

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN APRIL 12, 2020

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

HOLY WEEK SERVICES. We'll largely be keeping the same schedule of services as we usually celebration. There will be some slight modifications, but His Eminence Metropolitan Nicolae has asked everyone to maintain the cycle of services as close to usual as we can. Go to the parish website: www.stnicholaschurch.org, to download the full schedule. We'll see each other on-line.

WE'RE LIVE-STREAMING THE SERVICES DURING HOLY WEEK. A few things you should keep in mind. **EVERYONE** is streaming these days. The traffic you used to see on your commute is now on your computer. In order to access the Live-Streaming, click on the link below the icon at the parish website: www.stnicholaschurch.org. **HOWEVER**, if you encounter any issues during a stream, please be patient as we will be working behind the scenes to get the stream operational again as soon as possible. **THEN**, keep checking the website link frequently, but **DON'T** use the **BACK** button in the browser. (It's a technical issue.) Either **open up a new tab** OR **use a different browser** you might have. Evan will try to keep our **Facebook** page updated with status. (Use the quiet moment to pray that God inspire him!)

STEWARDSHIP AND GIVING. This Covid-19 epidemic is effecting and affecting us in many ways. The first and most obvious way is the possibility that we and our loved ones might become sick. Another is the "social" distance that we must observe, in order to pro-



THE ENTRANCE OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM
EPISTLE: PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9 ☩ GOSPEL: JOHN 12:1-18
(EVERYTHING ACCORDING TO THE FEAST)

tect those around us and ourselves. And then there's the economic effect. Many, if not most of us, are much more economically insecure than we were just a few days ago. We'd like you to keep **two important points** in mind. **If you need help**, whatever it might be, including financial assistance, please contact Fr. Nick. We'll find a way to assist you. And second, as you are able, please remember that **the Church is also in the same situation**. There are on-going expenses, as well as the need to help those in need. As you are able, please continue to send what stewardship offering that you feel comfortable with. You may mail it to the Church address. You may also give on-line, on the parish website. That address is: <https://www.myowngiving.com/Default.aspx?cid=8544>

WE HAVE ESTABLISHED A COVID FUND. There are people both in our parish and who come to the Church who

are in need. There will very likely be even more as this situation continues. We are asking the faithful in our parish **WHO ARE ABLE**, to perhaps contribute. We've also set up a small committee, headed by Fr. Nick, to administer this fund, and distribute what we're able to give as equitably as possible. **May God keep us all!**

HEROS AND FIRST RESPONDERS. This is such a difficult time, and each of us is being asked to stretch ourselves to the limit. Given that this is first and foremost a medical crisis, our minds correctly go to the doctors, nurses, and staff who are putting themselves and their families at risk to minister to the

DATES TO REMEMBER

Mon, March 2 Great Lent began
Sat, April 4 Staff Food Pantry 9AM-NOON
Sun, April 19 Great and Holy Pascha

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A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Americas



afflicted. But our hearts and our prayers should also be directed to the people who continue to go to work, doing their job. The supermarkets are open and stocked. So are the hardware shops. People are cooking and delivering take-out. The list could keep going. Let's think about this. Each is doing their job, what they were asked to do before it became something heroic. Many, if not most, need the money to live. Yet still, in spite of whatever concern, and yes, fear, they might have, they do what they need to do to keep our society functioning. Don't forget to lift up a prayer for them, and their families, and their well-being

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

HOLY TRINITY has set up a [dedicated web page](https://www.htnr.net/coronavirus) on its site to address all of the questions and changing information regarding the situation, especially with the COVID-19 virus. We urge all families and other interested persons to go directly to the site — <https://www.htnr.net/coronavirus> — for answers to the many questions they might have. There are also links and phone numbers to use if one would like more specific information.

We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your kindness and generosity during this difficult time, and for thinking about those that need our help. God Bless you and please stay healthy!

BAKING ORDERS FOR EASTER. Yes, we are taking orders and they need to be in **NOW!** 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, or to place an order: talk to Chris Toda: 508-832-6271 or Betty Anderson: 508-756-4848.**



THE LORD IS NEAR

WE ARE ENTERING JERUSALEM WITH THE LORD TODAY. It is Palm Sunday. For everyone except Jesus, this is a climatic event. I say everyone except Jesus because no one else except he understands what will eventually take place. In last Sunday's Gospel lesson we heard the disciples continue to be oblivious to the true nature of our Lord's presence on earth. They will continue to not understand until after the Resurrection.

The Epistle lesson for today is taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians 4:4-9. This is a remarkably beautiful letter on many levels. It is gentle, poetic and generous. Paul has an affection for this community, and this community has been generous and affectionate toward him. On a number of occasions they have sent him assistance when he was in need. He says that he is writing this letter from prison; many think this was when he was imprisoned in Ephesus. Regardless from which prison he was writing, the important point is that St. Paul doesn't offer advice out of intellectual speculation. He speaks from the experience of suffering, and this gives his words power.

Listen to what he writes from prison: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (v. 5-6).

In this one sentence he twice tells the Philippians to "Rejoice." He is suffering and the Philippians are themselves suffering, but he nonetheless tells them to rejoice. I heard someone say that the difference between happiness and joy is that happiness means doing what you want, and joy is doing what God wants. Everyone around us (and, this everyone includes ourselves), is searching for happiness by fulfilling their own desires. We are living through a time when we are

able to see what the "happiness" that fulfilling our desires produces. Many of us are suffering because of it, while others continue to profit on the suffering of others. It is not a pretty sight. Moreover, no one seems very happy. That we are living to see this terrible principle at work is in one sense a gift from God. If we take the lesson offered, it will be for our salvation.

Never forget: what God wants for us is what we want for ourselves — in the middle of the night, when we wake up in a cold sweat and regret every evil thing that we've ever done. When we realize our weaknesses and beg God to help us, and then get a glimpse of our true selves. What God wants for us is joy, a joy based not in material things that pass away, but grounded in the very depths of our being, body and soul.

After telling them to "rejoice," St. Paul tells them to: "Let [their] gentleness be known to everyone" (v. 5). This one word "gentleness" is translated as "good sense" (in the *Jerusalem Bible*), and also "forbearance" (in the *Revised Standard* and *King James* versions). Translation can be a tricky business, and while each of these meanings can work well here, we can see even in this small example how much depends on the spiritual insight of the translator.

St. John of the Ladder writes that the antidote to the sin of anger is gentleness. From what we know of the Philippian community, they were guided by good sense, they practiced forbearance, and so St. Paul tells them to let people see how good and gentle they were, as encouragement and inspiration for others; to show others how to quell the fires of anger through gentleness.

The next verse is possibly why this reading was chosen for today. St. Paul bolsters the Philippians by reminding them: "The Lord is near" (v. 5). He surely was referring to his eager hope that the Lord would be returning very soon, but there is another sense to his

phrase that we pick up in verse 6: "Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." God is near to us when we pray. God hears and knows our thoughts and needs even before we ask.

God is also near to us in a particular way today, as he enters Jerusalem. We share the joy of seeing him, even as we contemplate the pain he will endure in the coming days. But, through his suffering he will draw nearer to us still.

If we pray and trust, St. Paul says, "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (v. 7). One of the great mysteries of the Life in Christ is how God gives us the ability to reconcile and make coherent the joys as well as the tribulations of this life. The world looks for logic. By taking up our cross and following Christ we find the understanding that surpasses logic. We find God's peace.

"Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you" (v. 8-9).

It is when we *do* what is right and good that we find God. It is when we *do* what God asks of us, that we find ourselves. Resist the temptation to over-analyze. It keeps you from doing what you're supposed to do.

During the coming week we will see the Lord do "what he's supposed to do." He will say many things, but as the time for "doing" draws closer, he will say less and less. Instead, he allows his actions to speak. We should take our lesson from him, and do likewise.

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA