

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN FEBRUARY 26, 2017 THIS WEEK'S NEWS

GREAT LENT begins tomorrow, February 27th.

THE WEDNESDAY PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGIES will begin on Wednesday, March 1st. We'll be rotating the celebration of this Lenten Liturgy among our sister Orthodox Churches in the area. Plan on attending these services. Set aside your Wednesday evenings and use this as one way to spiritually prepare for Pascha. Each Liturgy will start at 6:00 pm. Check out the full schedule in the Bulletin. There is a "pot-luck" Lenten meal after the service.

Our St. Nicholas will be hosting first of these PreSanctified Liturgies and the Lenten meal that follows. Donations of prepared Lenten foods are needed as well as help with set up, serving and clean up following the service. There is 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 should prepare themselves in the usual manner, including fasting from at least noon.

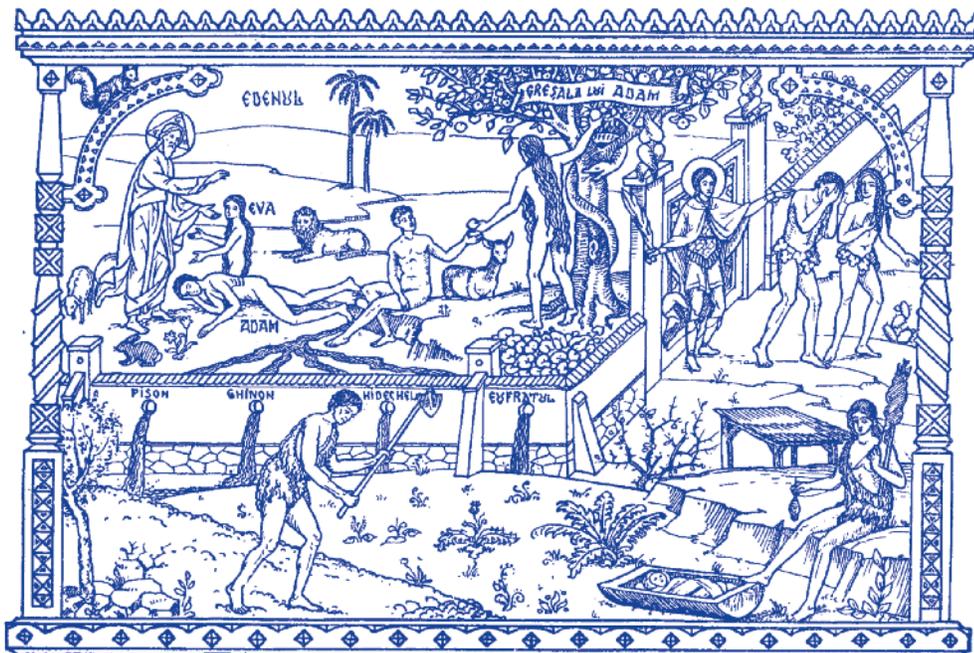
GREETERS TEAM 4:

DIMITRI SAFFRON AND SEAN FAHEY

COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP CREW B:

KARADIMITRIOU/KALPIDO FAMILY

ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED



CHEESE-FARE SUNDAY

SUNDAY OF FORGIVENESS — THE CASTING OUT OF ADAM & EVE FROM PARADISE

APOSTOLIC READING: ROMANS 13:11-14:4 ☩ GOSPEL: MATTHEW 6:14-21

TONE 3 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL 3

PITA BAKING. There will be a **Dough Rolling Session, next Saturday, March 4th, 9:00 am to noon.** **Questions?** talk to **Chris Toda, 508-832-6271.** Also, let her know if you'll be coming. **Remember: There's a job for everyone!**

FOOD PANTRY. Help is needed to staff our monthly responsibility at the Orthodox Food Center **next Saturday, March 4th, from 9 am - noon.** About 4 people are needed. Likewise, donations of food are always needed, and may be dropped off at the Food Pantry housed at St. Spyridon Cathedral. If you can help in this worthwhile ministry, please speak with **Lisa Mielnicki or Nicole Apostola.**

VESPERS AND CONFESION will be held **each Saturday evening at 5:00 pm** during Great Lent, beginning **March 4th.** Fr. Nick will be

available for confession each week after Vespers, and before Vespers by appointment (e-mail Fr. Nick).

BRING YOUR FAVORITE ICON TO CHURCH NEXT SUNDAY! Sunday March 5th is the Sunday of Orthodoxy. We're asking the children of the Parish to process with Icons toward the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. The adults can hold theirs high from the pew. **We**

DATES TO REMEMBER

- Sun, Feb 26 Cheesfare Sunday
- Mon, Feb 27 Great Lent Begins
- Wed, March 1 PreSanctified Lit - St. Nick's 6:00 pm
- Sat, March 4 Pita Dough Rolling, 9am-noon
Staff Orthodox Food Pantry
Vespers/Confession 5 pm
- Wed, March 8 PreSanctified Lit - St. George 6:00 pm
- Sat, March 25 Annunciation, Lit 10am
e-Recycling, 9am-2pm
- Sun, April 16 GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA
- Fri, April 21 Mustard Seed Meal, 5pm

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A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Americas

ask that parents bring their children's icons to Church to make the procession even more meaningful for them.

A MEMORIAL SERVICE is held today for two of our beloved parishioners, fallen asleep 40-days: **Angela Prizio Demake** and **Margaret Gikas**. *May our loving Lord rest their souls among the righteous!*

TODAY'S COFFEE HOUR is sponsored by both the **Demake, Johnson and Prizio family** and the **Gikas family** in memory of Angela and Maggie.

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

Holy Trinity is in need of **new or gently used IPODS and ITUNE gift cards** for the residents' Music and Memory Program. Please contact **Gina Metras**, Activities' Director at 508-852-1000 or gmetras@htnr.net.

COMMUNITY NEWS

TODAY IS MISSION SUNDAY. What better way to approach our journey toward Pascha than to pray for and support the Church's mission to share the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ

with the world! **On February 26th** 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 the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) website:** www.ocmc.org, e-mail: missions@ocmc.org, or call 1-877-463-6784.

LEARN TO DECORATE EASTER EGGS IN THE TRADITIONAL EASTERN EUROPEAN STYLE. A four hour class will be held at Jimmy D's in Sturbridge on **Saturday April 8th**, from 9am to 1pm teaching the art of decorating Ukrainian (pysanky) eggs. The instructors have taught at The Museum of Russian Icons in Clinton. A minimum of 25 people are needed to hold the class; the tuition is \$35 per person. You need to be the age of 16 or older. **Reserve a spot before March 20th** by calling Jim Dhembe at 508-728-3855 or e-mailing: Jimdhembe@aol.com.

A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

AT times, O forgiving Lord, it is difficult not to harbor grudges when we have been offended by treacherous speech and hurt by words that bruise our pride. We desire to rid ourselves of such feelings, but our own powers are not up to the task. Nor would we want, in any case, to rely solely on our own strength. You yourself must give us what we need to purify our minds and hearts, to dispel all these negative sentiments, lest we perish for breeding and nurturing them.

For blest and glorified is your most honorable and magnificent name, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

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.



LIVE HONORABLY, AS IN THE DAY

TOMORROW we begin Great Lent. The Scripture readings chosen for this Forgiveness Sunday are meant to give us some guidance as we set out. In the Gospel of Matthew (6:14-21) the Lord tells us to forgive one another, as well as to fast with joy and in secret. In the selection we read from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans (13:11-14:4) we also receive some sound advice on the proper way to approach the Fast. As a way to steel the resolve of the Roman Christians, he reminds them of the sleep and darkness from which they have emerged, and the day of salvation that draws every closer. He also counsels them not to judge how and what people eat — this is an echo from last week's reading from First Corinthians.

One of the powerful themes during Lent, especially at both the beginning and end, is the Lord's return — His Second Coming. Not only did we hear of this in the last Sunday's Gospel lesson, but the same subject was also present in all of the weekday readings during the past two weeks. Many of these same readings, as well as others on the Lord's Coming, will be read during Holy Week.

As Christians we experience and live the reality of the Kingdom on two levels. The first is in the changed reality we now live because Jesus our Savior has come. St. Paul reminds the Romans of this in the first part of the reading. The second level is the expectation of the Lord's coming-again. We await the great day of judgment when the Lord will come in glory. Then everything and everyone will be sorted out. This is the Judgment spoken of in last week's Gospel reading.

When we hear words like 'sleep' and 'waking' or 'night' and 'day', these are used to give us a way to understand a deeper spiritual reality: our movement from captivity by evil, to freedom in Christ. So, St. Paul tells the Romans: "You know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is

far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light." (v. 11-12) The early Christians (St. Paul included) believed that the Lord would be coming again soon. In addition, everyone in these communities was a convert to faith in Jesus Christ. Both the darkness they had left and the day drawing near were very palpable to them. It is hard to feel this same immediacy for us who have grown up in the Good News of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, part of our objective during Lent is to heighten and deepen within us the experiences of which St. Paul speaks.

St. Paul next turns to how we should actually live now: "Let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires." (v. 13-14) It would be easy to interpret these lines as St. Paul being 'prudish,' but this is not the case. St. John Chrysostom says that St. Paul is not speaking against normal partying, drinking, socializing or conjugal relations. He is warning us against the excesses of these that lead us to pervert our true human nature — our nature in Christ.

The fast is meant as a time for us to regain our sense of who we are and what we are called to be. To "live honorably as in the day" is to embrace our true selves — who God created us to be and to which He calls us again.

The second theme in this week's reading concerns judgment: forming opinions about and criticizing others. He uses the same categories of 'weak' and 'strong' as he did when writing to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 8:8ff). This suggests that the matter of whether or not a Christian could or should eat food offered to idols was being discussed in Churches throughout the ancient world. While today we might not face the question of food offered to pagan gods, we do have the Church's

fasting rules that present a similar spiritual challenge.

St. Paul says: "Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand." (v. 14:1-4)

The first thing that strikes us is that the 'weak' are eating vegetables, and the 'strong' are eating freely. Our fasting rules are the absolute inverse: the strong are those who abstain and the weak are eating freely. Fasting is an important spiritual discipline, but it is our own personal discipline. We fast not because God needs our fasting, but rather because we need to change our focus from our stomach and desires, to the deeper reality of our love for God and His love for us. When we are tied down to the things of earth, it is hard to ascend toward Heaven.

Because fasting requires us to be disciplined, it is very easy to fall into the sin of pride. We may feel our fasting deserves some recognition, by God and others. We can feel we are better than those who do not fast, or, do not fast rigorously. But, "who are you to pass judgment on servants of another?" Our fasting is our own, something private between us and God. Our good works are our own, a secret between us and God. Our prayer is our own, the quiet conversation we have with our Lord. But, may each of us grow together during this time of the Fast, and so be worthy to see the Light of Christ's Resurrection.

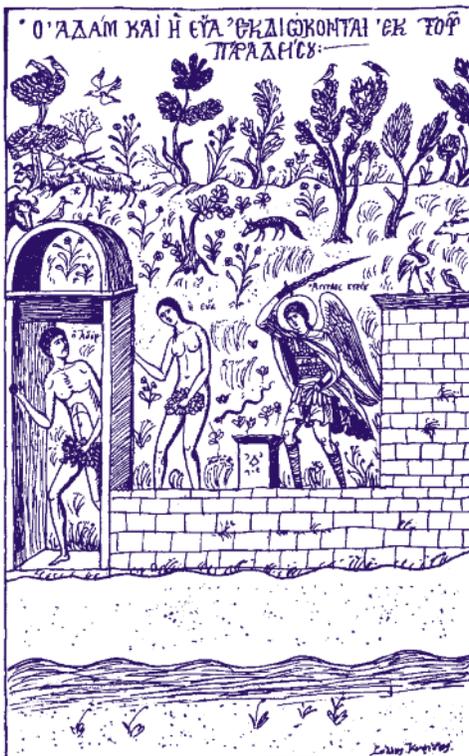
FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA

EXPLANATIONS FROM THE LENTEN TRIODION

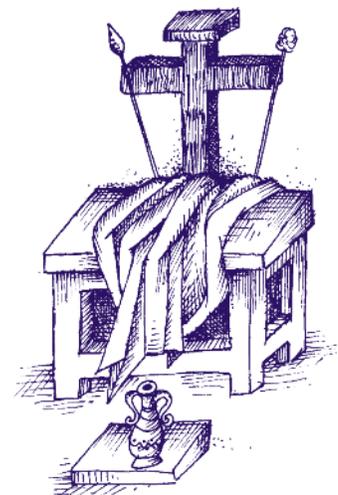
THE SUNDAY BEFORE LENT. The last of the preparatory Sundays has two themes: it commemorates Adam's expulsion from Paradise, and it is also the Sunday of Forgiveness. There are obvious reasons why these two things should be brought to our attention as we stand on the threshold of the Great Fast. One of the primary images in the Triodion is that of the return to Paradise. Lent is a time when we weep with Adam and Eve before the closed gate of Eden, repenting with them for the sins that have deprived us of our free communion with God. But Lent is also a time when we are preparing to celebrate the saving event of Christ's death and rising, which has reopened Paradise to us once more (Luke 23:43). So sorrow for our exile in sin is tempered by hope of our re-entry into Paradise:

O precious Paradise, unsurpassed in beauty,
Tabernacle built by God, unending gladness and delight,
Glory of the righteous, joy of the prophets, and dwelling of the saints,
With the sound of thy leaves pray to the Maker of all:
May He open unto me the gates which I closed by my transgression,
And may He count me worthy to partake of the Tree of Life
And of the joy which was mine when I dwelt in thee before.

Note how the Triodion speaks here not of 'Adam' but of 'me': 'May He open unto me the gates which I closed'. Here, as throughout the Triodion, the events of sacred history are not treated as happenings in the distant past or future, but as experiences undergone by me here and now within the dimension of sacred time.



The second theme, that of forgiveness, is emphasized in the Gospel reading for this Sunday (Matthew 6:14–21) and in the special ceremony of mutual forgiveness at the end of Vespers on Sunday evening. Before we enter the Lenten fast, we are reminded that there can be no true fast, no genuine repentance, no reconciliation with God, unless we are at the same time reconciled with one another. A fast without mutual love is the fast of demons. As the commemoration of the ascetic saints on the previous Saturday has just made clear to us, we do not travel the road of Lent as isolated individuals but as members of a family. Our asceticism and fasting should not separate us from our fellow men but link us to them with ever stronger bonds. The Lenten ascetic is called to be a person for others.



PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGIES

2017

Wednesday, March 1, 2017
St. Nicholas Church

Wednesday, March 8, 2017
St. George Cathedral

Wednesday, March 15, 2017
St. Mary's Assumption

Wednesday, March 22, 2017
St. George Cathedral

Wednesday, March 29, 2017
Ss. Anagroi

Wednesday, April 5, 2017
St. Nicholas Church

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.