

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, July 12, 2020

The Fifth Sunday After Pentecost

Apostolic Reading: Romans 10, 1-10

Gospel: Matthew 8, 28-34;9,1

"Jesus Restores Two Demon-Possessed Men in the Land of the Gadarenes "

Tone 4 • Matins Gospel 5

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PARTICIPATING IN SERVICES. As a reminder, we are able to welcome a limited number of parishioners to attend Liturgy on Sundays at church. Here are the [Guidelines](#) for attending Church services. Everyone **must wear a mask** while present, and **at this time we can comfortably accommodate 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. If you are not able or ready to return to church, you will still be able to access the live-stream of Divine Services. Go to: www.stnicholaschurch.org and click on "**Live Streaming of Services**". ***To view previous Services*** on our YouTube Channel, [click here](#).

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

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

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 or speak to George Demake.

ARE YOU AN ORTHODOX YOUNG ADULT WANTING TO SERVE YOUR CHURCH? If COVID-19 has shown the Orthodox communities anything, it is that parishes are in need of help from the young adults within them. We have the skills, enthusiasm, and energy to benefit our churches and make them thrive during this time. Telos POP, born out of the Telos Project at HCHC, is **looking for young adults to be a part of our team. Join our community and sign up [here](#)** to receive guidance and support from the Telos team to **carry out your own initiatives at your parish!**

PRISON MINISTRY AWARENESS SUNDAY. The [Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the USA](#) ask you to observe **July 26, 2020, as Prison Ministry Awareness Sunday.** The Holy Scriptures instruct us to proactively serve those in our community in love. Each of us can be the solution to the anxiety around us by doing the little things that are in our control with humility, empathy, and patience. **Part of this calling to serve includes those who are in prison, where true, deep isolation has enveloped our brothers and sisters incarcerated.** In prison, the simple acts of kindness are magnified: a letter to someone serving a long sentence, a Bible Study in the local jail, making the wife of a prisoner feel welcome in church. These are the acts of proactive mercy our Lord calls us to that Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry and many of our clergy and parishes participate in every day. Please consider a [donation](#) to support the work of the [Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry](#).

MUSTARD SEED MEAL. 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) 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. Likewise, questions or information for the Parish Council may be addressed to ParishCouncil@stnicholaschurch.org

PITA & PASTRY FOR SALE

Inventory Available!

“St. Nick’s Kitchen” has many items available for purchase. Enjoy these treats with your summer barbecue:

Large Leek Pita
Large Spinach Pita
Sweet bread
Baklava
Koulourakia
Kouroubia

Please consider a purchase to support your Church and help us reduce our inventory. To order, email [Christ Toda](mailto:Christ.Toda) or email/call [Betty Anderson](mailto:Betty.Anderson) at 508-353-9449.

VACATION CHURCH SCHOOL 2020

“Metamorphosis & Prayer”

The Sunday School programs of Sts. Anargyroi & St. Nicholas invite you to join a one-day event on the Feast of the Metamorphosis or Transfiguration of our Lord.

WHO: Youth, **grades K - 8**

WHEN: **THURSDAY, AUGUST 6, 9 AM - 2 PM**

- Liturgy- 9 AM
- Sessions & Lunch (provided) - 10 AM - 2 PM
- (1:15 pick-up for those not staying for lunch)

NOTE: ***All CDC Guidelines for Covid will be followed.***

All participants and leaders are required to wear masks.

WHERE:

- **RAIN Location - Sts. Anargyroi Church**, 9 Central Street, Marlboro, MA
- **SUNNY Location - St. Nicholas Church**, 34 Gold Street, Shrewsbury, MA

RSVP: **By AUG 1st!** - [Valarie Stamoulis](mailto:Valarie.Stamoulis) OR [Presbytera Eleni Christakos](mailto:Presbytera.Eleni.Christakos)

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

Update – Please continue to keep the residents and staff of Holy Trinity in your prayers. 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 if you are interested. This is a great opportunity to join a fantastic team for a wonderful cause.

A MESSAGE FROM FR. NICK

“Have you come to Torment us before the Time?”

This Sunday's Gospel lesson touches on a topic both very interesting and somewhat sensitive: demonic possession and mental illness. It is the account of the healing of the demoniacs of the Gadarenes (or, Gergesenes) found in the Gospel of Matthew (8:28-9:1). There are parallel accounts of this exorcism also found in Mark 5:1-20 and Luke 8:26-39.

Throughout the Gospels, we find many people who come to the Lord asking for healing who today we might describe as suffering from various mental illnesses, but whom the Evangelists record as having, or being possessed by, a demon. Today, we view abnormal behavior through the lens of modern social and medical sciences, and this informs and shapes our understanding. We know how such maladies can lead a person to do many horrible things, both to themselves and to others. We could fairly describe these people as not being themselves, not being “in their right mind,” not reflecting the true essence of who they are. This Gospel passage provides us with an opportunity to look at mental illness and demonic possession from both spiritual and social scientific perspectives.

In Matthew's account, prior to the Lord's encounter with the demoniacs, he and the disciples had reached land after having sailed through a tremendous storm. Even though the wind and water were raging, Jesus had been sleeping throughout, but, fearing death, his disciples woke

him. He rose, raised his hands, and rebuked the winds and the sea. The disciples marveled, wondering “what sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?” (v. 27)

Shortly afterward, when on the shore, the Lord encounters the demoniacs. The demons are similarly awed by Jesus, but they don’t wonder “what sort of man is this.” Unlike the disciples, they recognize him immediately. They know who he is. They say: “What have you to do with us, O Son of God?” (v. 29) But lest we think that the demons are happy to see him, they add: “Have you come to torment us before the time?”

Knowing that Jesus is going to expel them from these men, they ask permission to enter the herd of swine feeding nearby. He says to them: “Go.” They leave the persons they had possessed, and enter the swine, who run down the steep bank and drown in the sea.

We have a number of points to consider in this encounter. First, notice that the demons need Jesus’ permission to leave the persons possessed and enter the swine. The Lord has power over them. Second, the demons bring the swine to immediate destruction. It could be that they delighted in killing the animals, or that the animals could not tolerate being under their influence. And third, everyone witnessing this event was frightened. The townspeople even begged Jesus to leave them (v. 34). The reality of demonic possession terrified them. The reality of evil overwhelmed them. But neither were they ready to accept the alternative that Jesus offered them.

How should we understand this story? There are two points that we might take away from this miracle. First, God is always in charge. God’s grace was protecting the people possessed by the demons even while in their state of possession. We see what happened to the pigs when Jesus allowed the demons to enter them. This is what would happen to us if God allowed the demons free reign.

Second, the demons are working constantly for our destruction. Sometimes we give them entry into our lives through our “passions:” greed, envy, even laziness and jealousy. And, they play with us. Before we know it we are under their influence. Sometimes we fall victim to the genetic or biological fissures in our bodies that make us susceptible. Addictions, mental illnesses, and more are often the result of many complicated factors. We do know this though: people struggling with addictions and mental illness many times hurt and destroy themselves and others. They can feel disassociated from their actions, as though someone or something else were controlling them and causing bad things to happen. Is this not “possession?” All sickness has both physical and spiritual components.

Mark and Luke add one more interesting aspect to this encounter. Once they had been freed from their captivity, the men formerly possessed asked the Lord if they might follow him, become his disciples. While they certainly would become powerful witnesses if they followed him in this way, he charges them rather to go back home, to their family and friends, to testify

there what God had done for them. This is something each of us is asked to do: to reflect on how God has changed our lives, and to share that good news with those around us.

—Fr. Nicholas Apostola

Please click on this [link](#) to read **Fr. Nick's article, *Keep the Faith: Reflections on Common Sense*** published in the Worcester Telegram & Gazette on July 4th and in this bulletin last Sunday.

A Prayer of Fr. Laurence

Let us pray to the Lord,

O only Sovereign Lord, divine and incomprehensible unity in trinity of persons. As the lights of this world fade into darkness, let your thrice-radiant brilliance illumine our lives with ever greater clarity and strength. Our words cannot begin to describe the mystery we experience, for how could we ever truly grasp your unchanging wisdom and the power of your goodness! Yet, ever-changing as we are, we dare to approach you, our immutable creator, with this prayer: Make us hold fast to our faith. Teach us how to worship you in spirit and in truth. Strengthen us against superstition, childishness, and fascination for every passing fad. And, when we have persevered in the face of doubt and difficulty, grant us the enjoyment of your unapproachable light.

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.

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 25 - E-Recycle - 9 AM - 2 PM

July 26 - Prison Ministry Awareness Sunday

Aug 1 - Food Pantry - 9 AM - NOON

Aug 6 - Vacation Church School - 9 AM - 2 PM

Aug 21 - Mustard Seed

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www.StNicholasChurch.org
Sunday Services: Matins at 9:00 am and Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am