

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, October 11, 2020

Twenty-first Sunday After Pentecost

Apostolic Reading: Titus 3:8-15

Gospel: Luke 8:5-15

(The Parable of the Sower and the Seed)

***The Sunday of the Fathers of the
7th Œcumenical Council***

Tone 1 • Matins Gospel 7

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PARTICIPATING IN SERVICES. As a reminder, you may 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.

WE ARE LIVE-STREAMING THE LITURGY. If you are not able or ready to return to church, you may 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](#).

MUSTARD SEED MEAL. Our regular meal for the Mustard Seed is **THIS COMING Friday, October 16th**. We will be serving around 100 people. Given the virus, the meals are now pre-packaged and dropped off, ready to be distributed by their regular staff of volunteers. *We'd like to thank Anthi and Sergios Eleftheriou for underwriting the costs of this meal!* If you or your family would like to help with the preparation, please contact **Betty Anderson — by e-mail** (bettya16@verizon.net) or **phone** 508-353-9449.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASSES have begun. There are three classes, according to grade level. Class sizes are no more than 5 students. The standard Covid-19 protocols are 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](#).

THE FAITH / CREDINTA MAGAZINE. The **July-September issue** of our Metropolia's quarterly magazine is now available. Please download and read it by [clicking here](#).

THANKS TO THE FOOD PANTRY VOLUNTEERS for working the Orthodox Food Center on behalf of our parish last Saturday. Our regular commitment is the first Saturday of the month from 9am to noon. About 4 people are needed. Help is also needed to do the shopping at the Food Bank. If you can help in this worthwhile ministry, please e-mail [Nicole Apostola](mailto:Nicole_Apostola) at nicole.apostola@gmail.com. Our next date is November 7th.

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!**

COMMUNITY NEWS

IOCC's LATEST PRAYER JOURNAL IS HERE! While families are staying at home together, IOCC's **The Prayer Journal** is a great tool to learn about what the Orthodox Church is doing through IOCC in the US and the world. The Prayer Journal highlights the scripture of Matthew 25, the inspiration for IOCC's mission. It offers a glimpse into the lives of children and families around the world and shows how your prayers and support are helping them build a brighter future. For more information, and to order a copy or copies, [click here](#).

The ASSEMBLY OF ORTHODOX BISHOPS met virtually on October 6-7, and issued a **Message of Hope** for these difficult days. It expresses "the perennial message of Christian hope and spiritual encouragement to our clergy and faithful, and all persons of good will, in these

unprecedented times of the current global health crisis, political division, and social strife.” To read the full message [click here](#).

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

NEW ADMINISTRATOR AT HOLY TRINITY. Our CEO, Ellen Belanger, resigned from her position at the end of September. We are thankful for Ellen's contributions to our facility over the past year, particularly for help us navigate through the difficult time of the Covid-19 pandemic. We have been fortunate to bring onboard as interim administrator, Kristine Pacheco. Kristine comes to Holy Trinity with years of experience in leadership at skilled nursing facilities, most recently as executive director in interim roles at several long term care facilities in California. We are confident that Kristine is well-positioned to guide us through this transition period and to ensure the continuity of the high quality care that Holy Trinity provides to its residents and family. At the same time, Holy Trinity's Board has appointed a committee to conduct a thorough search for a permanent replacement.

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 are closed for now. However, our outside entertainment is continuing so residents can enjoy music via their windows. Divine Liturgy is limited to residents.

St. Parascheva the Young

October 14

Our venerable Mother Parascheva the Young lived as a monastic in the 11th century. Her feast day is celebrated on October 14. She is the patron saint of the Romanian region of Moldova and Romanians generally have great esteem towards her.

St. Parascheva was born at the beginning of the 11th century A.D. into a wealthy, noble, and pious Christian family in the town of Epivat on the shores of the Marmara Sea. At the age of ten she heard the words, "Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me." The words of the Lord had a profound effect on the young girl, and they became the subject of her meditations. The future St. Parascheva began to dress poor people in her expensive clothes, but her parents objected, finding the girl's charity more than they could understand or support. To follow her calling, Parascheva abandoned her wealth and privileges, left her parents, and ran away to Constantinople. There she spent her time in prayer, meditating on the words of Christ.

To elude her parents, who were traveling from city to city trying to find her, she moved to Chalcedon, and then to the Church of the Most Holy Theotokos, in Heraclea Pontica, near the Black Sea. She spent the next five years there, living an austere life of continuous prayer and devotion. During her prayers she received visions of the Holy Virgin Mary and in one of the visions, she was instructed to go to Jerusalem. After spending some time in the city, she joined a convent in the Jordanian desert. A few years later, she returned to Constantinople and then, at the age of twenty-five, moved to the village of Katikratia where, at the Church of the Holy Apostles, she lived the remaining two years of her life. She revealed herself to a local monk in a dream who uncovered her uncorrupted body, which was interred in the Church of the Holy Apostles, where she had spent the last years of her earthly existence.

Later on her relics were moved to Tarnovo, in Bulgaria, then to Belgrade, in Serbia, and finally to Constantinople. In 1641, they were given as a gift to Vasile Lupu, Voievod of Moldova, by the Patriarch of Constantinople. Her intact relics have remained in Iași ever since. She is venerated as the Protector of Iași and all of Moldova, and each year hundreds of thousands of Orthodox faithful and hierarchs from many countries gather in Iași to celebrate her feast day and venerate her holy relics, which continue to work miracles.

A Prayer of Fr. Laurence

Let us pray to the Lord,

Lord God, eternal Father: Give us the justice that will make us flourish like the palm tree; give us also the goodness that will enable us to grow before you like the cedar of Lebanon. Help us to avoid senseless controversy, to eschew judging, censoring, and criticizing, and to resist being enslaved to our own opinions. Planted in your courts, O Lord, may we grow by abandoning ourselves to your perfect will.

By the 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.

Avoid Stupid Controversies

The Epistle lesson this week is related to the commemoration of the Fathers of the Seventh Œcumenical Council, the second held in Nicæa in 787ad. This was the Council that addressed the issue of the proper role of icons in the Church and in worship. The selection today is from St. Paul's letter to his disciple and co-worker Titus (3:8-15). In it he addresses some of the finer points of pastoring a community, especially an early Christian one still influenced by many pagan enticements.

We read today from the very last verses of that Letter. St. Paul, after giving Titus his advice on how to guide the community in a Christian way, tells him: "I desire you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to apply themselves to good deeds; these are excellent and profitable to men" (v. 8). St. Paul is a man of action. He believes the principles of faith are meant to be put into practice. This is equally true of many of the spiritual fathers of the Church. They believed that by practicing acts of charity and good works, a person is able to integrate their faith into their very being. It is not enough for someone to have good intentions in their head; they also need to act on these same intentions with their hands.

He warns Titus to "avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels over the law, for they are unprofitable and futile" (v. 9.) This isn't to say that Titus himself was prone to such controversies, but rather that itinerant preachers were stirring up things everywhere. People in local communities, informed or ignorant, would form camps and tear each other apart. This is St. Paul's concern.

He tells Titus: "As for a man who is factious, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is perverted and sinful; he is self-condemned" (v. 10-11).

The word translated as "factious" is, in the original Greek, "αἱρετικὸν" — "heretical." (This word didn't assume the specific theological meaning we understand today until a few hundred years after St. Paul.) The Greek root of the word "heretical" literally means, "to choose;" that is to say, to single out one particular point and emphasize it to the exclusion of other points of view or understandings. Thus, a "heretic" turns their one central point into the whole truth. Many persons who the Church considers to be heretics were not entirely wrong. The problem was that the one point they clung to and emphasized changed the full meaning of the truth. In effect, their one point became their whole truth. The Church has always had a wider understanding of truth, avoiding to reduce it to a singular idea.

St. Paul calls this "factious" person "perverted and sinful." Even without discussing St. Paul's understanding or intent of that word in the context of the early Church, we can see his point very easily in the way much public discourse happens today in shouting matches on TV, radio and in the public square. No doubt much of this is theatre, contrived for effect; but increasingly it is not. The factious person uses ideas and language to push people to extremes. The part is presented as the whole. In contrast, the truly thoughtful person tries to keep all perspectives in balance.

This does not mean there are no principles we should defend; of course there are! It is the “stupid controversies” and “dissensions” that St. Paul asks us to avoid; “quarrels” that are “unprofitable and futile.” These last two words are key to understanding where and how someone should stand on a question of principle. Will the dispute ultimately build up the Body of Christ, or will it finally be unprofitable and futile? Understanding this difference is what makes one person a saint and another a heretic. It calls for discernment.

Discernment is first and foremost a spiritual gift. It is the ability to distinguish between the various thoughts that enter our mind and to recognize those that come from God and those that are from the devil. As such, the person with discernment can understand both the short and long term consequences of a thought or an action. Like all spiritual gifts, God gives discernment to a person of prayer. We all need God’s help so that He might guide us toward people of true discernment to whom we should listen and from whom we can learn.

In St. Paul’s last few lines to Titus, we gain insight into how he was so successful in establishing Churches throughout the Roman world. St. Paul had sent Titus to Crete to bring order to the Church there. He tells him he will “send Artemas or Tychicus” to Crete to replace him and then he would like Titus to come to Nicopolis to join him there (v. 12). He asks him to “speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way;” to “see that they lack nothing” (v. 13). We suppose that these two, about whom St. Paul speaks in other letters, had brought this message to Titus. After they leave Crete they will visit other Churches.

Then he offers Titus a final piece of advice: “Let our people learn to apply themselves to good deeds, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not to be unfruitful” (v. 14). While much has been made of St. Paul’s principle of justification by faith, not by works (Romans 3:25ff), we see here, as in other places, the emphasis on how our faith should take concrete form, in ministering to those in need.

He reminds us that ultimately the Church is composed of communities of faithful people who love one another. He says: “All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all” (v. 15). And so this is how it should always be, one community embracing one another in the love of Christ.

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

Friday, Oct 16 - Mustard Seed Meal
Saturday, Nov 7 - Food Pantry (9 AM - NOON)

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church
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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