April 10 Holy Land Presentation, after Liturgy
 Jesus Christ Superstar, 2pm
 Mon, April 11 Parish Council, 6:30 pm
 Wed, April 13 PreSanctified, St. Spyridon Cath, 6pm
 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

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

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.



**PRE-SANCTIFIED
LITURGIES
2016**

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.

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 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.

ST. JOHN OF SINAI AND THE LADDER OF DIVINE ASCENT



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,

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 ask 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.

NAMEDAYS

April 5

The Holy Martyr Victor

- Victor Ioan Nedelescu
- Victoria Wilder

April 11

St. Calinic of Cernica

- Călin Galeriu

April 21

The Holy Martyr Alexandra the Queen

- Alexandra Dymek
- Alexis George
- Alexandra Mentis
- Sandra Nedelescu
- Casie Soter
- Alexandra Valoras

PRAYER AND FASTING

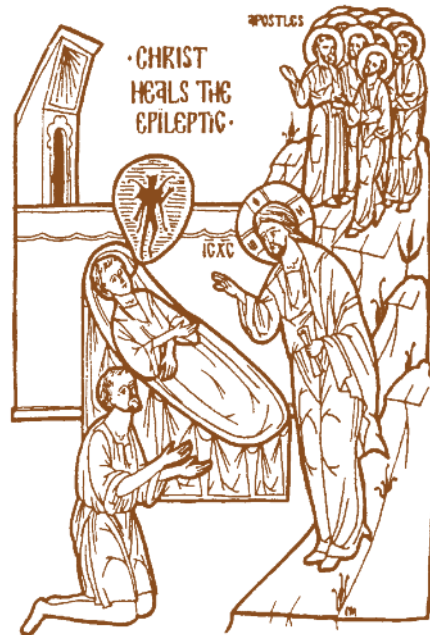
THIS is the fourth Sunday of Great Lent. We remember our father among the saints, John of Sinai who wrote the great spiritual work, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. We also continue to read from the Gospel of St. Mark. This week we hear the story of the healing of the epileptic boy (Mark 9:17-29). We read St. Matthew's telling of the same miracle (Matthew 17:14-21) earlier in the cycle. [The reflection on this Gospel account is on the next page.] 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 absolute 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 and absorb it.

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA

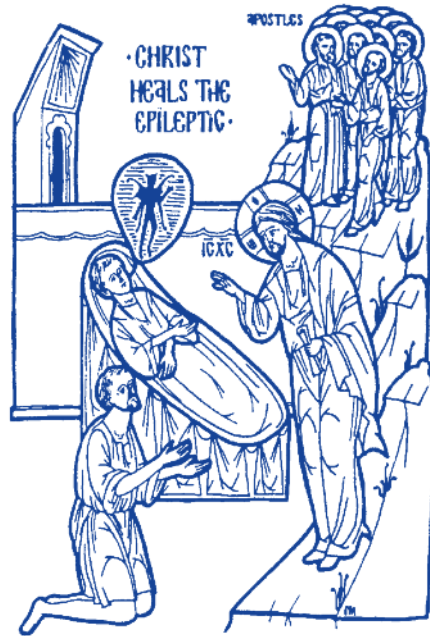
FAITH AS TINY AS A MUSTARD SEED

THE Gospel reading for this tenth Sunday after Pentecost is the healing of the epileptic boy (Matthew 17:14-23). St. Matthew tells us that this healing happened as the Lord and his disciples were coming down from the mountain where He had been transfigured. There was a crowd there waiting, and a man came up to him begging him to heal his son. A dramatic moment, and there are many players. There are the father and his son; the disciples; the demons; and of course, the crowd. For each, this encounter provokes a dilemma. For some a crisis, of faith. The father of the boy, the disciples, and even the members of the crowd will find the nature and depth of their faith tested. The demons will foresee their time of reckoning.

It is clear from the way the boy's father approaches Jesus that he was not a faithful man. He had come to Jesus out of desperation, not necessarily with the conviction that the Lord could do this. He had first brought the child to the disciples, but when they were unable to cast out the demon he decided to seek out the "higher source."

Jesus rebukes the father, but he doesn't do it directly. Rather, he addresses the rebuke more generally to all those present, saying: "You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you? How much longer must I put up with you?" (v. 17) The truth is that even after seeing so many of the signs and wonders he has worked, it is not just the father, but the crowds gathered around him who still have a hard time believing. Finally, he says to the father: "Bring him here to me."

The Evangelist Mark adds a few more details to this story. He says that when the spirit saw Jesus he convulsed the boy (Mark 9:20). Even if the boy's father did not know who Jesus was and what he could do, the demon did. Jesus then asked the boy's father how long he had been afflicted with this condition, to which the father replies "from child-



hood." He then adds: "If you are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us" (Mark 9:22).

Jesus immediately turns his question around telling him: "If you are able! — All things can be done for the one who believes" (Mark 9:23). Again, St. Mark records the father as saying: "I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24). Confronted with his own doubt and consumed with love for his child, the father at last comes to a sense of what it means to believe. He needed to learn to trust in God and ask for God's help especially when his trust was weakest.

What Jesus is saying to the man — and, of course to us as well — is that if we believe we will be given the power to heal, or work even greater things. But still, he does not wait for the father's faith, or that of the disciples; rather, in his compassion for the boy he heals him directly and immediately.

The disciples' dilemma is different. The Lord had given them "authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness" (Matthew 10:1). After everyone had left, they came to Jesus privately asking why they could not cast out this spirit. They were probably anxious and afraid they had lost the grace that had

been entrusted to them. Even Peter, James and John, who had seen the Lord transfigured in all his glory on Mount Tabor, were shaken (Matthew 17:1-8). Jesus gives them a similar answer to that which he gave the boy's father: "Because of your little faith. For truly I tell you, if you have faith as a grain of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you" (v. 20). And then he adds: "But this kind does not come out except by prayer and fasting" (v. 21).

Having given them this great power to heal, the Lord now instructs them on principles that support this power, this gift. He says that genuine faith, even as small as a mustard seed, has limitless power. But, this faith has to be strengthened, nurtured, and supported by prayer and fasting. Prayer brings us into God's presence and teaches us to listen to Him. Fasting helps us to distance ourselves from the excesses of this physical existence, making us lighter, and more spiritual.

Just a couple of words about the demons or evil spirits. The Biblical worldview sees the struggle between good and evil, sickness and health as a cosmic battle between God and those who pretend to be god. We have a scientific worldview, but I would hasten to add this doesn't mean that the ancient world was without science, far from it. But, they saw evil and good in personal terms. If you've ever struggled with a debilitating illness, physical or psychological, I'm sure that there were times that you felt that there was a malevolent force behind your suffering.

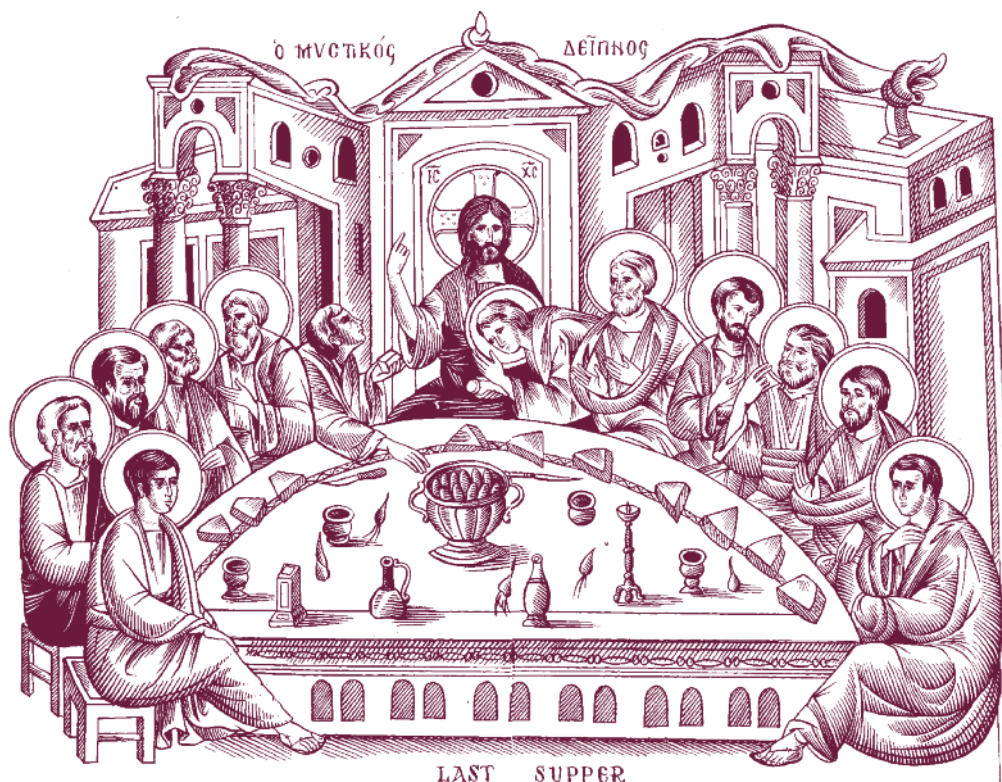
However, we are not abandoned in our struggles. God is with us. Each of us has the capacity to believe. God gave us this 'mustard seed' when He created us. The key to faith is trust. Trust is the fertile soil in which the seed of faith is planted, and it will grow into a magnificent and glorious tree.

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA

Walking With The Lord

Getting Ready for Holy Week

A Vacation-Week Retreat for Children and Youth
Monday, April 18, 2016 & Tuesday, April 19, 2016
10:00 am — 1:30 pm



Monday, April 18th

Ss Anagyroi Greek Orthodox Church
9 Central Street
Marlborough, MA 01752
(508) 485-2575

Tuesday, April 19th

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church
34 Gold Street
Shrewsbury, MA 01545
(508) 845-0088

Ages: K - High School ∞∞∞ Everyone's Welcome
No Fees ∞∞∞ Lunch & Snacks Provided

REGISTRATION REQUIRED

Questions and registration information should be directed to:

Fr. Gregory Christakos: (fathergreg@stsanagyroi.org)

Include the name and age of the child/children and any food allergies