

# ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN MARCH 25, 2018

## THIS WEEK'S NEWS

**THE SIXTH WEEK OF GREAT LENT BEGINS TOMORROW.**

**BAKING ORDERS FOR EASTER** need to be in **TODAY!** Any questions, please contact **Betty Anderson** or **Chris Toda**. You can find the Baking Order Forms at the candle stand.

**THIS WEEK'S PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGY, ON Wednesday, March 28th, will be here at St. Nicholas.** Each Liturgy starts at 6:00 pm. We're responsible for preparing the "pot-luck" Lenten meal after the service; please speak with Presvytera Maria.

**VESPERS AND CONFESSION** 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)

**THE FULL PASCHA SCHEDULE** and announcements may be found attached to this Bulletin or as a separate sheet at the candles.

**THE GREAT FRIDAY CHILDREN'S RETREAT** for the younger children will be held on **Friday, April 6th starting at**

### GREETERS TEAM 4:

DIMITRI SAFFRON AND SEAN FAHEY

### COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP CREW D:

ILIANA & SEAN FAHEY,  
DIMITRI SAFFRON & MACLYNN TROJAN  
CHRISTOS & SPIRO SPYROU

**ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED**



## THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT — ST. MARY OF EGYPT THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE THEOTOKOS

**APOSTOLIC READING: HEBREWS 9:11-14 \* FOR THE FEAST: HEBREWS 2:11-18**  
**GOSPEL: MARK 10:32-45 (REQUEST OF SONS OF ZEBEDEE) \* FESTAL: LUKE 1:24-38**  
**TONE 1 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL 9**

**12:30 pm, and concluding with a celebration of Great Vespers at 2:00 pm.** Older children and teens are also welcome. There are many ways each can help. A sign-up sheet will be posted at the candle stand. Besides assisting with the children's lessons and activities, assistance is needed with snacks (no lunch) and other logistics. For additional information and offers to assist, **please contact Valarie Stamoulis.**

**DONATIONS FOR MID-NIGHT PASCHAL MEAL** are needed. Please see Presvytera Maria if you would like to contribute and assist with preparing and serving the meal. Please join with your fellow parishioners to celebrate the Resurrection and break-the-fast together. Everyone's welcomed!

## HOLY TRINITY NEWS

**HOLY TRINITY IS LOOKING FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS!** Share your talents and experience! While helping others, you will make new friends, learn new things and have a choice of assignments and have fun. Holy Trinity makes an effort to find or to create volunteer opportunities to match a person's interest. **Become a part of the volunteer team and make a difference!** Contact Serena at: 508-852-

### DATES TO REMEMBER

Wed, Mar 28 PreSanctified Lit at St. Nicholas 6pm  
Sun, April 1 Palm Sunday (Western Easter)  
April 1-8 HOLY WEEK, Check full schedule  
Sat, April 7 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry, 9am-noon  
Sun, April 8 GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA  
Sat, April 14 e-Recycling, 9am - 2pm  
Fri, April 20 Mustard Seed Meal, 5pm

**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 Metropolia of the Americas*

1000, ext. 350, or email shields@htnr.net. *"You cannot change the world, but you can change someone's world."*

Holy Trinity has job openings for **Cooks** (10-20 hrs/wk), **Staff Nurses** (RN/LPN), **CNA's**, and **Unit Manager**. For a full detailed description of job requirements and responsibilities, go to the website at: [www.htnr.net/employment-opportunities](http://www.htnr.net/employment-opportunities), or contact **Michele Williamson** at: mwilliamson@htnr.net, or call 508-852-1000, ext. 218.

### 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.



**S**ix months after John the Forerunner's conception, the Archangel Gabriel was sent by God to Nazareth, a town of Galilee, to Mary the Virgin, who had come from the Temple a mature maiden. According to the tradition handed down by the Fathers, she had been betrothed to Joseph four months. On coming to Joseph's house, the Archangel declared: "Rejoice, Full of Grace, the Lord is with you: blessed are you among women." After some consideration, and turmoil of soul, and fear because of this greeting, the Virgin, when she had finally obtained full assurance concerning God's unsearchable condescension and the ineffable dispensation that was to take place through her, and believing that all things are possible to the Most High, answered in humility: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it to me according to thy word." And at this, the Holy Spirit came upon her, and the power of the Most High overshadowed her all-blameless womb, and the Son and Word of God, Who existed before the ages, was conceived past speech and understanding, and became flesh in her immaculate body (Luke 1:26-38).

### A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

### **G**LORY TO YOU, CREATOR OF THE DAY AND THE NIGHT,

O you who awaken us from sleep that, as we begin another day, we may also welcome this feast. With joyful hearts, we celebrate the coming of the archangel Gabriel to the Theotokos to whisper to her the good news of the incarnation. We beseech you, Lord: Attend to our pleas and make us as willing to please you as the Theotokos was. By her intercessions, let our repentance and love give off a fragrance to perfume the whole world, bringing glory to you and hope to all your people.

For you are a kind and loving God, and we give you glory, Father, Son, and Holy 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

Vangush Lolo

Evan Sparages

Evan Stamoulis

Lynne Tonna

Evans Tsoules

# 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 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 prove their love. If we injure or offend someone, we try to find a way to repair what we've done, and it always involves a sacrifice.

Most early religions involved sacrifice of living things to their gods in order to repair and restore their relationship. 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 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 a 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 to Christ: "you are the offerer 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 (usually martyrs) have been placed. Knowing that they themselves would be



DRINK YE ALL OF IT

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. We celebrated here on earth the model,

the icon, 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 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 vi-

sion 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

## PALM SUNDAY LUNCHEON

Please plan on joining us for our annual **PALM SUNDAY LUNCHEON** following the Divine Liturgy on **Sunday, April 1, 2018**. We thought we'd keep this year's meal a simple affair. It is the custom to serve fish on Palm Sunday, so there will be traditional fish options. There will also be Lenten non-fish options for children and others. Serving will be a buffet, and we're asking for people to share their favorite lenten dish. Presvytera Maria is coordinating, and she can offer ideas of what you might bring. She is also underwriting all expenses in memory of her parents. **Reservations are strongly encouraged.** A sign-up sheet is located at the candles. We're asking for a free-will donation, the proceeds directed toward the IOCC. If you'd like to help or bring something, please e-mail or speak with Presvytera Maria ([mzm@apostola.org](mailto:mzm@apostola.org)) during coffee hour.

## 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 dis-

solute 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.



### 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) .....	\$75.00
(Resurrection) .....	\$75.00
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 .....	\$600.00
Decorations/Plants for Pascha .....	\$400.00
Easter Candy/Gifts for Children .....	\$100.00

*Please see Betty Anderson to make a donation*