

# ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN

## FEBRUARY 11, 2018

### THIS WEEK'S NEWS

A **PITA BAKING** Session will be held, **THIS COMING** Wednesday, February 14th, 9:00 am to noon. **Questions?** talk to **Betty Anderson** (508-756-4848) or **Chris Toda**, 508-832-6271. **Remember: There's a job for everyone!**

**OUR NEXT MUSTARD SEED MEAL** is **THIS COMING** Friday, February 16th. We'll need help cooking and serving. **Prep** help needed (3 persons), 12 noon Thursday. **Prep** help needed (2 persons), noon Friday. **Serving** help needed (5 persons), 5:30pm Friday. **We are also looking for donors to cover the cost of the meal—around \$400.00 for the 200 meals we usually serve.** If you'd like to help, please talk to Fr. Nick.

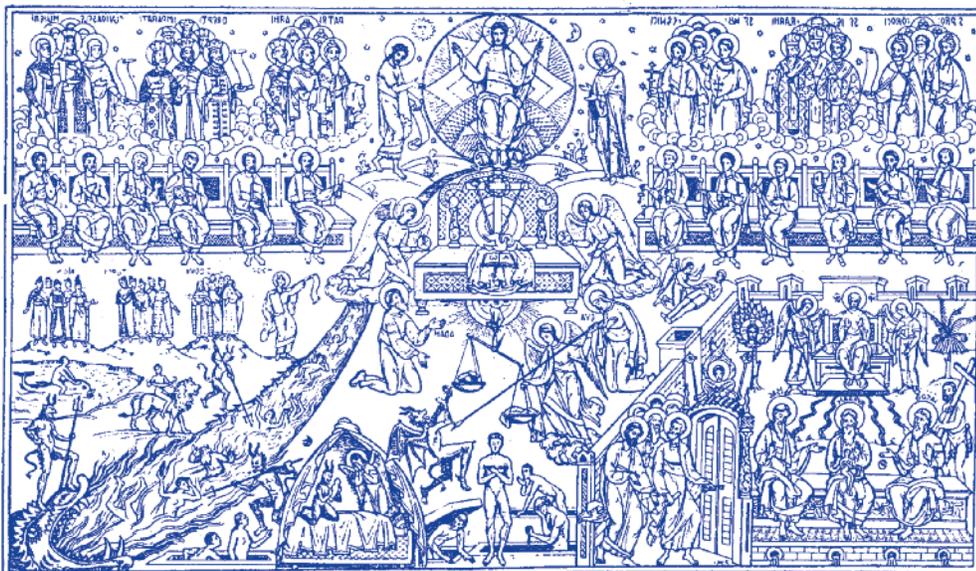
**COFFEE HOUR SPONSORS ARE NEEDED** for the coming weeks. Please speak with Presvytera Maria if you would like to sponsor one.

**WE CELEBRATE THREE MEMORIALS** this Sunday: **Louis Rucho**, fallen asleep one year; **John Rucho**, fallen asleep three years; and **Sophie George**, mother of Florence Rucho. **May their memory be eternal!**

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

**COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP TEAM B:**  
KARADIMITRIOU/KALPIDO FAMILY

**ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED**



### THE THIRTY FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT — MEATFARE SUNDAY

APOSTOLIC READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 8:8-9:2 ☩ GOSPEL: MATTHEW 25:31-46  
TONE 3 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL 3

**TODAY'S COFFEE HOUR** is sponsored by **Florence Rucho** and the members of the Rucho family in memory of their family members, fallen asleep.

### UP-COMING

**THE PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY SCHEDULE** is posted a little farther down. Please make note of the dates and places. The first PreSanctified Liturgy will be held at **St. Spyridon Cathedral on Wednesday, February 21st.**

**PRESVYTERA MARIA** has been invited to speak at **Sts. Anargyroi, Marlborough**, by the Enosis-Philoptochos on **Sunday, February 25th** at 3:00 pm. She will be talking about her responsibilities as the Child Advocate of the Commonwealth and her work on behalf of especially children in need. The conversation is open to all. Please mark your calendars.

### HOLY TRINITY NEWS

Holy Trinity has an opening for an **Activities Director**. Also, Holy Trinity has an openings on all shift for **RNs, LPNs and CNAs**. For more information: call Michelle Williamson at (508) 852-1000, ext. 218 or e-mail: mwilliamson@htnr.net. Or, stop by Holy Trinity and fill out an application.

### COMMUNITY NEWS

**Notre Dame Academy** (Catholic, col-

### DATES TO REMEMBER

Sat, Feb 10	Saturday of the Souls, Liturgy 10am
Sun, Feb 11	Meatfare Sunday
Wed, Feb 14	Pita Baking, 9am - noon
Fri, Feb 16	Mustard Seed, 5 pm
Sun, Feb 18	Cheesefare Sunday; Sun of Forgiveness
Mon, Feb 19	GREAT LENT BEGINS
Wed, Feb 21	PreSanctified Lit at St. Spyridon 6pm
Wed, Feb 28	PreSanctified Lit at St. George 6pm
Sat, March 3	Staff Orthodox Food Pantry, 9am-noon
Sun, April 1	Palm Sunday (Western Easter)
Sun, April 8	GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA

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A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Americas

lege prep school for young women) is inviting seventh grade and transfer students to spend an academic day at NDA through May 1st. **If you're interested contact the Admissions Office at [admissions@nda-worc.org](mailto:admissions@nda-worc.org).**

**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.



**SUNDAY OF THE  
LAST JUDGMENT**

**T**he parables for the previous two Sundays — especially that of the Prodigal Son — have presented to us God's extreme goodness and love for us. But lest certain persons, putting their confidence in this alone, live carelessly, squandering upon sin the time given them to work out their salvation, and death suddenly snatch them away, the most divine Fathers have appointed this day's feast commemorating Christ's impartial Second Coming, through which we bring to mind that God is not only the Friend of man, but also the most righteous Judge, Who recompenses to each according to his deeds.

It is the aim of the holy Fathers, through bringing to mind that fearful day, to rouse us from the slumber of carelessness unto the work of virtue, and to move us to love and compassion for our brethren. Besides this, even as on the coming Sunday of Cheese-fare we commemorate Adam's exile from the Paradise of delight — which exile is the beginning of life as we know it now — it is clear that today's is reckoned the last of all feasts, because on the last day of judgment, truly, everything of this world will come to an end.

All foods, except meat and meat products, are allowed during the week that follows this Sunday.

**A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE**

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

**O** MERCIFUL FATHER: You have enabled us to live through another day by your ineffable goodness. As daylight fades into darkness, we pray, once more, that you will send us your unfailing light, our Lord Jesus Christ. Let his brilliance bring meaning to our lenten passage. Enlighten our minds and hearts, so that the observance of these days will not be empty ritual but the renewal of our lives. Therefore, as we struggle to win greater control of the body, let us also be renewed in spirit.

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



**NAMEDAYS**

**February 22**

*The Holy Martyr Anthousa and her 12 Servants*

Anthi Elefteriou

**February 24**

*St. Theodore of Tyre*

Theodore Belba

Theodora Collins

Theodhoraq Lolo

Teodor Nedelcu

Theodore Peter Tonna

Theodore Russell Tonna

Derek Wilder

**BAKING STATISTICS**

**During 2017  
St. Nick's Kitchen  
baked and sold:**

- 365 Pitas**
- 129 Platters**
- 2500 Baklava**
- 2800 Kourabia**
- 3900 Kouralakia**
- 65 Breads**

**WOW!**

## I'M O.K.? YOU'RE O.K.?

By God's grace we are approaching Great Lent. The Church offers us this occasion as an opportunity to unplug from the noise and static of our normal lives, while also giving us a number of tools for introspection, aids to assist us in taking a look into our own souls. Not that anyone is suggesting this process should be restricted to the 40 days preceding Pascha. Repentance — turning our lives God-ward — is a life-long undertaking. But given human nature, we often need a little push to find ways to focus our attention on the important things that we really know we should do. For example, we really don't need birthdays to tell us we are getting a little older, or anniversaries to remind us that we love our spouse. But a birthday cake or an anniversary dinner gives us an opportunity to openly express feelings we have for those we love. Secular and religious holidays do something similar. Great Lent is different only in the sense that it's over an extended period of time, not a single day. It is like the rigorous commitment of boot-camp, as it provides us the opportunity to openly express and act on our need to repent and heal our souls.

One of the first hymns we hear when we begin Lent says: "Open to me the gates of repentance, O Giver of Life ... for as I ponder in my wretchedness the many evil things that I have done, I tremble for the fearful day of judgment." Many people are able to embrace these sentiments readily, but others have difficulty with these words. As I've thought about it, perhaps the difficulty some have with Great Lent is with the language of sin and repentance. It is hard work to look honestly at ourselves. We don't use the word "sin" too often anymore. It seems too harsh and judgmental.

Every Sunday during Lent we cele-

brate St. Basil's Liturgy. There's a phrase in one of the prayers we read, when we ask God to send His Holy Spirit to change the Bread and Wine into the Body and Blood of our Lord, that puts this very issue even more starkly. Asking for God's help we recognize that, "we have done nothing good on the earth." Perhaps we can understand this phrase when we enter deeply into the spiritual life, but for most of us we would have a hard time accepting that "we have done nothing good on the earth." We need to pull this phrase apart. St. Basil is using poetry to help us get in a 'repentance' frame of mind.

More than a few years ago a popular psychology book hit the best sellers list entitled: *I'm O.K., You're O.K.* It was a serious attempt to make psychological insights accessible to average people. Most people who know the phrase have most likely never read the book, and the phrase itself took on a life of its own. In many ways it came to capture the modern world view; a perspective to fill the void that reflection on sin and repentance once occupied.

The central question is: "what does 'O.K.' mean?" If I'm O.K., why do I hate, why do I steal, why do I lie? And if you're O.K., why do you do the same? If everything is O.K., then why is there so much evil in the world? Why can't we stop the violence and injustice? Why does it take so much energy to undertake even the simplest forms of love and charity? If O.K. is to have any kind of meaning, it needs to be grounded in the very foundation of who we are, who God created us to be. It cannot be based on the standards of the fallen world around us. It has to be rooted in God's image within us.

Of course, the truth is that I am not O.K. and neither are you. We are both sick and desperately in need of a Physi-

cian. When Jesus invited himself to Zachæus' home, there were people who were scandalized, but his response was, "those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (Matthew 9:12). There are so many of us who are sick, and the first step toward healing is to recognize it and find a physician.

The next step in our struggle to grow spiritually is our desire not to injure others by our own misdeeds. This reasoning is expressed something like this: "Well, I may not be 'O.K.', but as long as I don't do anything to hurt anyone else, it's alright." This is a step forward because our concern turns toward the well-being of someone else. The focus moves away from us, and toward our neighbor. We realize that our actions *do* impact others and that we are indeed connected one with the other.

At first blush this approach seems a very appropriate way to handle complicated moral questions in a very diverse society such as ours. I'm sure that we've all invoked it at one time or another to justify questionable behavior. But as benign as this seems on the surface, the reality is something else. We may not be "hurting" anyone when we get drunk (unless, of course, we are driving and happen to kill someone, or get violent and beat our wife and children); or when we gamble (unless, our family needs that money to live on, or through our own example we are encouraging others to neglect their obligations); or when we are engaging in an extra-marital relationship between two consenting adults (unless, of course, you get pregnant and 'need' an abortion, or you begin to encourage younger, and less sophisticated persons into similar activities—like the multitudes of 'consenting' teens fathering and mothering children).

An important way to improve our behavior is to remind ourselves of our responsibility to those we love. The degree to which our concern centers on the 'other' becomes a measure for us of our maturity in Christ.

The early Christian Corinthian community had a number of moral questions they were confronting. Some of the members were using the "as long as it doesn't hurt anyone else" defense. One particular issue was whether a Christian could eat food that had been offered to pagan gods. It was a real dilemma for early Christians since they would oftentimes be invited to attend a party sponsored by their non-Christian friends or family and the food served had been 'blessed' at the pagan temple. How should they respond?

St. Paul says straight out that food is not the issue. As Christians they were free. His concern is how eating the food might affect the weaker brethren, who having recently come to Christianity, might be tempted to backslide. This is what his advice was: "For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed. But when you thus sin against members of your family, and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall." (1 Corinthians 8:10-13).

If we take our commitment not to hurt our neighbor seriously, then every aspect of both our personal and public life must reflect it. Humans are social beings, and we *do* have a real impact on one another. If we love, then this love will take us to the very limits of our person. It will break the bonds of division, uniting us with all those around us. Our

example is Christ our God, Christ our brother, who loved his Father and loved us so much that he died for us. (cf. John 3:16)

One other way we hear "I'm O.K." expressed is: "I'm not basically a bad person." People want to feel good about themselves. They want to feel valued. They want a sense of self-worth. While understandable, our sense of worth and



value are not produced by us. It is a gift given to us, first by God, but also by those who love us, especially our parents. The evidence compiled by developmental psychologist testifying to the need infants and toddlers have to be held, kissed, spoken to, and loved is overwhelming. Children who have been deprived of this love early in their lives have a difficult time recovering. Of all of the things we as family and society should be concerned with, it is the care of the smallest and weakest among us. Let me repeat: how we feel about ourselves is based on our having been loved. As Christians we say over and over again that God loves us — pay careful attention to the hundreds of times we call God "loving" in the prayers and petitions of our services.

So, it is not necessarily wrong to say, "I'm not basically a bad person." As

Christians we assert that we are created good by God, to do good. We are, if you will, 'programmed by our manufacturer' to do good. This is the reason we have deep and warm feelings when we perform some selfless charitable act. We have been true to ourselves. We have acted in accordance with our nature. We have responded in a God-like fashion reflecting the One who created us.

But most people are not speaking theologically or spiritually when they say that "they are not necessarily bad." They are trying to justify themselves, or rather, *we* are trying to justify *ourselves*. We want to say that we are O.K. The great spiritual danger is that if we accept our half-growth, we won't grow at all.

While we are 'good by nature,' our response to this goodness involves a *choice*. Unlike God who is good by nature, (that is, He is what He is), we must *choose* to be good. We vacillate and fluctuate between good and bad. It is a struggle to keep moving forward. When we are complacent we are loosing. How does the saying go? If you're not moving forward, you're going backward. In the end, we will be judged by our commitment to the struggle.

St. Theognostos writes: "We will not be punished or condemned in the age to come because we have sinned, since we were given a mutable and unstable nature. But we will be punished if, after sinning, we did not repent and turn from our evil ways to the Lord: for we have been given the power to repent, as well as the time in which to do so. Only through repentance shall we receive God's mercy."

Repentance means to turn around. If there were ever a time in human history for us to do some personal and collective turning, it's now. May you have a blessed and life-transforming Lent.

—Fr. Nicholas Apostola

## EXPLANATIONS FROM THE LENTEN TRIODION

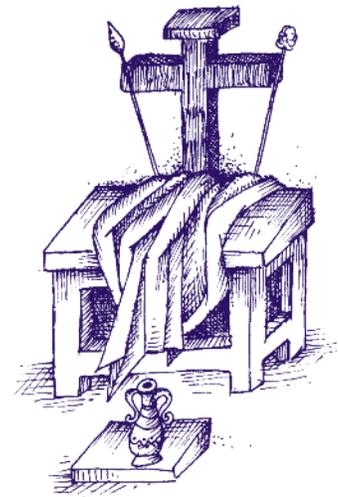
**THE SATURDAY BEFORE THE SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT.** On the day before the Sunday of the Last Judgment, and in close connection with the theme of this Sunday, there is a universal commemoration of the dead ‘from all the ages.’ (There are further commemorations of the dead on the second, third and fourth Saturdays in Lent.) Before we call to mind the Second Coming of Christ in the services on Sunday, we commend to God all those departed before us, who are now awaiting the Last Judgment. In the texts for this Saturday there is a strong sense of the continuing bond of mutual love that links together all the members of the Church, whether alive or dead. For those who believe in the risen Christ, death does not constitute an impassable barrier, since all are alive in Him; the departed are still our brethren, members of the same family with us, and so we are conscious of the need to pray insistently on their behalf.

**THE SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT.** The Sunday of the Last Judgment (Gospel reading: Matthew 25:31–46). The two past Sundays spoke to us of God’s patience and limitless compassion, of His readiness to accept every sinner who returns to Him. On this third Sunday, we are powerfully reminded of a complementary truth: no one is so patient and so merciful as God, but even He does not forgive those who do not repent. The God of love is also a God of righteousness, and when Christ comes again in glory, He will come as *our judge*. ‘Behold the goodness and severity of God’ (Rom. 11:22). Such is the message of Lent to each of us: turn back while there is still time, repent before the End comes. In the words of the Great Canon:



The end draws near, my soul, the end draws near;  
 Yet thou dost not care or make ready.  
 The time grows short, rise up: the Judge is at the door.  
 The days of our life pass swiftly, as a dream, as a flower.

This Sunday sets before us the ‘eschatological’ dimension of Lent: the Great Fast is a preparation for the Second Coming of the Saviour, for the eternal Passover in the Age to Come. (This is a theme that will be taken up in the first three days of Holy Week.) Nor is the judgment merely in the future. Here and now, each day and each hour, in hardening our hearts towards others and in failing to respond to the opportunities we are given of helping them, we are already passing judgment on ourselves.



### PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGIES

2018

Wednesday, February 21, 2018

St. Spyridon

Wednesday, February 28, 2018

St. George

Wednesday, March 7, 2018

St. Nicholas

Wednesday, March 14, 2018

St. Mary

Wednesday, March 21, 2018

St. Nicholas

Wednesday, March 28, 2018

Sts. Anagroi

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.