

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, July 19, 2020

The Sixth Sunday After Pentecost

Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the 4th Ecumenical Council

Apostolic Reading: Romans 12, 6-14

Gospel: Matthew 9, 1-8

"Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man in Capernaum "

Tone 5 • Matins Gospel 6

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PARTICIPATING IN SERVICES. As a reminder, we are able to welcome 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](#).

The **April-June issue** of our Metropolia's quarterly magazine **The Faith / Crediința** is now available. Please download and read it by [clicking 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. [Here is a flier with all the details](#). If you're able and willing to help, please call Gerry Belba at 508-868-1569 or email him at vgbelba@msn.com

DO YOU HAVE EXPERIENCE IN ACCOUNTING AND BOOKKEEPING? 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 Christopher Seith at cbseith@gmail.com.

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/call [Christ Toda](mailto:ChristToda) at 1-774-272-2773 or [Betty Anderson](mailto:BettyAnderson) 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. [Here is a Flier](#) with all the details.

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)

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](#) OR [Presbytera Eleni Christakos](#)

***NOTE: All CDC Guidelines for Covid will be followed.
All participants and leaders are required to wear masks.***

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

Updated 7.14.20

COVID-19 Update – Holy Trinity is extremely proud to say there are NO Covid-19 positive residents at this time. Holy Trinity continues accepting new residents and rehabilitation patients who are Covid-19 positive, however there have been NO cases of Covid-19 acquired from the facility in weeks. The staff have performed admirably and the results prove their hard work and dedication!

Visitations – Since June 3, 2020 Holy Trinity is providing in person outside visits and we have expanded the days and times visits are possible. If you are looking for more information on visiting a loved one please click [here](#). The residents are so happy they can once again interact with their loved ones and the smiles on their faces say it all!

Job Openings – Please click [here](#) to view the latest job openings. Become part of an amazing team!

Resident Activities – Resident activities have recently changed to include small group activities for those who are fully recovered! It has been over 3 months and residents are thrilled to return to some semblance of the way things “use to be”. We are accepting donations to go towards increased resident activities. Please click [here](#) if you would like to contribute. Thank You!

“Let Our Love Be Genuine”

This is the sixth Sunday after Pentecost. In today’s reading, Romans 12:6-14, St. Paul moves the discussion from Law and Faith, to how our faith in Jesus the Messiah impacts and changes our life. Up until now he had been presenting a very detailed and systematic explanation as to why the Law of the Old Covenant needed to give way to God’s Grace that we receive by our faith in Jesus Christ — the New Covenant. Now he wants us to focus on this new relationship with God, and explains the implications for how we should live our lives.

“We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us” (v. 6). We are not all the same; each of us has been given a particular charism. One of the greatest challenges we have in life is to recognize and understand the particular gifts given us. The second challenge is to then fully develop these gifts.

As a way of transitioning from his discussion of the Law, St. Paul offers us this vivid image. He tells us: “present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual [or reasonable] worship” (v. 12:1). You will remember that the central aspect of Old Testament worship was the sacrificing of animals. St. Paul says that our worship of God should now be us sacrificing ourselves, as a living sacrifice. Our sacrifice is the deliberate development of the gifts given us. And different from the animals which were dumb beasts, we offer up our bodies knowingly, with our mind and in our heart.

He then offers practical expressions of the gifts to which he is referring, as well as how we should use them. If it is “prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.” (v. 6-8)

The first thing that we should notice is that these gifts given us are not for ourselves; they are for service to others. The second is that it is not simply the *doing* of a thing that matters; what is more important is *how* it is done.

St. Paul mentions seven gifts, but unlike when he writes to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 12:28ff), here he doesn't place them in an hierarchical order. Moreover, he mentions gifts in Romans that he doesn't refer to in his letter to the Corinthians, and vice versa. There are innumerable gifts of the Spirit. Let's look at the ones he presents here.

“Prophecy, in proportion to faith.” We could also call this “inspired preaching.” It sometimes may involve predicting the future, as in Acts 11:27-28, but usually it is meant to inspire and exhort the listeners. “In proportion to faith” has a few meanings. The most important is that what the prophet says should correspond to the Faith, the belief held in common, but also to the personal faith of the listeners. It should build them up, not confuse or misdirect them.

“Ministry, in ministering.” The Greek word used here is “*diakonia*,” this is where the title ‘deacon’ originates. In this context it means ministry in the sense of service. It refers to those persons responsible for distributing material aid. For most of the Church's history deacons were primarily responsible for the administration of the material goods of the Church, especially aid to those in need. The Liturgical aspect was secondary.

“The teacher, in teaching.” Teacher and teaching was and is a gift distinct from prophecy, preaching, or administration. We see this clearly in our Church today. Those responsible for instruction of both children and adults play a vital role in building up the Body.

“The exhorter, in exhortation.” Here St. Paul refers to what we would call the ‘spiritual father or mother.’ This is the person with great spiritual maturity and wisdom who encourages people as they struggle to do God's will. We see these people in every parish, held up as examples of what God calls us to.

“The giver, in generosity.” This is the person who exercises his or her generosity gently and abundantly. His or her gift is one of philanthropy, distributing private wealth with love.

“The leader, in diligence.” This refers to the persons who head the community. They are to exercise this gift conscientiously. It is a difficult job.

“The compassionate, in cheerfulness.” This is the person who does acts of charity, of kindness. Too often we do such things grudgingly, out of a sense of duty. St. Paul reminds us to do these acts not only with a smile on our face, but also from our heart. The smile is just as important as the deed.

Then St. Paul sums it up in an almost staccato-like manner: “Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor (v. 9-10).

We should never ‘fake’ our love. Sometimes we may have to ‘work at it;’ but the final objective should be for it to be real. St. Paul says that we should hate evil. Actually, the word is closer to abhor than hate. Evil destroys. We destroy evil through goodness. Even as we abhor the evil we need to cling to what is good.

He says we should love one another. The Greek word is ‘philadelphia’: love like brothers and sisters. We need to treat each other as family — a healthy Christian family.

He continues with, “outdo one another in showing honor.” This could also be translated, “As far as honor goes, esteem the other more highly.” The greatest danger we face is our own pride. Love each other. Always put the other before you. Think no more of yourself than you do your brother and sister. This is the greatest of spiritual gifts.

He then says (because he knows what we might get a little ‘tired’ at this point), “Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord” (v. 11). Notice how at each point St. Paul draws us to a higher goal. He doesn’t simply say: “give;” but “with generosity;” nor “lead;” but do it “with diligence;” nor “be compassionate;” but do it “with cheerfulness;” nor “honor;” but “prefer one another;” nor “love;” but do it “genuinely;” nor refrain from “evil” things, but “abhor” it; nor hold to “what is good;” but “cling” to it; nor “love one another;” but to do it “as if you were brother and sister;” nor be zealous, but be so without flagging, that is without backsliding; nor have the “Spirit;” but have it “fervently;” that is, be burning and awake.

The simple truth is that if one practices these virtues that St. Paul speaks of, the Holy Spirit will be drawn to us. And if the Holy Spirit is drawn toward us, all of these things will become easy for us to embody. “Serving the Lord” is akin to serving our brother and sister. It is the primary way in which we draw closer to God.

He then tells us to do three things that are at the center of the spiritual life. “Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer” (v. 12). When God sends us the answer to our prayers, or when He sends us the good things that we recognize, we should rejoice. These

are given us as signs of hope to encourage us. When we suffer difficulties — “tribulations” — we simply need to trust in God; be patient. God sends us hopeful signs to encourage us to be patient and trusting. Finally, we need to be constant. Our love of God should not depend on this thing or that. We need to love God in the same way we love others; even though someone we love may disappoint us, we continue to love them. Our disappointment in God is often because we cannot see or understand God’s love for us. While it may be difficult, we need to be even more consistent in our love and devotion as a result.

The Lord, through St. Paul’s teachings, leads us to a still higher plane. “Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality” (v. 13). Recognizing the needs of others, without them asking for help, is a great gift. Not only do we have to simply ‘distribute’ what we have, but we should share it. This means biting into our own income. To drive home the point he says, “practice hospitality.” Hospitality was an ancient virtue. It is even more important as a Christian virtue. It is still even more important in our day and age. To welcome the stranger into our midst, even to our home, is to welcome Christ Himself. There was no greater sin in the ancient world than to refuse a stranger. It is even a more grievous Christian sin. We are all strangers. We need to welcome one another.

Finally, as a way of summarizing all that he has said, St. Paul tells us: “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them” (v. 14). This is the final step. If we can learn to bless our enemies — those who inflict pain on us — then we will have ‘graduated’ from being simply a ‘good’ person, to a true Christian.

If you would like to look at this developmentally, we move from being a child, where the whole world revolves around us, to an adolescent where we only have eyes for our ‘true love’ and/or caught in various forms of narcissism.

If ‘true’ love moves to a full love then marriage may ensue. Marriage leads to children, and children require a ‘coming out’ of ourselves. We can no longer live in the closed circle of either our own ego or the simple love of one person over another. Children require us to come out of any closed circle.

The final circle from which God asks us to emerge is the circle of those familiar to us; those with whom we feel comfortable. St. Paul instructs us how to build the personal bonds that will strengthen us. He tells us, “Bless those who persecute you.” And then, he wants to make sure that we understand exactly what he is saying so he says: “bless and do not curse them.”

God draws us from love of family and friends, to friends and siblings in the faith, to love of our enemies. We were God’s enemies and He loved and died for us. He asks us to do the same with others, if we love Him.

—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,

Prevent us, Lord and Father, from being unmindful of you. Make us more and more sensitive to your presence, always growing in consciousness of you and your commandments. Inspire us to live correctly, filled with love for you and our neighbor. Let us be sensitive to your inspirations and give us always the right response to them and the strength to carry them out.

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 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

Aug 29 - Food Pantry - 9 AM - NOON

Sept 5 - Food Pantry - 9 AM - NOON

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church
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Sunday Services: Matins at 9:00 am and Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am