

# ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN MARCH 8, 2020

## THIS WEEK'S NEWS

**GREAT LENT** began this past Monday. Tomorrow marks the start of the second week of Lent.

**THE WEDNESDAY PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGY** this Wednesday, March 11th will be held at St. Mary's Assumption on Salisbury Street. Set aside your Wednesday evenings and use this as one way to spiritually prepare for Pascha. 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.

**PITA BAKING.** There will be a Pita Baking Session, **THIS Thursday, February 27th, 9:00 AM to NOON.** **Questions?** talk to **Chris Toda**, 508-832-6271 or **Betty Anderson**, 508-756-4848. Also, let them know if you'll be coming. **Remember: There's a job for everyone!**

**HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH DANIEL** has addressed a pastoral message to the faithful concerning **faith and the reception of Holy Communion** in light of the growing epidemic caused by the **Novel Coronavirus**. Copies are available at the candles in both English and Romanian.

**AS THE 2020 CENSUS** approaches, **His Eminence Metropolitan Nicolae** has

**GREETERS TEAM 4:**  
V. GERALD BELBA & ROSE SALERNO

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

**ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED**



**THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY** ☩ **FIRST SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT**  
**APOSTOLIC READING: HEBREWS 11:24-26; 32-40** ☩ **GOSPEL: JOHN 1:43-51**  
**(JESUS CALLS PHILIP AND NATHANAE)**  
**TONE 5** ☩ **MATINS GOSPEL 5**

asked that we distribute this flier to emphasize the importance of participating in it. Copies are available at the candles in both English and Romanian.

**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 April 4th.

**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)

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

**TODAY'S COFFEE HOUR** is sponsored by the **Tonna family** in memory of their mother **Florica Tonna**.

## COMMUNITY NEWS

**THE MIRACULOUS KARDIOTISSA** (Tender Heart) Icon, and the **EIKONA**

### DATES TO REMEMBER

Mon, March 2	Great Lent began
Sat, March 7	Staff Food Pantry 9AM-NOON Sun of Orthodoxy Vespers, 6PM
Wed, March 11	PreSanctified, St. Mary, 6PM
Thurs, Mar 12	Pita Baking, 9am-noon
Wed, March 18	PreSanctified, St. George, 6PM
Wed, March 25	Annunciation Lit., St. Nicholas, 6PM
Wed, April 1	PreSanctified, Sts. Anargyroi, 6PM
Wed, April 8	PreSanctified, St. Nicholas, 6PM
Sun, April 19	Great and Holy Pascha

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*A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Americas*

Byzantine Ensemble will be at the Sts. Constantine and Helen Church on Webster next weekend, Friday through Sunday, March 13-14. A flier with the many different Services and lectures is available at the candles.

**PSALTIKON**, will be offering a free concert of Byzantine hymns at St. Spyridon Cathedral, Thursday, March 19TH at 7:00PM. Check the flier on the Bulletin Board

## HOLY TRINITY NEWS

**THE MARCH ISSUE** of the Holy Trinity Times may be downloaded at: [www.htnr.net](http://www.htnr.net). Click on "Newsletter." Also, subscribe to the Holy Trinity e-mail list. And, 'like' Holy Trinity on Facebook and Twitter.

**JOB OPENING:** Dietary Cook & Aid, 30 hours. Contact Dietary Director, Maria Ruiz at 508-852-1000 ext. 220.

Holy Trinity provides a comprehensive rehabilitation program of **Physical, Occupational and Speech/Language Therapies**. For info call: 508-852-1000.

**SEND AN E-CARD** to your loved one and put a smile on their face! Visit our website at [www.htnr.net/e-cards](http://www.htnr.net/e-cards) and submit a message and it will be handwritten and delivered daily to Residents! The little things in life make the biggest difference!

**DIVINE LITURGY** is celebrated every Wednesday morning at 9:30AM. And please always keep Holy Trinity Nursing Home, it's staff, directors, residents, and families in your prayers. And remember: you can always visit!

**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

### 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.



### A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

**G**LORY TO YOU, O Father, for sending us your only Son to be our salvation! Glory to you, O Christ, for dying on the cross to give us life! Glory to you, O Holy Spirit, for initiating and perfecting the mystery of our salvation! We again ask you to bring our lenten observances to fruition. Enable us to internalize our external practices, and convert us to the truth in spite of us, showing us how to think and live correctly. Help us to hold onto confidence and endurance, so that, by doing your will, we may reap the rewards you promise. And, as we rejoice in this season of grace, enable us to remain focused on the paschal mysteries, so that our joy may be completed by seeing them fulfilled in our lives.

For you are indeed our God, and we give you glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.



may be made at: [www.htnr.net](http://www.htnr.net). Volunteers are welcomed and needed. Contact: Dana Spinney, Activities Director, at 508-852-1000 or e-mail: [dspinney@htnr.net](mailto:dspinney@htnr.net).

# MOSES FASTED AND SAW GOD

**T**HE EPISTLE lesson for this first Sunday of Lent is taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews (11:24-26; 32-40). In chapter eleven of Hebrews St. Paul speaks of the meaning of faith and opens with his famous definition: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). He then gives us examples of people who down through the centuries, while not seeing and realizing the promise given them by God, nevertheless continued to persevere. Some of the verses from today's reading (v. 32-40) are also read on the Sunday before Christmas to remind us of how God's promise was realized in the birth of the Messiah. We read these words again, as we begin the Fast, to remind ourselves of the faith of all of those holy people — those saints — who persevered, never faltering in that faith in the promise.

What St. Paul says in Hebrews bears directly on what we celebrate this first Sunday of Lent. We remember how after a long civil struggle, holy images — icons — were restored in the life and worship of the Church. And while the struggle centered around painted or mosaic images of our Lord, his mother, and the other saints, the issue went much deeper than a controversy over artwork. The question was, and continues to be, how does the invisible God make Himself known in our world?

The first and most important way God is visible in the world is in each of us. We believe that every human being is created in the image of God (cf. Genesis 1:26-27). I think it is not too much to say we are God's living icons, or, at the very least, we are called to be that. This verse of Genesis says that God created us in His image and likeness. Reflecting on these two words, theologians have come to see a growth dynamic between the image of God "burned" into our very being, and the day-to-day way we strive to make that image within us real and visible. The men and women we call "holy" are those who through trial and

adversity kept their faith with God. When we look at them, we see God. More importantly, when a holy person looks at us, they too see God, in spite of all of our imperfections and doubts — the ways we struggle with our faith.

Today the iconoclast struggle takes a different form. Many fellow Christians have difficulty understanding the role of saints. The most straight-forward way to understand why we honor the saints is that these holy people — some of whom we recognize and know, but vastly more whom we do not know and are known only by God — are given to us as examples and role models. In a world where celebrities are idolized and discarded, we are in serious need of people who we can trust and follow.

The beauty of the saints is that they are people like us; people created in God's image who struggled to make their likeness match God's design. Some speak to us more directly because we can recognize our own struggle in the difficulties they endured. Others we simply admire for their total commitment to God and neighbor. They reveal God in a real and actual way. They worked and work in the world, making His presence known.

In this eleventh chapter St. Paul cites many such examples of persons of faith, but he highlights two in particular: Abraham and Moses. The verses we read before Christmas featured Abraham, because he was Jesus' very-great-grandfather, through Mary. In the first three verses of today's reading St. Paul concentrates on Moses.

We begin Lent by remembering Moses first and foremost because he is a "type" or image of Christ. Both were liberators. Moses foreshadowed the freedom Christ would bring. As Moses freed the children of Israel from slavery to Pharaoh and Egypt, Jesus, our Savior, freed us from slavery to Satan and death. As Moses led his people through the waters of the Red Sea changing them from slaves to free persons, our Lord

changes us from mortal to immortal in the waters of Baptism. As Moses renounced his royal status, embracing the low-status of his people, Christ left the heights of heaven to be one with us.

This is how St. Paul puts it: "By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called a son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered abuse suffered for the Christ to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to the reward" (v. 24-26).

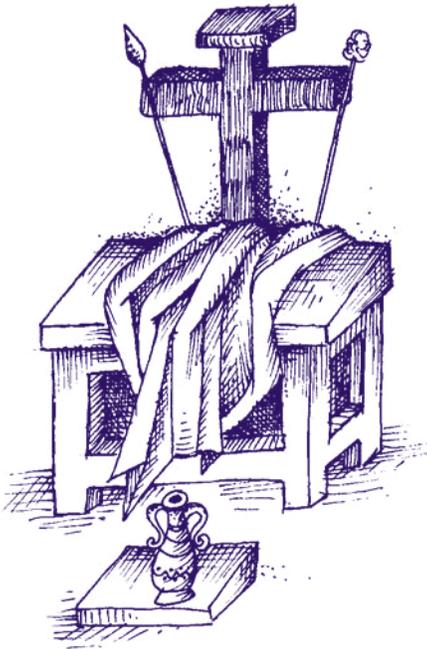
Moses renounces the comfort of Pharaoh's house, choosing to "share ill-treatment with the people of God." In Philippians St. Paul speaks of how Christ identified himself with us, his people, by emptying himself. He took on the form of a servant. Even though he was in the form of God, he did not cling to his equality with God. He became humble and obedient, even to the point of death (cf. Philippians 2:6-8).

In Moses we see a preview of what God was planning for us in Jesus Christ. In Moses' faith we see what God intends for each one of us, if we too share his faith. But lest we think that this faith Moses had was easy for him, pick up your Bible and read the Book of Exodus. It's not long. In it you will read not only of the confrontation with Pharaoh, but also the struggles Moses had with his brother Aaron, the whining of the Israelites, and his own temptations and sins. Throughout, he persevered and was rewarded by God.

In a hymn we sang last Sunday during Matins we heard: "Moses fasted for forty days and saw God." We are encouraged to follow his example, especially during Lent, so that we too might see Christ, radiant and risen.

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA

## EXPLANATIONS FROM THE LENTEN TRIODION



### 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

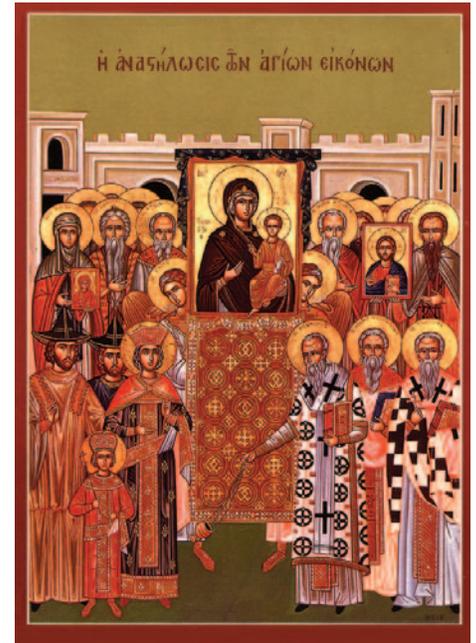
Wednesday, April 8, 2020

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 SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY.** The sense of joy and thanksgiving, already evident on the Saturday of St. Theodore, is still more apparent on the first Sunday in Lent, when we celebrate the Triumph of Orthodoxy. On this day the Church commemorates the final ending of the Iconoclast controversy and the definitive restoration of the holy ikons to the churches by the Empress Theodora, acting as regent for her young son Michael III. This took place on the first Sunday in Lent, 11 March 843. There is, however, not only a historical link between the first Sunday and the restoration of the ikons but also, as in the case of St. Theodore, a spiritual affinity. If Orthodoxy triumphed in the epoch of the Iconoclast controversy, this was because so many of the faithful were prepared to undergo exile, torture, and even death, for the sake of the truth. The Feast of Orthodoxy is above all a celebration in honour of the martyrs and confessors who struggled and suffered for the faith: hence its appropriateness for the season of Lent, when we are striving to imitate the martyrs by means of our ascetic self-denial. The fixing of the Triumph of Orthodoxy on the first Sunday is therefore much more than the result of some chance historical conjunction.

The Triodion gives the text of a special 'Office of Orthodoxy', which is held at the end of Mattins or, more commonly, at the end of the Divine Liturgy on this Sunday. The Office celebrates not only the restoration of the holy ikons but, more generally, the victory of the true faith over all heresies and errors. A procession is made with the holy ikons, and after this extracts are read from the synodical decree of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (787). Then sixty



anathemas are pronounced against various heretics dating from the third to the fourteenth century; 'Eternal Memory' is sung in honour of the emperors, patriarchs and fathers who defended the Orthodox faith; and 'Many Years' is proclaimed in honour of our present rulers and bishops. Unfortunately in many parts of the Orthodox Church today this impressive service has fallen into disuse; elsewhere it is performed in a greatly abbreviated form.

Before the Triumph of Orthodoxy came to be celebrated on the first Sunday, there was on this day a commemoration of Moses, Aaron, Samuel and the prophets. Traces of this more ancient observance can still be seen in the choice of Epistle reading at the Liturgy (Hebrews 11:24-6, 32-40), and in the Alleluia verse appointed before the Gospel: 'Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among them that call upon His Name'.

# 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.