

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN MARCH 15, 2020

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

GREAT LENT has begun. Tomorrow marks the start of the third week of Lent.

THE WEDNESDAY PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGY this Wednesday, March 18th will be held at St. George Cathedral on Anna 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.

NEXT SUNDAY IS THE VENERATION OF THE PRECIOUS CROSS. If you'd like to donate toward the flowers, please speak with **Tim Rucho**.

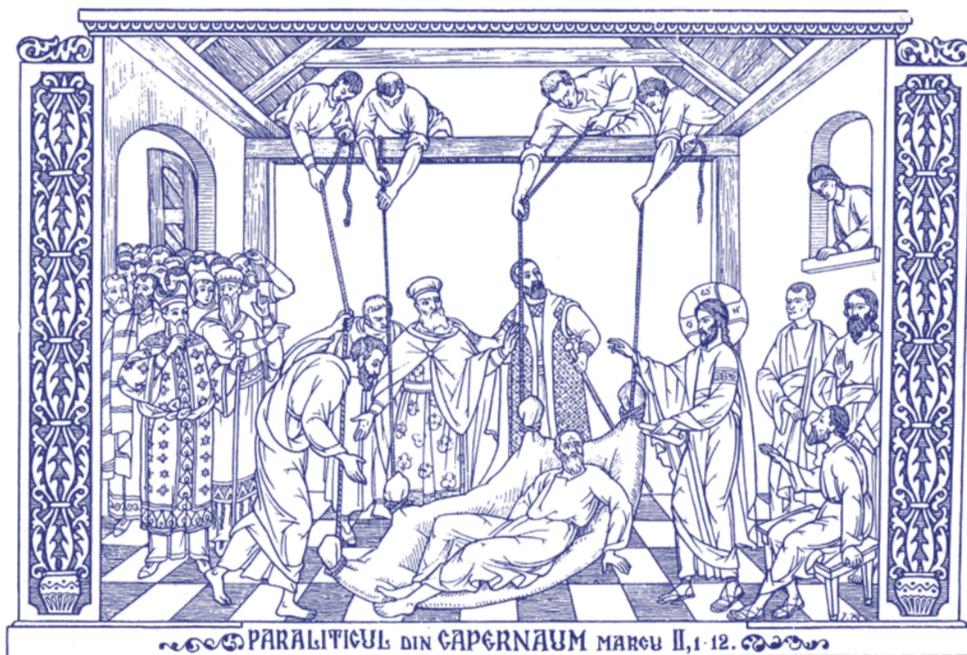
BAKING ORDERS FOR EASTER need to be in by **April 1st** If you have family or friends who would like pitas, pastry, or pastry platters for the holiday, please make sure you get the orders in on time! **Questions?** talk to **Chris Toda**, 508-832-6271 or **Betty Anderson**, 508-756-4848.

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**. Check the Patriarchates website: <https://basilica.ro/>

GREETERS TEAM 1:
MACLYNN AND DIMITRI SAFFRON

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

ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED



PARALITICUL DIN CAPERNAUM MARCU II, 1-12.

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT

APOSTOLIC READING: HEBREWS 1:10-2:3 ⊕ GOSPEL: MARK 2:1-12
(JESUS HEALS THE PARALYTIC IN CAPERNAUM ⊕ ST. GREGORY PALAMAS)
TONE 6 ⊕ MATINS GOSPEL 6

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

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 PSALTIKON CONCERT, that was to be held at St. Spyridon Cathedral, **Thursday, March 19th** has been canceled.

TODAY'S COFFEE HOUR is sponsored by **Carol Soter and family** in memory of her son Gary.

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

HOLY TRINITY IMPLEMENTS PROCEDURES AND PRECAUTIONS TO ADDRESS COVID-19. Along with other skilled nursing facilities in the Commonwealth, Holy Trinity has adopted a number of measures to safeguard the health and well being of its residents and visitors. In this, Holy Trinity is following the directives of both state and federal public health officials. There are currently no confirmed or suspected cases at our facility. The situ-

DATES TO REMEMBER

Mon, March 2	Great Lent began
Wed, March 18	PreSanctified, St. George, 6PM
Wed, March 25	Annunciation Lit., St. Nicholas, 6PM
Wed, April 1	PreSanctified, Sts. Anargyroi, 6PM
Sat, April 4	Staff Food Pantry 9AM-NOON e-Recycling, 9AM-2PM
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

ation is being carefully monitored, and along with local, state, and federal officials, Holy Trinity is cooperating in developing strategies to be both prepared and to prevent the spread of the virus. Among other things, this does mean there will be strict limits on outside visitors.

For the most current information on the situation at Holy Trinity, check the website at: www.htnr.net or the Facebook page. You will also find links to helpful advice and guidelines from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *The staff of Holy Trinity stands ready to provide the information and care you need, in order to ensure that all the members of community stay safe and healthy.*

THE MARCH ISSUE of the *Holy Trinity Times* may be downloaded at: 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.

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 may be made at: www.htnr.net. Volun-

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.



teers are welcomed and needed. Contact: Dana Spinney, Activities Director, at 508-852-1000 or e-mail: dspinney@htnr.net.

A PRAYER FOR THE CESSATION OF THE NOVEL CORONA VIRUS EPIDEMIC

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

LORD OUR GOD, You who are rich in mercy, and with careful wisdom direct our lives, listen to our prayer, receive our repentance for our sins, bring an end to this new infectious disease, this new epidemic, just as you averted the punishment of your people in the time of David the King. You who are the Doctor of our souls and bodies, grant restored health to those who have been seized by this illness, raising them from their bed of suffering, so that they might glorify You, Merciful Savior, and to those who are healthy keep them from every sickness. By your grace, Lord, bless, strengthen, and preserve, all those who out of love and sacrifice care for the sick, either in their homes or in the hospitals. Remove all sickness and suffering from your people, and teach us to value life and health as gifts from You. Give us Your peace, O God, and fill our hearts with unflinching faith in Your protection, hope in Your help, and love for You and our neighbor.

For Yours it is to have mercy on us and save us, O our God, and to You we give glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

CAN WE NEGLECT SO GREAT A SALVATION?

DURING LENT THE APOSTOLIC READINGS are taken largely from the Letter to the Hebrews. The overarching theme of Hebrews is that Jesus, God's Son, has become the High Priest of the New Covenant at the heavenly altar. God's new sanctuary is not on earth, but above. The Old Law is superseded by the New. The ritual of animal sacrifices has given way to the spiritual sacrifice, through the Self-Sacrifice of Jesus. By reading and studying this Letter we are given deeper insights into the way in which God had been leading humanity, and especially His chosen people, to understand the new relationship with Him to which we all are called.

Today's reading begins at Hebrews 1:10 and ends at 2:3. The theme in the first chapter is to remind the reader who this Jesus is. He is not an angel or other created being; he is the "Son, whom [God] appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world" (v. 2). It seems that the community to which this Letter is addressed were back-sliding in their faith in Jesus. Most scholars think this was a community of Jewish converts. Some even think the audience might have been a community of priests of the Old Covenant. The writer of this Letter wants to remind them that this Jesus "reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power" (v. 3), that is to say: he is God.

I need to say a word about the authorship of Hebrews. Even from the first Christian centuries people who studied the Bible noticed differences in style and vocabulary between Letters we know St. Paul wrote and the Letter to the Hebrews. Various reasons were offered. St. Clement believed that he had written it in Hebrew and then had St. Luke translate it into Greek. Origen believed that the thinking was St. Paul's, but the hand probably belonged to one of his disciples. This does not diminish the author-

ity of the Letter — God forbid! Rather, it simply highlights the distinct challenges that the Letter to the Hebrews presents for us modern readers. The other Letters of St. Paul are primarily pastoral, even while being replete with deep theology and profound spirituality. Hebrews has this same level of theology and spirituality while taking up the question of Old Testament worship and how it changed with the self-sacrifice of the Son of God. For our purposes here, we will assume that St. Paul is the author.

In the first chapter St. Paul cites a number of Old Testament texts that were generally assumed to refer to the Messiah. The way he uses these verses have the form of hymns and poems that were written to describe the enthronement of kings in the ancient Near East, especially when these kings declared themselves to also be gods. St. Paul is telling the Hebrews that Jesus is not just a man, nor is he an angel. All created things, human or angelic, are mutable and changeable. The Son is not. So when he speaks of the Son as sitting down "at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (v. 3), he is emphasizing that Jesus has "become as much superior to the angels as the name [i.e. God's Son] he has obtained is more excellent than theirs" (v. 4).

St. Paul has taken the verses that begin today's reading (v. 10-12) from Psalm 102: "In the beginning, Lord, you founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like clothing; like a cloak you will roll them up, and like clothing they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will never end." The Psalmist directs these words to God. St. Paul uses them to describe Jesus, the eternal Son of God.

To emphasize this, he reminds us of the words of Psalm 110: "But to which of the angels has he ever said, 'Sit at my

right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet'" (v. 13)?

The angels are the servants of the Son. "Are not all angels spirits in the divine service, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation" (v. 14)? Notice, they are sent not only to serve the Son, but they are also "sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation." This means us. God has sent us prophets and angels. Now he sends us His Son.

"Therefore we must pay greater attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the message declared through angels was valid, and every transgression or disobedience received a just penalty, how can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? It was declared at first through the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him" (v. 2:1-3).

Brothers and sisters, this is our central challenge: to pay attention! How many times do we hear in the Liturgy, "Let us be attentive!?" This is just a polite way of saying: "Pay Attention!" St. Paul reminds us of punishments meted out to those who ignored the angels. Implicit is the consequences that await us if we ignore the Son of God who lived among us.

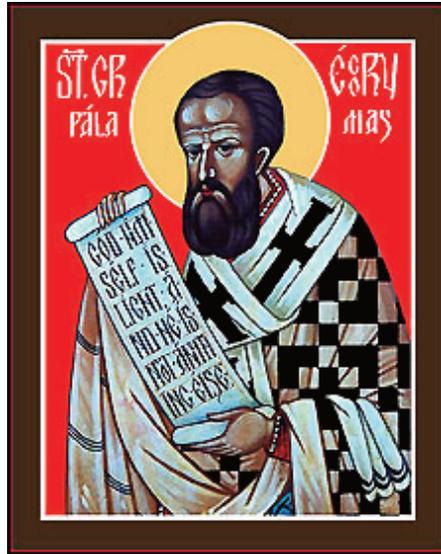
"Can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" God is not rescuing us from famine and fire, sword and invasion. He is saving us from death. He is offering us eternal life.

God spoke to us directly — in and through His Son. We know this because those who saw him and lived with him told us; they testified to it not only in word, but also with their very lives. Throughout the centuries the truth of his word and their testimony has enlivened countless believers. May God give us the strength of will to pay attention, and not to neglect our salvation.

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA

ST. GREGORY PALAMAS

This divine Father, who was from Asia Minor, was from childhood reared in the royal court of Constantinople, where he was instructed in both religious and secular wisdom. Later, while still a youth, he left the imperial court and struggled in asceticism on Mount Athos, and in the Skete at Beroea. He spent some time in Thessalonica being treated for an illness that came from his harsh manner of life. He was present in Constantinople at the Council that was convened in 1341 against Barlaam of Calabria, and at the Council of 1347 against Acindynus, who was of like mind with Barlaam; Barlaam and Acindynus claimed that the grace of God is created. At both these Councils, the Saint contended courageously for the true dogmas of the Church of Christ, teaching in particular that divine grace is not created, but is the uncreated energies of God which are poured forth throughout creation: otherwise it would



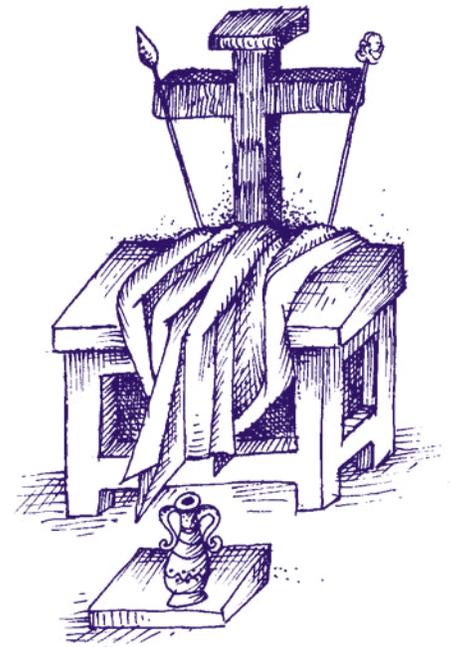
be impossible, if grace were created, for man to have genuine communion with the uncreated God. In 1347 he was appointed Metropolitan of Thessalonica. He tended his flock in an apostolic manner for some twelve years, and wrote many books and treatises on the most exalted doctrines of our Faith; and having lived for a total of sixty-three years, he reposed in the Lord in 1359.

EXPLANATIONS FROM THE LENTEN TRIODION

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT. Since 1368 this Sunday has been dedicated to the memory of St. Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica (1296–1359). This commemoration forms a continuation of the feast celebrated on the previous Sunday: St. Gregory's victory over Barlaam, Akindynos and the other heretics of his time is seen as a renewed Triumph of Orthodoxy. In the earlier period there was on this day a commemoration of the Great Martyr Polycarp of Smyrna (+ c. 155), whose feast was transferred from the fixed calendar (23 February). This commemoration, like that of St. Theodore, underlined the connection between Lenten asceticism and the martyr's vocation. The second Sunday also takes up the



theme of the Prodigal Son as a model of repentance, with the first of the two Canons at Mattins being devoted to this parable.



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.