

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, September 20, 2020

The Sunday After the Elevation of the Precious Cross

Apostolic Reading: Galatians 2:16-20

Gospel: Mark 8:34-38, 9, 1

(Taking up the Cross and Following Christ)

Tone 6 • Matins Gospel 4

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](#).

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 (no more than 5 children and the teacher). The standard COVID-19 precautions (handwashing, mask wearing, distancing and sanitizing materials and furniture) will be followed. If you have questions or to sign your child up to attend class, please contact: for grades **K through 2nd**, Cristina Iusco at cristinaiusco@yahoo.com; for grades **3rd through 6th**, Gina Skaff at ginaskaff@hotmail.com; and for grades **7th and up**, Fadi Girgis at elfady@yahoo.com. You may download a [Registration Form by clicking 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.

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.

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

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

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.

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

Holy Trinity Update for week of September 21st

COVID-19 Update—As we continue to monitor, test and communicate the COVID-19 situation, we have had one employee test positive. There have been no residents that have tested positive. Per the Department of Public Health guidelines weekly testing is continuing for those residents and staff who have always tested negative, until we have 14 days with no new positives. We continue to have adequate PPE and use it per CDC guidelines.

Visitations— As always Facetime and phone calls are encouraged for all residents. Item drop off is welcome as well. At this time, residents who are fully recovered from a prior positive test and not showing any signs or symptoms consistent with COVID-19 can participate in outside or window visits. For the time being there are no compassionate visits unless an individual is actively dying. Please reach out to the nurse manager for individual questions. For more information go to <https://www.htnr.net/coronavirus>

Job Openings— Please click here <https://www.htnr.net/careers> to view the latest job openings.

Resident Activities— In order to keep our community safe and healthy we have scaled back on several activities until we have a clear 14-day window of no COVID-19 positive tests. The main dining room and salon is closed for now. The Divine Liturgy is canceled for this week and next and other small group activities have been put on hold for now.

However, our outside entertainment is continuing so residents can enjoy music via their windows. The schedule includes *Gary Landgren on September 22nd at 2:45p.m* and *Bill McCarthy September 28 at 2:00p.m.*

The Prayer of Fr. Laurence

Let us pray to the Lord,

Whom shall we glorify? Whom shall we praise? And to whom shall we give thanks, if not to you, O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for that terrible instrument of the cross on which your Son was put to death for love of us? Though it was a symbol of shame, he transformed it into a resplendent trophy of victory. As we celebrate its triumph during these days, and contemplate the salvation it purchased for us, help us truly understand its meaning so that we may share in the resurrection it promises.

Through the same Lord Jesus Christ, with whom you are blest, together with your all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

It Is No Longer I Who Live

This is the Sunday after the Universal Exaltation of the Precious Cross. Today's Epistle Lesson, like last week's, is taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians, 2:16-20. In this passage St. Paul sums up his teachings about the relationship between faith in Jesus and adherence to the Law of Moses. One could say, that in a very concise way, St. Paul synthesizes in these seven verses his whole teaching on this subject which he more fully explains in his letters to both the Romans as well as the Galatians.

What lies at the heart of his teaching is that salvation comes to us through faith in Jesus the Christ. It cannot come through "works of the law" (v. 16), because no one can fulfill all of the provisions or precepts of the Law. In spite of all our efforts, we remain far from perfection. However, this fulfillment of the Law was accomplished by and in Jesus. He literally embodied the Law, doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. But more importantly, He showed us that it is in our willingness to follow God with our whole being, to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30), to have total faith in Him and His Christ, that allowed and allows us to be justified before God. Salvation is a free gift to us from God; what we need to do is trust in Him completely.

The reason St. Paul is so upset with the Galatians is that they have doubted that their faith in Jesus is sufficient basis for their salvation after listening to the Jewish Christians (Judaizers) that I spoke of last week. Following their teachings, they are now opting for "works of the Law" as the proper means for "justification." Circumcision, that we heard so much about in last week's reading, is the shorthand for this.

St. Paul begins this part of his Letter by using the example of St. Peter and himself — Jews of the first order. He says that even they "know that a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ." They themselves, "have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law, because by works of the law shall no one be justified" (v. 16).

We should review again the way in which St. Paul uses the word "justified." In colloquial terms, to be "justified" means to be able to stand before God without being embarrassed. It means that we have enough virtue that we can face God and not hang our heads in shame. Think about it in this way: if your employer were to call you into his or her office to question you about your job performance, could you "stand" before them with your head held high? Or, would you be hanging your head in contrition? The root word of "justified" is the Latin, "iust," which means "right." When we are justified, we stand right with God.

Now St. Paul addresses the central question plaguing the Galatians: "But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we ourselves were found to be sinners, is Christ then an agent of sin?"

Certainly not!" (v. 17) The anxiety of the Galatians is this: does simple faith in Jesus suffice? Can this faith be enough to wipe away my sin? And, if it isn't, is Jesus now an agent of sin? St. Paul says: "Of course, not!" We can stand before God in and through our faith in Jesus! Works will not do it; only our faith will.

Then he moves to the next level of questions: "if I [namely, St. Paul] build up again those things which I tore down, then I prove myself a transgressor" (v. 18). Here he is referring to those advocating that followers of Christ now follow the Mosaic Law. The 'building up' refers to returning to the Mosaic Law as a basis for justification before God. The 'tearing down' refers to his advocacy for faith in Christ. To change course would be worse for him; there is no hope in the Old Law, the only way is forward, the only sure way is faith in Jesus. He points to his own life, first as a pious Jew who followed the Law rigorously, but then found salvation through faith in Jesus.

He writes: "For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God" (v. 19). There are three levels of meaning in this verse. The first is that Christ was put to death by the Law; the Jewish authorities handed Jesus over to die because they contended that He had violated the Law. The second level is that Paul, and all Christians, are one with Christ in Baptism. As Christ was put to death because of the Law, so are we. Even more, we are "put to death" because we truly violate the law through our sins. So, in this sense it is very true that through the Law we died to the Law. The last level of meaning is the most important. In dying to and through the Law, we, like Christ, are resurrected. Because we become one with Christ in our Baptism, we both die and live in and through Him. We are totally transformed.

St Paul declares: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (v. 20). What he experiences is what we long for: the new life in Christ. We want to feel deep within us the newness that our Lord Jesus makes available to us. Oftentimes, what we lack is the will and courage to "live by faith in the Son of God who loves" us. We keep ourselves at arm's-length, not fully embracing the commitment that would give us St. Paul's confidence. Let us strive to embrace the Lord's loving Cross, and accept the gift of everlasting life that He offers us.

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

September 20 - Sunday School Classes Begin

Sept 26 - Electronics Recycling - 9 AM - 2 PM

Oct 3 - Food Pantry - 9 AM - NOON

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church
34 Gold St | Shrewsbury, MA 01545-6238
508-845-0088 | fax: 508-845-8850 | email: ParishCouncil@StNicholasChurch.org
www.StNicholasChurch.org

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