

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN

APRIL 24, 2016

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

A REMINDER: HOLY WEEK SERVICES begin each evening at 6:00 pm. The complete schedule, **with announcements**, is available at the candles and on our parish website.

PALM SUNDAY LUNCH

THE PALM SUNDAY LUNCHEON will be held following Divine Liturgy. The menu for the luncheon includes: 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.**

EASTER BAKING ORDERS are available for pick up on Palm Sunday and following the evening services during Holy Week. See Betty Anderson.

CONFESSIONS will be heard each evening during Holy Week after the Service through Holy Wednesday. **Fr. Nick will be available for confession at other times by appointment** (e-mail:

GREETERS:
ALL GREETERS ARE NEEDED

CLEAN-UP:
ALL HANDS ON DECK
VOLUNTEERS WELCOMED!

ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED



THE ENTRANCE OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM
APOSTOLIC READING: PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9 ☩ GOSPEL: JOHN 12:1-8
EVERYTHING OF THE FEAST

FrNick@StNicholasChurch.org).

THE LIST OF DONATIONS for items needed for the Holy Week celebration is on the next page. If you'd like to contribute, please speak with **Betty Anderson or Lillian Chachi**.

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).

THE GOOD FRIDAY ABSENCE Letter, that parents may need to present to their children's school authorities, is available from Fr. Nick.



DATES TO REMEMBER

Sun, April 24 Palm Sunday / Dinner
HOLY WEEK BEGINS
SERVICES each evening at 6:00 pm
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

NAMEDAYS

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 Krassopoulos
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



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 PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

GLORY TO YOU, O LORD, for letting us live to enjoy the beautiful day that celebrates the triumphal entry of your Son into Jerusalem. As we add our own hosannas to those of the people who welcomed him, number us among those who hymn you forever. Give us all we need to live in a way that is pleasing to you. Take pity on those whom your own hands fashioned and for love of whom your Son sojourned on this earth. Bring a loving peace and unity to your churches, disturbed by so many divisions and contrary opinions. Grant us all remission of our sins, and, by the prayers of the Theotokos and all your saints, enable us to offer you this morning worship with attention and true devotion.

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

PALM SUNDAY



Come with me on a trip to a time past, yet still ever-present. Come and visit in our mind's eye that Sunday two thousand years ago when Christ entered Jerusalem as King. We feel the atmosphere charged with electricity. We can see that the whole city is buzzing with the news of the great prophet who had just raised a man who had been dead for four days. We silently ask ourselves, "Could this Jesus be the one? Could he be the Savior, the Anointed of God who is to rescue my country?" Having waited so long for the promised Messiah, we ponder in our hearts whether it will be our generation that sees the restoration of Jerusalem.

It is the time of the great feast of Pascha — the Passover — when we re-

call how Moses led our people from captivity in Egypt to freedom here in Palestine. But, truth be told, it has been downhill since. Certainly there were moments of glory under David and Solomon, but that was one thousand years ago. Since then we have been occupied by one foreign power after another. Now it's the Romans. God promised someone who would free us. Can this Jesus be the one?

All of a sudden there is a commotion. I look around and there is a crowd running toward the city gates. Someone shouts out "Hosanna" (it means, "Lord, save us"). Another person says, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." Someone else says, "He is the King of Israel." But in my mind I can

only think that he really doesn't look like much of a king. While there is something magnetic about him, I find it hard to believe can he lead my nation against the Romans. These people are calling him Lord and King, but how can I be sure? If I am going to commit myself to him, I want to know that I won't end up tortured and executed.

The questions haven't really changed much since that Sunday two thousand years ago. The person of Jesus Christ remains as controversial. The claims made on us by him remain as difficult. One isn't compelled any more today than then to recognize Christ as King and Lord. Perhaps it is easier today to fall into 'worshipping' him as God. The

Church is organized and people are born and baptized into the Faith. But, at some point, after having heard all the stories about him, each of us must face the very personal choice of accepting him or rejecting him. It is not like voting in a secret ballot election for president. While it is a *personal* choice, it is not a *private* one. We will be asked to take a palm branch in our hands and cry out loud: “Hosanna!”

Many people, perhaps most, find this a difficult decision. I suspect that among the reasons is that if we make a choice to follow Jesus Christ we are being asked to make a total commitment. Or, to put it into classical terminology, we are being asked to recognize Him as King and Lord. This is a decision going far beyond who we think would be best to serve as president. We are choosing who will rule our very life.

We live in an era where democracy is the norm and its guiding principle is: “the government that governs least, governs best.” But in Christ’s time rulers had total authority over your life. To say that someone was your King and Lord was to give your life over to him in a very real way. This is the reason why so many Christians were tortured and killed by the Roman authorities when they refused to call the Emperor “Lord.” It was treason; an act of sedition.

While we likely would not be physically threatened for calling Christ our Lord in today’s society and culture, the spiritual struggle is as intense. At the same time we should never forget that many places in the world do not play by our rules. People *are* tortured and killed today for being Christians. Many more are ostracized and discriminated against. Yet even within the context of our relative freedom, the decision remains a profound one.

When we recognize Christ as our King, then we must dislodge the king presently reigning over our hearts: our

own ego. This is not an easy task. And, I think, herein lies our dilemma. To accept Christ is first and foremost to deny ourselves. This is what the Lord Himself asks of us (cf. Mark 8:34). He also says that to save our life is to lose it, and to lose our life, for His sake, is to gain it (cf. Mark 8:35).

Unlike any other king or any other ruler, we believe Jesus Christ to be God who lived and continues to live among us. There is no proof of this. Either you accept it or reject it. If you say to yourself: “If only I could see a miracle, a sign, then I would believe,” just remember that there were people present who saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead, and not only did not believe, but plotted to put Him to death (cf. John 11:46).

To pick up the palm branch, to take that step, is a decision to change the focus of our life. It is to set our course on a heavenly goal. We leave behind our self-centeredness and our selfishness in order to devote our life to Christ.

One of the hymns we sing on Palm Sunday says: “Buried with you through baptism, O Christ our Lord, we have been granted immortal life by your resurrection.” For most of us this commitment was made for us at our baptism, when we were infants. Of courses, we were truly baptized into the death and resurrection of the Lord, but we were not consciously making the decision at the time. However, there comes a time when we must affirm or reject that commitment. It is totally voluntary — no one will force us — but we *do* need to reaffirm that commitment made on our behalf when we were young, now totally our own.

Christ did not enter Jerusalem with an army. Rather, He rode on the foal of an ass led by children. Those who picked up branches recognizing him as King did so persuaded by the force of his person, by the light of the divinity

permeating His being. This same Christ exists today as he did then. He doesn’t force by external means. There are no armies making us believe. There is only the person of Jesus Christ, compelling in His humility. “The King of heaven, who enters Jerusalem seated upon a humble colt as though upon a lofty throne” (*from Palm Sunday Matins*).

If we are moved by this sight of children and adults running to worship the King; if as we stand there trying to decide whether or not to pick up a palm branch, we are compelled by the warm and loving Lord who comes to free His people not by violence, but by sacrifice; if there is only the smallest impulse within us that cannot let the Lord pass by without adding our voice to the chorus of praise; then stand up and act on it! For who can be unmoved as the King passes? “The mountains and hills break forth into great rejoicing at the mercy of God, and the trees of the forest clap their hands” (*Palm Sunday Matins*). Can we just stand by? Will we remain unchanged by this encounter with the Lord?

What if the procession were to stop, and the Lord were to call us out of the crowd as he did Zacchæus (cf. Luke 19:5)? What would our reaction be? Could we continue to be apathetic or hesitant?

The Lord asks this commitment from us every day. We can choose to answer His call with the words of the hymnographer, “Today the grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us together, and we all take up your Cross and say: ‘Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest!’”

— Fr. Nicholas Apostola