

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN

FEBRUARY 16, 2020

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

THE SOUPER BOWL FUNDRAISER FOR IOCC by the youth of the parish is **TODAY, THIS Sunday**, February 16TH. Please be supportive of their dedication and effort, as well as generous to the good work of the IOCC.

SATURDAY OF THE SOULS/SĂMBĂTA MORTILOR is next **Saturday, February 22ND**. Liturgy begins at 10:00AM, preceded by Matins at 9:00AM. If you would like to prepare the memorial wheat, speak with Fr. Nick.

SNOW TUBING FOR YOUTH during Vacation week is this **Thursday, February 20TH, 11 AM**. For details, check out the flier or talk to **Valarie Stamoulis**: valarie.stamoulis@gmail.com

OUR NEXT MUSTARD SEED MEAL is Friday, February 21ST. We'll need help cooking and serving. **Prep** help needed (3 persons), 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.

THE BLESSING OF HOMES AT THEOPHANY. PLEASE NOTE we

GREETERS TEAM 1:
MACLYNN AND DIMITRI SAFFRON

COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP:
HELP NEEDED
PICK UP A CUP - LEND A HAND

ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED



THE THIRTY FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

APOSTOLIC READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 6:12-20 ☩ **GOSPEL:** LUKE 15:11-32
(THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON)

TONE 2 ☩ **MATINS GOSPEL 2**

will be scheduling House Blessings differently this year. Fr. Nick will be blessing houses through January and February. If you would like him to bless your home, please contact him either by e-mail (frnick@stnicholas church.org) or on his cell: 508-335-7378 in order to set up a time.

The latest issue of the Archdiocesan quarterly **CREDINȚA / THE FAITH** is available at the candles. **Pick one up and take it home!**

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

A MEMORIAL IS CELEBRATE TODAY for the servant of God Marjeta Kristo, fallen asleep three years. May the Lord rest her soul among the just!

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

Holy Trinity provides a comprehensive rehabilitation program of **Physical, Occupational and Speech/Language Therapies**. Call 508-852-1000 for more information.

DIVINE LITURGY is celebrated every Wednesday morning at 9:30AM. And please always keep Holy Trinity Nursing

DATES TO REMEMBER

Sat, Feb 15	Youth Souper Bowl Prep, 2PM
Sun, Feb 16	IOCC Souper Bowl Fundraiser
Thurs, Feb 20	Youth Snow Tubing, 11AM
Fri, Feb 21	Mustard Seed Meal, 5PM
Sat, Feb 22	Saturday of Souls
Sun, Feb 23	Meatfare Sunday
Sat, Feb 29	Staff Food Pantry 9AM-NOON
Sun, March 1	Cheesefare/Forgiveness Sunday
Mon, March 2	Great Lent begins
Sat, March 7	Staff Food Pantry 9AM-NOON
	Sun of Orthodoxy Vespers, 6PM
Sun, April 19	Great and Holy Pascha

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A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolis of the Americas

Home, it's staff, directors, residents, and families in your prayers.

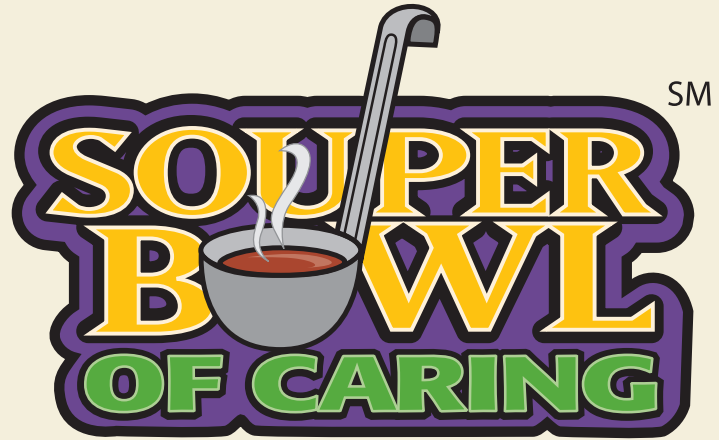
HOLY TRINITY is a non-profit skilled nursing and rehabilitation center and a project of the Council of Orthodox Churches of Central MA. Please keep Holy Trinity in your prayers and in your charitable plans. Contributions to the Treasured Generations Annual Fund can be made at www.htnr.net and volunteers are welcome to be a part of Holy Trinity by contacting: Dana Spinney, Activities Director, at 508-852-1000 or e-mail: dspinney@htnr.net.

**A PRAYER OF
FR. LAURENCE**

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

LEND AN EAR, LORD, and answer us, for we are poor and miserable! Look after our souls, for we are your friends; save your servants, O God, for we trust in you! Attend to our prayers, and show us a sign of your favor as we struggle for true repentance during this lenten season. Enable us to grow in the spirit of the prophets, to exercise the faith of the apostles, to win the nobility of the martyrs, to attain the wisdom of the fathers, and to imitate all the virtues of the saints, so that with them we may arrive at the paschal mysteries of your only Son.

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



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2020

Together we can beat hunger.

Help feed the hungry by collecting nonperishables for a local food bank, and collect money for IOCC to support our work around the globe. Together we can turn the biggest weekend in football into a super day of giving!

Learn more at
ioccc.org/souperbowl



INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES

P.O. Box 17398 | Baltimore, MD 21297-0429 | Toll-Free: 877.803.4622

AND, HE CAME TO HIMSELF

THIS is the second Sunday of the Tridion, the Sunday of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). By way of preparing us for Great Lent and assisting us on our journey, the holy fathers have given us this Gospel reading as another example of repentance. As with the parable of the Publican and Pharisee, we are asked to draw from this story hope and faith in God's love for us.

In one important respect this parable is very much like that of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). It has entered into our cultural imagination and vocabulary, even for those people who would be hard-pressed to know its scriptural context. The story of the Prodigal coming home remains a powerful image of repentance and forgiveness, of return and acceptance.

There are three important 'players' in this story: the father, the elder son, and the younger son. It is not an uncommon dynamic: sibling rivalry, youthful excesses, rebellion against parents. The elder is being groomed to be the heir. From the story we can see that he takes this role seriously. He is hardworking and diligent. The younger son is a 'lost soul.' He is every parent's sleepless night. He resents his brother and chafes at his father's love.

Out of the blue the younger son demands of his father his inheritance (v. 12). There is a subtle 'knife' here. The son wants his inheritance before his father is even dead. In a sense, he is cutting himself off from his father as though he were already dead. Nonetheless, his father grants his request and divides his wealth, giving his younger son what would have been his only after he were gone.

The younger son gets his 'freedom.' (Don't we often equate money with freedom?) Because he has the means, now



he can do whatever he wants. And he does so, that is until the money runs out. Having now found the limits to his 'freedom' the younger son has to find some way to support himself. The only work he can find is to feed pigs (v. 15); this would be no more palatable to him then, than it would be to us today. This was his 'down and out' moment. Feeling the pangs of hunger, and envious of what the pigs themselves were eating, "he came to himself" (v. 17).

I believe that the whole parable turns on this one phrase. Having been stripped of everything, but especially his dignity, the younger son finally can see himself clearly — he comes to himself. This is the first step toward real repentance, to see ourselves as we really are. It is also a dangerous moment, because it can lead us in either of two directions: to despair or to change.

Instead of despairing, this young man chooses to go back to his father and beg for forgiveness. We know he's sincere because he decides that he's not worthy of 'sonship.' Rather, he will ask his father simply to give him a job, to

treat him like a hired servant (v. 18-19).

The Lord says that his father, even when the young man "was still far off ... saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him" (v. 20). Dismissing the son's pleas concerning his sins, the father rejoices at his return and restores everything.

The elder brother, when he returns home from working in the fields, and finding that his profligate brother had come back, was understandably angry and resentful. He blows up at his father, furious at the easy way he welcomed back this brother. The resentment he felt from years of having been the faithful son, doing his father's will, always doing the "right thing," comes out in a torrent of anger and hurt (v. 28-30).

The father tries to comfort his eldest son, even as he tries to teach him compassion and love, and encourages him to accept his brother, once dead to them, and now alive (v. 32).

This story is so powerful because we know these people intimately. *We* are the prodigal who needs to turn back and be embraced and loved by our Heavenly Father. *We* are the hardworking older child in need of learning compassion, forgiveness, and how to welcome back those who want to change. *We too* are the parent who grieves at the foolish and wayward ways of our children, standing at the window, waiting for them to come home. In this one story we find ourselves, but most importantly, we also find our way back home, but only if we first come to ourselves.

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA

EXPLANATIONS FROM THE LENTEN TRIODION



THIS SUNDAY WE RECALL THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON. (Gospel reading: Luke 15:11–32). The parable of the Prodigal forms an exact ikon of repentance in its different stages. Sin is exile, enslavement to strangers, hunger. Repentance is the return from exile to our true home; it is to receive back our inheritance and freedom in the Father's house. But repentance implies action: 'I will rise up and go ...' (verse 18). To repent is not just to feel dissatisfied, but to take a decision and to act upon it. On this and the next two Sundays, after the solemn and joyful words of the Polyeleos at Mattins, we add the sorrowful verses of Psalm 136, 'By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept ...'. This Psalm of exile, sung by the children of Israel in their Babylonian captivity, has a special appropriateness on the Sunday of the Prodigal, when we call to mind our present exile in sin and make the resolve to return home.

NEXT SATURDAY IS CALLED the Saturday of the Dead. 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

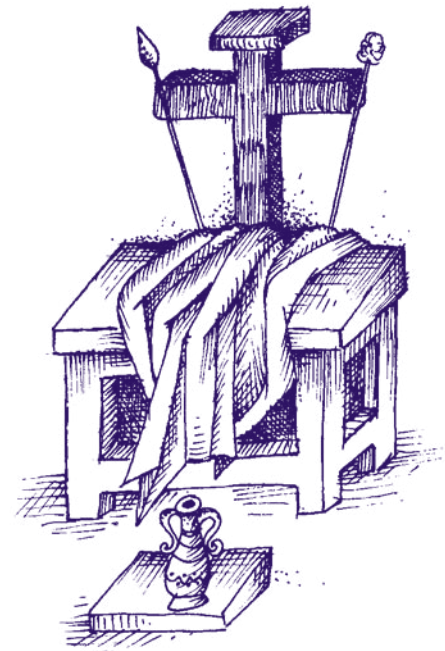
the dead on the second, third and fourth Saturdays in Lent.) Before we call to mind the Second Coming of Christ in the services on Sunday, we commend to God all those departed before us, who are now awaiting the Last Judgment. In the texts for this Saturday there is a strong sense of the continuing bond 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 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.



PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGIES

2020

Wednesday, March 4, 2020

St. Spyridon

Wednesday, March 11, 2020

St. Mary

Wednesday, March 18, 2020

St. George

Wednesday, March 25, 2020

St. Nicholas

Wednesday, April 1, 2020

Sts. Anagyroi

Wednesday, April 8, 2020

St. Nicholas

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.

THE RULES OF FASTING

Within this developed pattern of Lent, what precisely do the rules of fasting demand? Neither in ancient nor in modern times has there ever been exact uniformity, but most Orthodox authorities agree on the following rules:

- (1) During the week between the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee and that of the Prodigal Son, there is a general dispensation from all fasting. Meat and animal products may be eaten even on Wednesday and Friday.
- (2) In the following week, often termed the 'Week of Carnival', the usual fast is kept on Wednesday and Friday. Otherwise there is no special fasting.
- (3) In the Week before Lent, meat is forbidden, but eggs, cheese and other dairy products may be eaten on all days, including Wednesday and Friday.
- (4) On weekdays (Monday to Friday inclusive) during the seven weeks of Lent, there are restrictions both on the number of meals taken daily and on the types of food permitted; but when a meal is allowed, there is no fixed limitation on the quantity of food to be eaten.
 - (a) On weekdays in the first week, fasting is particularly severe. According to the strict observance, in the course of the five initial days of Lent, only two meals are eaten, one on Wednesday and the other on Friday, in both cases after the Liturgy of the Presanctified. On the other three days, those who have the strength are encouraged to keep an absolute fast; those for whom this proves impracticable may eat on Tuesday and Thursday (but not, if possible, on Monday), in the evening after Vespers, when they may take bread and water, or perhaps tea or fruit-juice, but not a cooked meal. It should be added at once that in practice today these rules are commonly relaxed. At the meals on Wednesday and Friday xerophagy is prescribed. Literally this means 'dry eating'. Strictly interpreted, it signifies that we may eat only vegetables cooked with water and salt, and also such things as fruit, nuts, bread and honey. In practice, octopus and shell-fish are also allowed on days of xerophagy; likewise vegetable margarine and corn or other vegetable

oil, not made from olives. But the following categories of food are definitely excluded:

- (i) meat;
 - (ii) animal products (cheese, milk, butter, eggs, lard, dripping);
 - (iii) fish (i.e. fish with backbones);
 - (iv) oil (i.e. olive oil) and wine (i.e. all alcoholic drinks).
- (b) On weekdays (Monday to Friday inclusive) in the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth weeks, one meal a day is permitted, to be taken in the afternoon following Vespers, and at this one meal xerophagy is to be observed.
- (c) Holy Week. On the first three days there is one meal each day, with xerophagy; but some try to keep a complete fast on these days, or else they eat only uncooked food, as on the opening days of the first week.

On Holy Thursday one meal is eaten, with wine and oil (i.e. olive oil).

On Great Friday those who have the strength follow the practice of the early Church and keep a total fast. Those unable to do this may eat bread, with a little water, tea or fruit-juice, but not until sunset, or at any rate not until after the veneration of the Epitaphion at Vespers.

On Holy Saturday there is in principle no meal, since according to the ancient practice after the end of the Liturgy of St. Basil the faithful remained in church for the reading of the Acts of the Apostles, and for their sustenance were given a little bread and dried fruit, with a cup of wine. If, as usually happens now, they return home for a meal, they may use wine but not oil; for on this one Saturday, alone among the Saturdays of the year, olive oil is not permitted.

The rule of xerophagy is relaxed on the following days:

- (1) On Saturdays and Sundays in Lent, with the exception of Holy Saturday, two main meals may be taken in the usual way, around mid-day and in the evening, with wine and olive oil; but meat, animal products and fish are not allowed.
- (2) On the Feast of the Annunciation (25 March) and Palm Sunday, fish is permitted as well as wine and oil, but meat and animal products are not allowed. If the Feast of the Annunciation falls on the first four days of Holy Week, wine and oil are permitted but not fish. If it falls on

Great Friday or Holy Saturday, wine is permitted, but not fish or oil.

- (3) Wine and oil are permitted on the following days, if they fall on a weekday in the second, third, fourth, fifth or sixth week:
 - First and Second Finding of the Head of St. John the Baptist (24 February)
 - Holy Forty Martyrs of Sebaste (9 March)
 - Forefeast of the Annunciation (24 March)
 - Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel (26 March)
 - Patronal festival of the Church or Monastery
- (4) Wine and oil are also allowed on Wednesday and Thursday in the fifth week, because of the vigil for the Great Canon. Wine is allowed—and, according to some authorities, oil as well—on Friday in the same week, because of the vigil for the Akathistos Hymn.

It has always been held that these rules of fasting should be relaxed in the case of anyone elderly or in poor health. In present-day practice, even for those in good health, the full strictness of the fast is usually mitigated. Only a few Orthodox today attempt to keep a total fast on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday in the first week, or on the first three days in Holy Week. On weekdays—except, perhaps, during the first week or Holy Week—it is now common to eat two cooked meals daily instead of one. From the second until the sixth week, many Orthodox use wine, and perhaps oil also, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and less commonly on Mondays as well. Permission is often given to eat fish in these weeks. Personal factors need to be taken into account, as for example the situation of an isolated Orthodox living in the same household as non-Orthodox, or obliged to take meals in a factory or school canteen. In cases of uncertainty each should seek the advice of his or her spiritual father. At all times it is essential to bear in mind that 'you are not under the law but under grace' (Rom. 6:14), and that 'the letter kills, but the spirit gives life' (2 Cor. 3:6). The rules of fasting, while they need to be taken seriously, are not to be interpreted with dour and pedantic legalism; 'for the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (Rom. 14:17).

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K. Ware with Mother Mary (Trans.), *The Lenten Triodion* (pp. 35–37). South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press.