

# ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN MARCH 19, 2017

## THIS WEEK'S NEWS

**WE ARE IN GREAT LENT.** Tomorrow marks the start of the fourth week of Lent.

**THE PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGY** this Wednesday, March 22nd will be at St. George Cathedral, on Anna St. 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. **ALSO**, persons wishing to receive Holy Communion should prepare themselves in the usual manner, including fasting from at least noon.

**THE VENERATION OF THE PRECIOUS CROSS** is this Sunday, March 19th, the 3rd Sunday of Great Lent. **Donations are needed to cover the cost of the flowers that adorn the Holy Cross.** If you would like to contribute, please see either **Tim Rucho** or **Fr. Nick**.

**THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION** is this **Saturday, March 25th.** Divine Liturgy will begin at 10:00 am, with Matins preceding at 9:00 am.

**PITA BAKING.** There will be a **Pita Baking Session, THIS COMING Friday, March 24th, 9:00 am to noon.**

**GREETERS TEAM 3:**  
EVANS TSOULES AND TOM FITZPATRICK

**COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP CREW A:**  
MARGARITE LANDRY,  
CHRISTINE MASTERJOHN

**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 6** ☩ **MATINS GOSPEL 6**

Please mark your calendars. **Questions?** talk to **Chris Toda, 508-832-6271.** Also, let her know if you'll be coming. **Remember: There's a job for everyone!**

**PLACE YOUR HOLIDAY PITA AND PASTRY ORDERS NOW!** Reach out to your family and friends to let them know that they may place orders for delivery for Easter/Pascha (April 16). Pick up an order form at the candle stand. All orders must be received by Sunday, April 2. We are baking to order so do not assume that there will be "extra" pita and pastry for sale. Orders may also be placed with Betty Anderson or Chris Toda.

**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).

**AN E-RECYCLING DAY** will be held on **THIS Saturday, March 25th, 9am-2pm.** **Gerry Belba** is coordinating. We need 2-3 people to help with traffic and the like on that day. A couple hour commitment either in the morning or afternoon would be great. **Questions?** please

### DATES TO REMEMBER

Sat, March 18	Vespers/Confession 5 pm
Wed, March 22	PreSanctified Lit - St. George 6:00 pm
Fri, March 24	Pita Baking, 9 am
Sat, March 25	Annunciation, Lit 10am e-Recycling, 9am-2pm Vespers/Confession 5 pm
Wed, March 29	PreSanctified Lit- Sts Anargyroi 6:00 pm
Sat, April 1	Staff Orthodox Food Pantry Vespers/Confession 5 pm
Wed, April 5	PreSanctified Lit - St. Nicholas 6:00 pm
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

talk to Gerry: 508-868-1569 or e-mail: vgbelba@msn.com.

**WE OBSERVE TWO MEMORIALS TODAY.** A 40-day Memorial for **Louis Rucho**, as well as a Memorial for **Gary Soter**. *May the Lord rest their souls among the just!*

**TODAY'S COFFEE HOUR** is sponsored by the **Soter family** in memory of Gary, and the **Rucho family** in memory of Louie.

## HOLY TRINITY NEWS

**Holy Trinity has job openings** for a **Director of Finance** and in Nursing for a **Unit Manager**. Contact Michelle Williamson, Director of Human Resources, 508-852-1000, mwilliamson@htnr.net

**Volunteering at Holy Trinity** is a rewarding way you can make a difference in the lives of the residents by donating your time and talent. To inquire about volunteer opportunities, contact **Gina Metras**, Director of Activities, 508-852-1000, gmetras@htnr.net, or **Serena Shields**, Director of Community Relations, 508-852-1000, shields@htnr.net.

## A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

**WHOM SHALL WE GLORIFY?**  
Whom shall we praise?  
And to whom shall we give thanks, if not to you, O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for that terrible instrument of the cross on which your Son was put to death for love of us? Though it was a symbol of shame, he transformed it into a resplendent trophy of victory. As we venerate its triumph during these days, and contemplate the salvation it purchased for us, help us truly understand its meaning so that we may share in the resurrection it promises.

Through the same Lord Jesus Christ, with whom you are blest, together with your all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

## NAMEDAYS

**March 17**

**St. Alexios the Man of God**

Alex John Johnson

Alex Leo Toda

**St. Patrick, Enlightener of Ireland**

Padraic Donnchadh Peterson

Patricia Thanas

**March 25**

**The Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos**

V. Gerald Belba

Lea Christo

Mary Anna Dymek

Vangjush Lolo

Evan Stamoulis

Lynne Tonna

Evans Tsoules

## 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.



**THE HOLY FORTY MARTYRS OF SEVASTIA**

# THE HEAVENLY LITURGY

**W**E'VE NOW reached the third and mid-point Sunday of Great Lent. We are asked to pause and reflect on our Lord's Precious Cross. The Epistle lesson it taken from the Letter to the Hebrews 4:14-5:6. St. Paul continues his reflection on Jesus as the high priest who presents our case before the Throne of God. There are two major points that he highlights in this reading. The first is that Jesus is like us in every respect, except for sin, and so he can thoroughly identify with our struggles, and as such present our case before God sympathetically. The second is that because of Jesus and his sacrifice, we can have more confidence before God than would have previously been possible.

St. Paul says that, "We have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God" (v. 14). There is a subtle reference to Moses in this verse; a contrast made between Moses who was prevented from entering the Promised Land because of his sin in Sinai, with Jesus who was permitted to "pass through the heavens" because of his faithfulness. Hebrews is constantly drawing our attention to possibilities present in the Old Covenant, and now realized in the New Covenant.

"For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (v. 15). When St. Paul speaks of the ability of Jesus as high priest to "sympathize with our weaknesses" he is not just referring to the fact that he is human like us; he is also saying that unlike the high priests of the Jerusalem Temple, he lived the life of a common person, not insulated from the real worries and concerns of daily existence. He also says that in every respect Jesus was tempted as we are, but without sin. There is a nuance to the Greek verb tense "has been tempted" that doesn't come across in English. It means that he was tempted not just once or only on a particular occasion, but continually. Jesus was

tempted all the time to do this or that, in the same way we are; only he did not succumb. He experienced the allure, but he resisted. He can relate to our struggle. More importantly, we can gain courage from his example. He shows us that it is possible to weather the storm of temptations.

St. Paul says that we can, "With confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (v. 16). Christ's example and position before God gives us access to God.

This is an image that we might find hard to relate to in our more egalitarian society. We are a democratic society and consider access to power a right, not a privilege. Of course, we know that even in America some people are more equal than others, yet we see this as an abuse of the fundamental egalitarian principle. And so, in order to appreciate what our Lord Jesus did, we need to do some reality-checking. Each of us, from the highest to the lowest, will find ourselves in serious need of help at some time in our life, especially before God. Unfortunately, we usually realize this only when we've hit bottom.

The image of the heavenly temple and God's throne that St. Paul gives us is much closer to our actual circumstance. If we honestly examine our hearts and our actions, we will quickly realize that we have no way to access God's grace on our own. Most of us are like that poor man in the parable who shows up at the wedding dressed inappropriately (cf. Matthew 22:12). The king had him arrested, cuffed, and thrown into the outer darkness. This, brothers and sisters, is our plight without Jesus. He's the one who lends us proper attire so that we can confidently approach God's throne of mercy.

We Orthodox understand the Eucharistic celebration, the Divine Liturgy, as being actually present before God's heavenly throne. The celebrant, usually our parish priest, is the living icon of

our Lord, who is Himself the *only* true celebrant. Jesus continually presents Himself before His Father, for our sake. In the Divine Liturgy we are healed of our wounds and changed by grace. Jesus intercedes, presenting Himself as a sacrifice for our sins.

Listen to how St. Paul explains it: "Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness; and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. And one does not presume to take this honor, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you'; as he says also in another place, 'You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek'" (5:1-6).

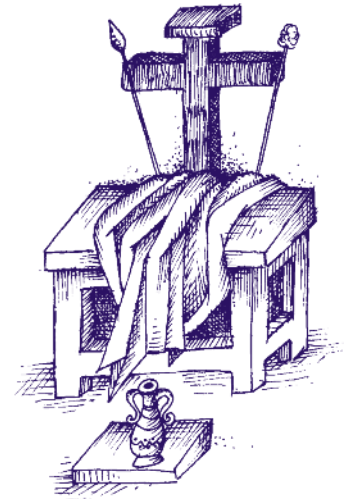
Next week I will speak more of Melchizedek. Today, I would like us to reflect on this glimpse that St. Paul gives of the Heavenly Liturgy. St. John in his Revelation (chapter 4) gives us a similar picture of the continual worship taking place in Heaven. Our Eucharist celebration is an image, an icon, of this Liturgy. In the Liturgy, just before the Lord's Prayer, we thank our loving God for the fact that the gifts of bread and wine we offered have been received "at His holy, heavenly, and spiritual altar as an offering of spiritual fragrance," and ask that he "may in return send upon us divine grace and the gift of the Holy Spirit." It is the heavenly Altar before almighty God to which the prayer is referring.

Next Sunday when we wake up and are thinking about being late for Liturgy, or even skipping it entirely, let us recall this image of the Heavenly Liturgy, and, hopefully, reconsider.

## EXPLANATIONS FROM THE LENTEN TRIODION

**THE THIRD SUNDAY (THE SUNDAY OF THE CROSS).** On this day the service of Mattins concludes with the solemn veneration of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross; the ceremonies are closely parallel to those at the feasts of the Exaltation of the Cross (14 September) and the Procession of the Cross (1 August). The veneration of the Cross on this third Sunday in Lent prepares us for the commemoration of the Crucifixion which is soon to follow in Holy Week, and at the same time it reminds us that the whole of Lent is a period when we are crucified with Christ: as the Synaxarion at Mattins

says, ‘Through the forty-day Fast, we too are in a way crucified, dying to the passions’. The dominant note on this Sunday, as on the two Sundays preceding, is one of joy and triumph. In the Canon at Mattins, the irmoi are the same as at Easter midnight, ‘This is the day of Resurrection ...’, and the troparia are in part a paraphrase of the Paschal Canon by St. John of Damascus. No separation is made between Christ’s death and His Resurrection, but the Cross is regarded as an emblem of victory and Calvary is seen in the light of the Empty Tomb.



### PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGIES 2017

Wednesday, March 22, 2017  
St. George Cathedral

Wednesday, March 29, 2017  
Sts. Anagyroi

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.



### 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
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Flowers for Epitaphion .....	\$500.00
Decorations for Pascha .....	\$350.00

*Please see Lillian Chachi or Betty Anderson to make a donation*