

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN

APRIL 2, 2017

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

THE COMPLETE HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE AND ANNOUNCEMENTS ARE ATTACHED TO THIS BULLETIN.

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 **TODAY 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.

PALM SUNDAY LUNCHEON. Please join us for our annual Palm Sunday Luncheon following the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, April 9, 2017. We are asking for a **free-will offering that will be directed toward IOCC's Syrian Refugee effort.**

A **CHURCH CLEANING** session will be held this coming **Monday morning, April 3rd**, from 9:00am—noon. Christine Masterjohn is coordinating. Please let her know if you are available to help!

GREETERS TEAM 5:
DEBORAH SEDARES & EVAN STAMOULIS

COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP CREW C:
PRIZIO FAMILY

ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED



THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT — ST. MARY OF EGYPT

APOSTOLIC READING: HEBREWS 9:11-14

GOSPEL: MARK 10:32-45 (REQUEST OF THE SONS OF ZEBEDEE)

TONE 8 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL 8

THE LAST WEDNESDAY PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGY of this lenten season will be this **Wednesday, April 5th here at St. Nicholas**. Liturgy will start at 6:00 pm. There is a "pot-luck" Lenten meal after the service. Persons wishing to receive Holy Communion should prepare themselves in the usual manner, including fasting from at least noon.

PITA BAKING. There will be a **Pita Baking Session, THIS Friday, April 7th, 9:00 am to noon**. 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!**

THANKS TO THE E-RECYCLING crew: Gerry Belba and the others who helped this past Saturday.

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 worthwhile ministry, please speak with Lisa Mielnicki or Nicole Apostola. Our next Saturday is May 6th.

DATES TO REMEMBER

- Sat, April 1 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry Vespers/Confession 5 pm
- Sun, April 2 Easter Baking Orders Due
- Mon, April 3 Church Cleaning, 9 am
- Wed, April 5 PreSanctified Lit - St. Nicholas 6:00 pm
- Sat, April 8 Lazarus Saturday Liturgy, 10 am Vespers/Confession 5 pm
- Sun, April 9 Palm Sunday, Luncheon
- April 9-15 Holy Week, Services every night at 6 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

TODAY'S COFFEE HOUR is sponsored by **Evans and Irene Tsoules**, in honor of Evans' nameday.

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

The St. Spyridon Greek Ladies Philoptochos is hosting a luncheon on Thursday, April 6th at Holy Trinity.

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,

O YOU WHOSE PERFECT WILL gives birth to each new morning: As we throw off sleep to come before you, we are uncertain — even apprehensive — about this day and how it will turn out. We are bereft of the faith and love that normally engender hope, and, yet, in spite of everything, we somehow dare to aspire to greatness. Therefore, master, shatter the chains that bind us, open our eyes to the things as they really are, and give us success in struggling toward that blessed end, so that, with all your saints, we, too, may feast the paschal mysteries of Christ, our Lord.

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.

EXPLANATIONS FROM THE LENTEN TRIODION

THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT. This corresponds closely to the preceding Sunday: just as the fourth Sunday is dedicated to St. John Climacus, the model of ascetics, so the fifth celebrates St. Mary of Egypt, the model of penitents. Like that of St. John Climacus, her feast has been transferred from the fixed calendar, where she is commemorated on 1 April. Her life, recounted by St. Sophronios, Patriarch of Jerusalem—it is read, as we have mentioned, on Thursday in the fifth week—sets before us a true verbal ikon of the essence of repentance. In her youth St. Mary lived in a dissolute and sinful way at Alexandria. Drawn by curiosity, she journeyed with some pilgrims to Jerusalem, arriving in time for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. But when she tried to enter the Church of the Holy Sepulchre with the others, an invisible force thrust her back at the threshold. This happened three or four times. Brought to sudden contrition by this strange experience,



she prayed all night with tears to the Mother of God, and next morning she found to her joy that she could enter the church without difficulty. After venerating the Cross, she left Jerusalem on that same day, made her way over the Jordan, and settled as a solitary in a remote region of the desert. Here for forty-seven years she remained, hidden from the world, until she was eventually found by the ascetic St. Zosimas, who was able to give her Holy Communion shortly before her death. Some modern writers have questioned the historical accuracy of St. Sophronios' narrative, but there is in itself nothing impossible about such a story. In the year 1890 the Greek priest Joachim Spetsieris found a woman hermit in the desert beyond the Jordan, living almost exactly as St. Mary must have done.

On this Sunday the first Canon at Mattins is based on the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31): like the parable of the Good Samaritan on the previous Sunday, this is applied symbolically to the repentant Christian.

NAMEDAYS

April 5

The Holy Martyrs Victor and Victorin

Victor Ioan Nedelescu
Victoria Wilder

April 9

The Entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem

Elodie Lauren Killick
Florence Rucho
Florica Tonna

April 11

St. Calinic of Cernica

Călin Galeriu

THE HEAVENLY LITURGY

WITH THE FIFTH SUNDAY of Great Lent the Church, through Scriptural readings and hymns, is preparing us to participate in the cornerstone of our faith: the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We believe that his death is no ordinary death, rather Jesus, innocent and blameless in every respect, consciously offers himself to be punished in the place of all of the rest of us who really deserved to be punished. He sacrifices himself for us.

Today's Gospel lesson from St. Mark (10:32-45) tells us of the conversation Jesus had with his disciples in which he directly tells them that he will not only be condemned to death, but that he will rise again three days later. The Apostolic reading is from the Letter to the Hebrews (9:11-14) where St. Paul speaks of the animal sacrifices offered under the Old Law, and how this practice was designed to prepare us so that we could understand and appreciate Jesus' sacrifice.

Sacrifice is a basic part of who we are as human beings. If we love we know about sacrifice. Parents constantly sacrifice for their children. Lovers repeatedly sacrifice themselves to demonstrate their love. If we injure or offend someone, we try to find a way to repair what we've done, and this always involves a sacrifice.

Most early religions involved the sacrifice of living things in order to repair and restore their relationship to their gods. Sometimes these offerings were acts of thanksgiving — sacrifices of food for a bountiful harvest. Sometimes these were sin offerings and could involve animals and even human beings. God's Covenant with His people, the children of Israel, required such sacrifices, all except human ones. Animals and plants were regularly offered. The Jerusalem Temple was the primary, if not the only, place where these offerings were made.

In our modern urban society most of us have had very little experience with slaughtering an animal. The language of blood and offering of blood seems at best an abstraction. (We'd more than likely rather not think about it at all, in real terms.) The Scriptures, however, are full of this language. The Eucharist, the primary Christian celebration, centers on partaking of the Body and Blood of our Lord. I am sure that most of us have questioned, at least on one occasion, what could possibly be meant by so graphic an image.

Blood is the source of life. The Hebrews believed that being the source of life it was also a sign of the divine within us. This shouldn't be difficult for us to understand. When we describe someone who has had a mortal wound, we say that "the life is draining out of them." We speak of "the life that courses through our veins." If we are composed mainly of water, most of that water is in the form of blood.

Blood does at least two things in our bodies. It brings the nutrients, including oxygen, to every part of our body that allows our cells to grow and be maintained. It also takes away the waste. It is the medium for feeding and cleansing our body.

When an animal was sacrificed, especially when the animal was sacrificed on the Day of Atonement, its blood was used to purify and sanctify, not unlike the way in which we use Holy Water. The High Priest, when he offered this sacrifice, offered a double sacrifice: one for himself and his family, and the other for the people of Israel. The New Testament refers to Jesus as the High Priest, but unlike other high priests, Jesus had no need for the first sacrifice; he was and is pure. However, we are the ones who need the second sacrifice. Jesus becomes this sacrifice for us. Let us look at the text of today's reading:

"But when Christ appeared as a

high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." (Hebrews 9:11-14)

It is important to remember that the author of Hebrews is speaking of the Heavenly altar. The earthly temple is modeled on the one in Heaven. In this earthly temple only the High Priest could enter the inner sanctuary, the Holy Place, and just once a year, and only after he had purified himself with a sacrifice. Jesus has no need of this purification. Rather, because he offered himself as a sacrifice, he carries within himself the purifying blood. He is the sacrifice. During the Liturgy in a prayer addressed to Christ, the priest says: "you are the offer and the offered, the one who receives and is distributed." This poetic phrase captures the mystery of Jesus' self-sacrifice.

God comes to us in the person of Jesus the Christ, the Word of God. Out of love for us, He offers himself up as the one to be sacrificed. He is both High Priest and Sacrificial Offering.

While not exactly the same, there is an example I can offer that might help illustrate this mystery. During the Communist persecutions, there were people, priests, who knew they were going to be killed for Christ the next day. As is our rule, Liturgies are celebrated on consecrated altars in which the relics of saints have been placed. Knowing that they

themselves would be sacrificed as martyrs shortly, these men celebrated the Liturgy on themselves. They offered Christ's sacrifice on the altar of their soon-to-be sacrificed bodies.

We no longer offer animals or other humans; those were meant as a preparation for Christ's unique sacrifice. His sacrifice put an end to it. Instead our Lord gave us the sacrifice of bread and wine, the unbloody sacrifice. These he changes, through the Holy Spirit, into his Body and his Blood. When we partake of the life-giving Body and Blood of our Lord, we are redeemed and reconciled to God the Father through Jesus' sacrifice. We are purified and changed.

Moses constructed the earthly Tabernacle after the image given him by

God (Exodus 25). When we celebrate the Divine Liturgy, the Eucharist, we participate in the one Sacrifice of the Son of God. Just as Moses' Tabernacle was made according to the image of the Heavenly Tabernacle, so it is with us when we enter into the Divine Liturgy celebrated here on earth. It is the model of the Heavenly Liturgy where God's Name is continually proclaimed.

It may be difficult for us to envision this Heavenly Liturgy, a place where Christ is enthroned, and the angels and saints unceasingly glorify God, but it exists. If God should so grace us, we might even catch a glimpse of this Heavenly Liturgy during the celebration of the Eucharist in our own parish. If our hearts are pure we will be given view

into this foretaste of God's promise.

During the coming Paschal celebration, when we are given the opportunity to contemplate Jesus' suffering and sacrifice, let us ask God to give us this vision of the Heavenly Liturgy. At the same time, we should remember the people who out of love continually sacrifice themselves for us. They may be relatives or friends, but they may also be people whom we do not know, who serve us out of duty and love for all.

We should also ask our Lord to strengthen us for the trials and sacrifices that will be asked of us. Love requires sacrifice. If we love, especially as Christ loves, we will be asked to show it.

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA

FIFTH SATURDAY OF GREAT LENT: OF THE AKATHIST TO THE THEOTOKOS

On the Fifth Saturday of Great Lent, the Saturday of the Akathist, we commemorate the "Laudation of the Virgin" Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos.

In 625, when the emperor Heraclius was fighting the Persians, the Khan sent forces to attack Constantinople by land and by sea. Patriarch Sergius urged the people not to lose heart, but to trust in God.

A procession was made around the city with the Cross of the Lord, the robe of the Virgin, the Icon of the Savior not made by hands, and the Hodigitria Icon of the Mother of God. The Patriarch dipped the Virgin's robe in the sea, and the city's defenders beat back the Khan's sea forces. The sea became very rough, and many boats sank. The invaders retreated, and the



people of Constantinople gave thanks to God and to His Most Pure Mother.

On two other occasions, in 655 and 705, the Theotokos protected the city from Saracen invaders. A feast-day dedicated to the Laudation of the Virgin was established to commemorate these victories. The Akathist to the Mother of God is believed to originate from this period, and its use has spread from Constantinople to other Orthodox lands.

The icon before which the Akathist was sung was given to the Dionysiou Monastery on Mt. Athos by Emperor Alexius Comnenos. There, it began to flow with myrrh. There were at least three wonder-working copies of this icon in Russia before the Revolution.

This icon shows the Mother of God seated on a throne, and surrounded by Prophets with scrolls.

HOLY WEEK & PASCHA SCHEDULE

As Orthodox Christians, one of the ways we set ourselves apart from the secular world is by placing a high priority on attending as much of the full cycle of Holy Week services as we are able. By participating in the services that commemorate our Lord's passion and death on the Holy Cross, we can more fully experience the joy of the Paschal celebration.



try to receive Holy Communion on Pascha. Holy Communion is only offered within the context of a Divine Liturgy. Confessions will be heard after Vespers at 5:00 on Lazarus Saturday, April 8th and before and after the Holy Week Services up until Great Tuesday. There will be no Confession in the hours before the Resurrection Service. If you have any questions or wish to arrange a special time, please call Fr. Nick at 508-845-0088.



Palm Sunday Luncheon:

Please join us for our annual Palm Sunday Luncheon following the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, April 9, 2017. We are asking for a free-will offering that will be directed toward IOCC's Syrian Refugee effort.



Agape Meal: Preteasa Maria (mzm@apostola.org) is organizing the Agape meal after the Resurrection Service. Please speak with her in regard to what food items are needed or consider a donation to help cover the cost of the paper goods and other needed items.

Easter Eggs: We are asking for a donation of cooked and dyed red eggs from each family. The eggs should be at the Church by Holy Thursday evening if possible (*Tradition has it that the eggs are cooked on Holy Thursday.*) Please see Preteasa Maria if you can help wrapping the eggs for distribution on Pascha.

Bay Leaves: Help is needed to remove leaves from their stems in preparation for use on Holy Saturday. This is a task that can be done at home at your leisure. Please see Tim Rucho if you can help.

Confession and Communion: The Faithful should prepare themselves for Confession and Holy Communion, and everyone should

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:

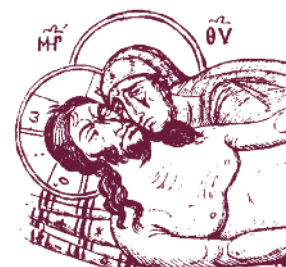
Flowers for Palm Sunday Icon	\$50.00
Palms	\$100.00
Flowers for Bridegroom Icon	\$50.00
Holy Thursday Gospel Candles	\$60.00
Wreaths for Cross (Great Friday)	\$50.00
(Resurrection)	\$100.00
Resurrection Icon	\$50.00
Bay Leaves for Holy Saturday	\$100.00
1 Gallon of Olive Oil	\$25.00
½ lb Incense	\$40.00
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

Great and Holy Friday:

We will have a Church School Program for the younger



Sunday school children. The program will begin at 12:30 pm and conclude with the celebration of Great Vespers at 2:00 pm. Please contact Valarie Stamoulis if you are interested in helping and to register your child/children for the program



P a s c h a l
Agape Ves-
pers on Easter
Sunday: We have the tradi-
 tion of reading the Gospel
 message in many different
 languages. If you are able to
 read the Gospel in a

particular language and would like to participate, please speak with Fr. Nick or Tim early in Holy Week. This is not something that can be “pulled together” at the last minute, so we need commitments by Palm Sunday if we are to continue this tradition.



HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE



SATURDAY OF LAZARUS APRIL 8, 2017

Matins 9:00 a.m.
 Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
 Great Vespers 5:00 p.m.

PALM SUNDAY APRIL 9, 2017

Matins 9:00 a.m.
 Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
 Matins of Holy Monday 6:00 p.m.

HOLY MONDAY APRIL 10, 2017

Matins of Holy Tuesday 6:00 p.m.

HOLY TUESDAY APRIL 11, 2017

Matins of Holy Wednesday 6:00 p.m.

HOLY WEDNESDAY APRIL 12, 2017

Mystery of Holy Unction 6:00 p.m.

GREAT AND HOLY THURSDAY APRIL 13, 2017

Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil (at Holy Trinity Nursing Ctr) . 9:30 a.m.
 Holy Passion (Reading of the 12 Gospels) 6:00 p.m.

GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY APRIL 14, 2017

Royal Hours 9:30 a.m.
 Great Friday Children’s Retreat 12:30 p.m.
 Vespers with the Taking-down from the Cross 2:00 p.m.
 Lamentations-Matins of Holy Saturday 6:00 p.m.

GREAT AND HOLY SATURDAY APRIL 15, 2017

Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil 9:30 a.m.

GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA APRIL 16, 2017

Vigil of Pascha 11:15 p.m.
 Resurrection Service 11:30 p.m.
 Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom 12:00 a.m.
 Vespers of Agape 12:00 p.m.

SUNDAY OF ST. THOMAS APRIL 23, 2017

Matins 9:00 a.m.
 Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Communion is offered at every Liturgy

Confessions may be heard after every service until Holy Wednesday