

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

**Sunday, September 13, 2020**

### **The Sunday Before the Elevation of the Precious Cross**

***Apostolic Reading: Galatians 6:11-18***

***Gospel: John 3:13-17***

*(Jesus Speaks to Nicodemus)*

***Tone 5 • Matins Gospel 3***

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

***MONDAY, SEPT. 14th, IS THE FEAST OF THE EXALTATION OF THE PRECIOUS CROSS.***

While we will not be celebrating Liturgy in our parish, each of our sister parishes will be holding services. If you are able, please make an effort to attend. Below you will find a brief explanation of the significance of the Feast. Also, we keep this day as a strict fast day.

***SAINT NICHOLAS SUNDAY SCHOOL*** will begin in-person classes on Sunday, Sept. 20, 2020. Classes will be held during Liturgy following Holy Communion through dismissal (about 25 minutes). The students will be divided by grade into three classes, and class size will be small. The standard COVID-19 precautions will be followed (handwashing, masks, distancing, sanitized materials) during classes. If you have questions or to sign your child up, please contact: Cristina Iusco, [Cristinaiusco@yahoo.com](mailto:Cristinaiusco@yahoo.com) who is teaching grades K - 2; Gina Skaff, [ginaskaff@hotmail.com](mailto:ginaskaff@hotmail.com) who is teaching grades 3 - 6; or Fadi Girgis at [elfady@yahoo.com](mailto:elfady@yahoo.com) who is teaching grades 7 and up.

***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](http://www.stnicholaschurch.org) and click on "**Live Streaming of Services**". *To view previous Services* on our YouTube Channel, [click here](#).

**ORTHODOX FOOD PANTRY** is our on-going ministry with our sister Orthodox Churches to provide food to those in need. The first Saturday of each month St. Nicholas is responsible for staffing the Food Pantry. Our next monthly responsibility at the Orthodox Food Center is Saturday, October 3rd, from 9 am - noon at St. Spyridon Cathedral in Worcester. About 4 people are needed. If you can help in this worthwhile ministry, please contact Nicole Apostola by email at [nicole.apostola@gmail.com](mailto:nicole.apostola@gmail.com).

**USHERS NEEDED.** The Parish Council is **seeking volunteers to assist with ushering** on Sunday mornings on a rotating schedule. You would need to be at Church from 9 AM to 11:30 AM on Sundays. If you can help, please email Christopher Seith at [cbseith@gmail.com](mailto:cbseith@gmail.com).

**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)

## **E-RECYCLING DAY**

**AN ELECTRONICS/WHITE GOODS, ETC. RECYCLING** day is set for **Saturday, September 26, from 9 - 2**. [Here is a flier with all the details](#). If you have computers, printers, small and large household appliances, TVs, bicycles, cell phones, exercise equipment, etc., they can be recycled to benefit the parish and the environment. If you're able and willing to help during the event, please call **Gerry Belba** at **508-868-1569** or email him at [vgbelba@msn.com](mailto:vgbelba@msn.com)

## **IOCC URGENT NEED: LEBANON NEEDS YOUR HELP!**

The International Orthodox Christian Charities team in Beirut has reported on the heartbreaking impact of this tragedy and is planning how to best help the people of Lebanon. **Short-term**

assistance will include hygiene parcels, expansion of community kitchens, and building rehabilitation. Given the continuing danger posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, all activities will incorporate measures to prevent the further spread of the virus. Your support of IOCC's work through their International emergency response effort will allow them to respond quickly and effectively in Lebanon. [Click on this link](#) to access the online donation form.

## **STS. CONSTANTINE AND HELEN DRIVE-THRU FOOD FEST & BAKE SALE**

Sts. Constantine and Helen in Webster will be holding a [drive-thru Food Fest & Bake Sale](#) on this weekend, Sept. 12-13 in Webster. To pre-order meals, please go to their website, [www.schwebster.org](http://www.schwebster.org). It is a great opportunity to support a sister church in their fundraising, and enjoy some delicious cooking.

## **HOLY TRINITY NEWS**

**Updated 8.10.20**

**General Assembly Meeting** – THE HOLY TRINITY GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING, scheduled as a Zoom meeting for Tuesday, September 15th, is postponed. The Holy Trinity Board is looking for a new date in October. Each parish has a designated representation and these delegates will be sent information concerning the new date and a Zoom invitation for logging into the meeting. We thank you for your understanding. We want to make sure that the General Assembly meeting is as informative and well organized as possible. Please contact Board President Steve Fotos ([stevefotos82@gmail.com](mailto:stevefotos82@gmail.com)) if you have questions about attending the future General Assembly.

**COVID-19 Update** – We are pleased to announce that at this time we have no patients or staff testing positive! We are conducting bi-weekly testing of 30% of staff, per state directive. We are so grateful to all staff, patients and family members who are adhering to the safety guidelines.

**Visitations** – We continue to offer multiple ways for families and residents to connect. There are outside in-person visits with social distancing measures — Understandably residents and loved ones are very happy to see each other. Family members can schedule Facetime or Skype visits through our website. Window visits are still an option too, and families may call the main number: 508-852-1000, ext. 282 and leave a voicemail; they could also contact the receptionist or social worker. For more information go to <https://www.htnr.net/coronavirus>

**Job Openings** – The newest job opportunity that we are excited to announce is a part-time activities assistant. But there are many other job openings. Click here <https://www.htnr.net/careers> to view the latest ones. We are very proud of our team. Our staff is

dedicated to the highest standards of a team-oriented care program. Residents are treated with compassion, understanding and personalized care. Each person deserves dignity and respect.

**Resident Activities** – We are excited to announce that we are starting to hold entertainment and small group activities which is great news for our vibrant and active community. Our residents are thrilled that our activities are back including: bingo, exercise, baking, virtual museum tours, gardening, trivia, movies and more. Food socials such as gelato, ice cream, lemonade and popsicle carts are back as well. These activities really help lift the residents' spirits. The Main Dining room and unit dining rooms are open for meals. On August 2nd entertainment with T.J. was held outside. And later in the month activities including a magic show and cookout will take place. Stay tuned for dates and be sure to follow us on Facebook.

Many of the residents are very pleased that the celebration of the **Divine Liturgy on Wednesdays** has resumed. There is a restriction on numbers allowed to attend at one time, so a rotation has been adopted. But the Live-Streaming to resident rooms has been a real spiritual comfort.

## **The Feast of the Elevation of the Precious Cross**

*(September 14th)*

Saint Helen, the mother of Saint Constantine the Great, when she was already advanced in years, undertook, in her great piety, the hardships of a journey to Jerusalem in search of the cross, about the year 325. A temple to Aphrodite had been raised up by the Emperor Hadrian upon Golgotha, to defile and cover with oblivion the place where the saving Passion had been suffered. The venerable Helen had the statue of Aphrodite destroyed, and the earth removed, revealing the Tomb of our Lord, and three crosses. Of these, it was believed that one must be that of our Lord, the other two of the thieves crucified with Him; but Saint Helen was at a loss which one might be the Wood of our salvation. At the inspiration of Saint Macarius, Archbishop of Jerusalem, a lady of Jerusalem, who was already at the point of death from a certain disease, was brought to touch the crosses, and as soon as she came near to the Cross of our Lord, she was made perfectly whole. Consequently, the precious Cross was lifted on high by Archbishop Macarius of Jerusalem; as he stood on the ambo, and when the people beheld it, they cried out, "Lord have mercy." It should be noted that after its discovery, a portion of the venerable Cross was taken to Constantinople as a blessing. The rest was left in Jerusalem in the magnificent church built by Saint Helen, until the year 614. At that time, the Persians plundered Palestine and took the Cross to their own country. Late, in the year 628, Emperor Heraclius set out on a military campaign, retrieved the Cross, and after bringing it to Constantinople, himself escorted it back to Jerusalem, where he restored it to its place.

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

*Let us pray to the Lord,*

O creator and maker of this hour: During these days we stand before you, celebrating the exaltation of the precious cross, that immortal and life-giving tree that bore the savior's body in death. From barren wood and bitter death was that tree made, but its stark and naked limbs produced unfailing fruit and leaves that never fade. It was the very price that saved us from the law of old, a price paid not in gold or silver, but in the blood of that pure and spotless lamb. Enlighten us as we reflect on this mystery, O God and Father. Impress on our feeble minds how much we need to embrace the cross, in whose rough surface we see ourselves as we really are.

By the grace and mercy 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.

## **The Glory of the Lord**

This is the Sunday before the Universal Exaltation of the Precious Cross. The Epistle Lesson is taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians, 6:11-18. In this passage, as well as throughout the whole Letter, St. Paul's emphasis is on "the Cross of Christ." In part, this explains why we read these verses today, in preparation for the Feast.

St. Paul was writing to the Galatians about the negative influence that a group of Jewish converts to Christ was having on their community. Galatia was a province located in north central Asia Minor, present-day Turkey. The larger cities of Galatia contained a mixed population of locals as well as Greeks and Romans. Greek and Latin were the languages there. In the more rural areas the population was largely Galatian; they were related to the Celts and spoke a language more akin to Celtic than the languages of their neighbors.

Today's reading is the close of St. Paul's Letter to them. It starts out: "See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand" (v. 11). St. John Chrysostom believes this indicates that St. Paul had written the whole Letter himself, rather than leave the task to a scribe. For him, this was an indication of the intense concern Paul had about the situation, and for the Galatians themselves. Modern scholars think that the first part of the Letter was given to a scribe to write down and that St. Paul wrote this part by way of emphasis. Either way, St. Paul is clearly upset and concerned.

Here is the reason: "It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who receive circumcision do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh." (v. 12-13)

It might seem odd to us that a practice done today for largely medical reasons was a deeply religious question in the early Church. However, according to the Mosaic Law, the primary sign

of the covenant between the Children of Israel and God was circumcision. It was and still is what defines Jews as a people set apart. For St. Paul, being required to accept circumcision as a condition of conversion was to subject yourself to the Old Covenant. It was a step backward.

St. Paul's contention was that these people had no interest in truly proclaiming the Good News of Christ's coming. Rather, they wanted these Galatians to undergo a ritual that was largely for show, while ignoring the true internal spiritual transformation that should occur in those who follow the Lord. These were fundamentalists. Rather than stand up for Christ — which would have probably subjected them to persecution — they took the 'zealous' route that would make them look devout, but really cost them nothing. This is what's behind the statement: "they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh."

His answer to these 'missionaries' is: "But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation." (v. 14-15) By the "cross" St. Paul means the whole 'economy' of our salvation; the whole of God's plan for us beginning with Adam and Eve, and culminating in the Lord's death and resurrection. He also means the cross that every Christian takes up when they decide to follow Christ. The 'world' that has been crucified to him is the world of sin and excess; the passions that lead away from God. This should be the cross that we ourselves pick up, choosing against sin and for the Lord.

St. Paul then offers a blessing: "Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God" (v. 16). He is sending two subtle messages in this blessing. He is saying that those who follow the 'rule,' that is, who choose the newness of Christ over the 'dead end' of the Law, will receive God's peace and mercy. And, by referring to the 'Israel of God' he is at once answering his critics — the Judaizers — that he is not 'Jewish' enough, as well as asserting that the 'Israel of God' is now the followers of Christ.

Expressing his exasperation with the Judaizers, he says: "Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus" (v. 17). The word translated here as "marks" in Greek is "stigmata." Because of how we use 'stigmata' today, it has led some people to speculate that St. Paul had on his body the crucifixion wounds of Christ. However, in the ancient world this word meant something like "branding." It was used for the branding marks burned into slaves and cattle. It is more likely that St. Paul means the very real scars on his body that were the result of the multiple floggings he had received. Anyone who has seen photographs of the backs of slaves who had been flogged will immediately understand what he is talking about. His scars mark him as belonging to Christ.

He concludes this rather harsh Letter with a blessing: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen" (v. 18). He chooses words — and especially the very final word, the affectionate term 'brethren' (brothers and sisters) — to soften whatever hurt they may be feeling, and to let them know that from his perspective all is healed.

As we reflect on St. Paul's words, let us also recommit ourselves to take up our cross and follow the Lord as St. Paul himself did.

Fr. Nicholas Apostola

## 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

Monday, September 14 - Elevation of Precious Cross  
September 20 - Sunday School Classes Begin  
Sept 26 - Electronics Recycling - 9 AM - 2 PM  
Oct 3 - Food Pantry - 9 AM - NOON

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[www.StNicholasChurch.org](http://www.StNicholasChurch.org)  
*Sunday Services: Matins at 9:00 am and Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am*