

# ***News from St. Nick's***

## **Sunday, July 5, 2020**

### **The Fourth Sunday After Pentecost**

***Apostolic Reading: Romans 6, 18-23***

***Gospel: Matthew 8, 5-13***

***"The Healing of the Centurion's Servant"***

***Tone 3 • Matins Gospel 4***

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

***PARTICIPATING IN SERVICES.*** As a reminder, here are the [Guidelines](#) for attending Church services. Everyone **must wear a mask** while present, and **we have increased the attendance limit to approximately 50 people**. Please follow the directions of Parish Council members at all times as they will ensure it is controlled and safe for all.

***THE LIVE-STREAMING OF THE LITURGY WILL CONTINUE.*** For the indefinite future, you will still be able to access the live-stream of Divine Services. Go to: [www.stnicholaschurch.org](http://www.stnicholaschurch.org) and click on "**Live Streaming of Services**". **To view previous Services** on our YouTube Channel, [click here](#).

***ORTHODOX FOOD PANTRY UPDATE.*** **Our Parish's responsibility to staff the Food Pantry will be on Saturday, July 4 from 9:00 AM to NOON.** The Food Pantry continues to serve the community with volunteers using PPE (masks and gloves) and following social distancing procedures. For more information, contact [Lisa Demake](#) or [Nicole Apostola](#) at 508-797-9482.

***AN ELECTRONICS/WHITE GOODS, ETC. RECYCLING*** day is set for **Saturday, July 25th from 9 - 2**. This is an opportunity for our parish to serve our local community while caring for the environment. If you're able and willing to help, please speak with Gerry Belba or email [parishcouncil@stnicholaschurch.org](mailto:parishcouncil@stnicholaschurch.org)

***VIRTUAL CHURCH SCHOOL.*** We are considering options for our Sunday school students to compensate for some of the class time missed this school year. One possibility is a virtual

program that will be activity based for younger children and focus on discussions and activities for older children. **Please complete this short survey to help us evaluate the overall interest in such a program:** <https://forms.gle/CUsGxVkQguiMgBN28>

**DO YOU HAVE EXPERIENCE IN ACCOUNTING AND BOOK-KEEPING?** If so, your Church needs YOU! The Parish Council is in need of someone with book-keeping experience to serve as treasurer of the parish. **This has been an ongoing and persistent need, and is an essential component of the stewardship of the parish.** Please consider if you might be able to offer this stewardship of time and talent to your Church. For more information, contact Evan Stamoulis at [estamoulis@gmail.com](mailto:estamoulis@gmail.com)

**USHERS NEEDED.** The Parish Council generally attends to ushering on Sundays, but given the current situation some are not able to do so. **As a result, we need a few more people to help with ushering** on a rotating schedule. One would need to be at the Church at 9 am on Sundays. If you can help, please email [parishcouncil@stnicholaschurch.org](mailto:parishcouncil@stnicholaschurch.org) or speak to George Demake.

**MUSTARD SEED MEALS.** **We have committed to providing a meal for the Mustard Seed on August 21.** Observing social distancing measures here at the Church, we will prepare 150 meals that will be pre-packaged and dropped off, ready to be distributed by their regular staff of volunteers. If you/your family would like to help with this, please call or contact **Betty Anderson by email** ([bettya16@verizon.net](mailto:bettya16@verizon.net)) or by phone 508-353-9449.

**STEWARDSHIP.** This is a difficult time for everyone, on so many levels. One is economic. But if you are able, please continue to send what stewardship offering that you feel you can afford. Keep in mind that **the Church is also in the same situation.** There are on-going expenses. You may mail any contributions to the Church address, or you may give on-line, at the parish website by [clicking here](#). God bless you and keep you safe!

**WE HAVE A COVID FUND.** There are people both in our parish and in the larger community who are in need during this time. **If you need help**, whatever it might be, including financial assistance, please contact Fr. Nick. We'll find a way to assist you. **ALSO**, we are asking the faithful in our parish **WHO ARE ABLE**, to perhaps contribute toward this fund. We've 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!**

**NEW EMAIL ADDRESSES FOR THE CHURCH.** If you have information or a notice to share in the Church bulletin, please send that to [Bulletin@stnicholaschurch.org](mailto:Bulletin@stnicholaschurch.org). Likewise, questions or information for the Parish Council may be addressed to [ParishCouncil@stnicholaschurch.org](mailto:ParishCouncil@stnicholaschurch.org)

## **HOLY TRINITY NEWS**

**A message from Holy Trinity Nursing and Rehabilitation Center (6/23/20)**

## **Holy Trinity In The News...A LOT!**

Last Sunday was Father's Day and one of the first celebratory days when families were able to visit with the residents in person! Holy Trinity was in the limelight this week as Boston and Worcester Media outlets did full stories covering outdoor Father's Day visits. We are all extremely proud of the way that Holy Trinity came across in these stories and hope that you will share it with your friends and family.

- [CBS Boston](#)
- [7 News Boston](#)
- [Spectrum News Worcester](#)
- [Worcester Telegram & Gazette](#)

**Update** – At this time, three residents are positive (not acquired at Holy Trinity), 51 are fully recovered, and 24 have always tested negative. Holy Trinity continues to admit residents needing long term care or short-term rehabilitation services, and provide for them in the safest, most caring manner possible no matter what their pre-existing condition.

**Resident IN PERSON Visits** - At this time, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services Department of Public Health is allowing in-person, outside visits with residents, provided certain safety conditions are met. If you would like to schedule an in-person visit, window time, or video call please click [here](#) to complete a visit form. You'll receive a follow up email and/or phone call with details about your scheduled visit. Please do not call the center to schedule a visit.

**Board Members Needed** – Holy Trinity will be voting on new board members in September at the General Assembly to replace those that have completed their term. Please email Steve Fotos [stevefotos82@gmail.com](mailto:stevefotos82@gmail.com) if you are interested. This is a great opportunity to join a fantastic team for a wonderful cause.

## ***A MESSAGE FROM FR. NICK***

### ***The Wages of Sin***

This is the fourth Sunday after Pentecost. In today's reading from his Letter to the Romans (6:18-23), St. Paul explains the radical transformation Baptism brings to our lives. In fact, all of Chapter 6 draws out the relationship between Baptism and our participation in the Lord's death and resurrection. He says: "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" (v. 6:3) [This verse is also read during the Epistle at the Baptism Service.] In dying to our old selves in Baptism, we also share in Christ's resurrected life—our new life in Christ.

The whole of the Baptismal service dramatically expresses this change in our lives. Just before the Baptismal service proper begins, the priest reads prayers of exorcism over the catechumen.

He then directs the person who is to be baptized to turn toward the west (where the sun sets and is a symbol for darkness), and asks: “Do you renounce Satan, and all his works, and all his worship, and all his pride?” He repeats the question three times. Then he directs the catechumen to turn toward east (sunrise and the source of light), and asks: “Do you unite yourself with Christ?” This is probably the most important question we will ever be asked, and the answer to this question is the theme of today’s Epistle lesson.

St. Paul says to the Romans, “having been set free from sin, we have become slaves of righteousness” (v. 18). He tells them that he is “speaking in human terms, because of [their] natural limitations” (v. 19). He is using an image that would be very real to those listening to his words. Slaves have masters. A slave has no life or will of his or her own; they do what their master wants. In baptism we are set free from our slavery to sin. In baptism we freely accept Jesus as our King and God. We trade being dominated by sin (that rules over our lives seeking our destruction), for the true master who desires only our complete well-being. While we might think there are other choices, there really are only two.

St. Paul weaves his spiritual understanding of baptism with very real and practical examples. He says to us, “As once you surrendered yourselves as slaves to immorality and to a lawlessness which results in more lawlessness, now you have to surrender yourselves to uprightness which is to result in sanctification” (v. 19). He is talking about choices that take advantage of the fresh start that Christ gives us.

“When you were the slaves of sin, you felt no obligation to uprightness, and what did you gain from living like that? Experiences of which you are now ashamed, for that sort of behavior ends in death” (v. 20-21). It is only when we stand in the freedom that God gives us that we can look back on our previous behavior and see it for what it actually is: slavery. A life without a moral direction is a life wasted. What we thought was freedom was in fact license. This is what St. Paul means when he says (when translated more literally), “When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness” (v. 20). When the direction of our life points us toward selfishness, pleasure, and greed, we end up in a place where it is very difficult to see the ultimate consequences of our actions. We are blind to it.

We are presently living through a very difficult period, both economic and political, that has and will cause many people to suffer. Pure and simple, this is the direct result of the kind of lifestyle of which St. Paul was speaking. People tend to think of sin in dramatic terms—the blatant and obvious sins that people commit such as murder, rape, bank robbery, and the like. But the path of sin is more subtle than that. It is in the small lie, the little thievery, and the clever belittlement. When we are on the trajectory of sin—when we are facing west—it is difficult if not impossible for us to see the full consequences of our actions. We all share in what befalls our nation and indeed the world when we feel “no obligation to uprightness.” What do we gain from living like this?

St. Paul reminds us of what God’s Baptismal gift to us was: “Now you are set free from sin and bound to the service of God, your gain will be sanctification and the end will be eternal life” (v.

22). Can you see the power in our choice to turn from west to east, from darkness to light? When we renounced and spat on the Devil and accepted Christ as our King and God we chose a new direction in our lives.

Of course, for most of us this choice was made when we were infants, by our parents and godparents. They pledged to raise us and put on the right trajectory, on the path of righteousness. At some point, however, their promise needs to be our choice. We need to say for ourselves, "I unite myself with Christ!" The Grace given us in Baptism is neither static, nor is it magic. It is potential. Just as before our Baptism we were predisposed to a certain outlook and action, so in the free gift of God we are given the proclivity for goodness. We become members of Christ's Body and have Jesus as our guide and helper.

Finally, St. Paul sets the stakes before us in very clear and stark terms. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (v. 23). The parallel here is unequal, but so is the choice before us. What we 'earn' for sin is death. What God freely offers us is life. Still, the choice is ours.

—Fr. Nicholas Apostola

## ***RUMINATIONS FROM CORONA LAND***

### ***"Common Sense"***

I've always been amused by the wit of Benjamin Franklin. He had a way of capturing profound truths in short and oftentimes irreverent phrases. A couple of these involved "common sense." Here's one: "The problem with common sense is, it isn't." And another: "Common sense is something that everyone needs, few have, and none thinks they lack." In the throes of this current pandemic we are certainly in short supply of common sense.

For those of you who are regular readers of my reflections, I trust that you're not surprised when I take a deeper look at words or phrases that we often times just read over. I feel we can gain a lot by pulling these apart. So, let's take a look at "common sense."

In his usual style, Ben Franklin plays around with the two-sided meaning of "common" to get our attention. "Common" can mean something that is ordinary, plentiful, and easily accessed. And, in another context it can mean something that we share, such as within a family, a group, or a nation; a thing that binds. We know that the more we share in common, the deeper the bond. Much of the tension we feel in our nation today, some would argue, is because across our society what we share, or what we feel that we share, has diminished. In a way, the two meanings of "common" come together when the things we share are held by more and more such that it becomes so ordinary and plentiful that we hardly think about it. It's not an issue.

If “common” has the characteristic of a thing, or an idea, or an object that we could point to or at, “sense” has an almost spiritual or psychological quality to it. It is a perception. Our mind synthesizes what we gather from the primary five senses, integrates that with our experiences of what and whom we encounter and interact with in and around our environment, and we begin to form opinions. We start to perceive what we think might be a consensus of thought and approach. So, far from any idea that common sense is a faculty or knowledge we possess, we come to see it as the ability we develop to perceive and engage those around us. We also might be induced, after careful thought, to influence the common mind in one direction or another. When enough are convinced in this way or that, we have common sense.

The lament of Franklin and others that so few people have common sense might be better said as that few people have taken the time to develop the capacity to grasp the common sense. What escapes most is that while we inhabit a particular body shaped by distinct times and events, we are not isolated islands unto ourselves. Like every aspect of creation, we are beings in community. The more we know about ourselves and the universe around us, the more we appreciate how much we impact others and how dependent we are on them. For example, and without getting bogged down in the numbers, today most people who study these things say that there are at least as many, if not more, non-human cells in our body as human ones. We are host to lots of living things that mostly help us (although some do harm us), and without which we would be unable to live. We could point to innumerable inter-dependencies, but we shouldn't have to. We know this to be true.

This brings us to the current pandemic and our reaction to it. There are so many frightening aspects to this virus. We are caught in its grip and have almost no idea how this will unfold. We know of some of its effects, but are still largely ignorant of the full extent to which it can harm us. We only have limited knowledge of how it's transmitted, although we are certain about some specific ways it gets passed. However, there's no negotiating; it's a virus, after all. Moreover, it intends us no harm; it doesn't have that kind of moral agency. But it can and will harm us and all that we love and hold dear.

There are concrete things that we can do, that we know work. We need to agree on these, build a consensus, and get about doing them. One Chief Justice famously said, law floats on a sea of ethics. You can't enforce a law that the majority of people don't agree with. Prohibition failed because people were not going to give up alcohol. Deep racism persists because, in spite of the changes in law, people continue to treat people they see as different from themselves differently, very differently. We will not contain the virus until people are as concerned about one another as they are about themselves. How do we change things? Change what people see as common sense.

God's self-revelation was and is directed toward making each of us realize and embrace the foundational truth that we belong to each other, that even every aspect of creation depends on us as we do on it and them. Common sense is when we finally apprehend and appreciate — sense — this.

—Fr. Nicholas Apostola

## ***A Prayer of Fr. Laurence***

Let us pray to the Lord,

As with the Israel of old, so also with us, the new Israel: We are always protesting how much we want to glorify you, Lord God, and praise the actions of your divine grace. Our protests, however, are rather flimsy. But oddly enough, the magnificent splendour of your majesty, when we can bring ourselves to focus on it, never frightens or repels us. Rather, we sense our love and reverence for you increase. Make us live ever conscious of your ineffable majesty, ever ready to embrace the power of this mystery.

By the grace and mercies and love for us of your only Son, with whom you are blest, together with your all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

## **Orthodox Links**

[Romanian Orthodox Metropolia](#) of the Americas

[Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America](#) (Assembly of Bishops)

[International Orthodox Christian Charities](#) (IOCC)

[Orthodox Christian Mission Center](#) (OCMC)

[Orthodox Christian Radio Network](#) (OCN)

[Council of Eastern Orthodox Churches of Central Mass.](#) (CEOC)

## **Dates To Remember**

July 4 - Food Pantry - 9 AM - NOON

July 25 - E-Recycle - 9 AM - 2 PM

Aug 1 - Food Pantry - 9 AM - NOON

Aug 21 - Mustard Seed

---

[St. Nicholas Orthodox Church](#)

34 Gold St | Shrewsbury, MA 01545-6238  
508-845-0088 | fax: 508-845-8850 | email: [ParishCouncil@StNicholasChurch.org](mailto:ParishCouncil@StNicholasChurch.org)  
[www.StNicholasChurch.org](http://www.StNicholasChurch.org)

*Sunday Services: Matins at 9:00 am and Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am*