

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, October 18, 2020

Twentieth Sunday After Pentecost
The Holy Apostle & Evangelist Luke

Apostolic Reading: Galatians 1:11-19

Gospel: Luke 7:11-16

(The Raising of the Widow of Nain's Son)

Tone 2 • Matins Gospel 8

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. Thanks to the Mustard Seed Volunteers! Those who prepared the meal this past Friday! The Mustard Seed is a Catholic Worker home providing dinner to about 150 people in need each day. 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, or to help sponsor a meal, please contact **Betty Anderson — by e-mail** (bettya16@verizon.net) or **phone** 508-353-9449.

WE HAD A 40-DAY BLESSING last Sunday for the servant of God [Gia Elise Spyrou](#), new born daughter of [Tracie and Christo Spyrou](#) and little sister to Noah. May our loving Lord pour out his Grace on them all!

OUR DEEPEST CONDOLENCES to the Christo family on the [falling asleep of James A. Christo](#) this past week. Jim was a stalwart of the Eastern Orthodox community here, and a supporter of our parish. We pray that our loving Lord will comfort his wife Joan, and his children: James, Stephen and Carolyn, and his many grandchildren. *May he rest among the saints, and his memory be eternal!*

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](#).

PASTRY FOR SALE. “St. Nick’s Kitchen” has scrumptious **Baklava, Sweet Bread, & Kouroubia** available for you to enjoy! Please consider a purchase to support your Church and help us reduce our inventory. To order, email/call [Betty Anderson](#) at 508-353-9449, or bettya16@verizon.net.

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

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

Holy Trinity Update – October 12, 2020

GREAT NEWS TO CELEBRATE!!! Holy Trinity just passed its third (impromptu) state Infection Control Survey with NO DEFICIENCIES. This is a tribute to all staff who played a significant role in achieving this result. The surveyor even made it a point to share how impressed he was with how engaged the staff is in caring for the residents and protecting the Holy Trinity family.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY — DELEGATES NEEDED: Holy Trinity Annual General Assembly meeting will be held on **Tuesday, October 27th at 7:00pm via Zoom**. We NEED as many delegates from the churches as possible and as it is via Zoom no one will have to leave their homes to attend. We will be reviewing the 2019 audit information, discussing COVID-19 and how it has affected Holy Trinity as well as our plans for 2021. The by-laws stipulate that each parish should be represented by: the Priest, Parish Council President, and at least 3 additional delegates. Please inform your Priest if you would like to attend.

STAFFING ANNOUNCEMENT. As you may have heard, the 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 regarding the Covid-19 pandemic, and wish her well. We have been fortunate to bring onboard an interim administrator, Kristine Pacheco, while the search committee seeks a permanent replacement.

COVID-19 UPDATE. Currently there has been no new onset of COVID-19 cases among residents or staff in the last 14 days, and the facility is not currently conducting outbreak testing. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health requires 30% testing biweekly, and CMS requires 100% testing monthly, to meet the criteria of both, we are doing 50% testing biweekly. We continue to have adequate PPE and use it per CDC guidelines.

VISITATIONS. The facility is using two offices and a portion of the reception area for indoor visits. These visits are scheduled through the Activities Department or the Holy Trinity website. Outdoor visits will continue, weather permitting. Face mask covering, hand hygiene and social

distancing are required. Compassionate Care visits are scheduled via social services and as always Facetime and phone calls are encouraged for all residents. **Item drop off is also welcome!**

JOB OPENINGS. Please click here www.htnr.net/careers to view the latest job openings.

RESIDENT ACTIVITIES. Our outside entertainment has continued so residents can enjoy music via their windows. Entertainment with Paul Bonneau is scheduled for October 16 at 2:45p.m. The fall fun continued with Pumpkin Pie Day on 10/12 and there was a pumpkin pie social with Pumpkin decorating on October 13. The Divine Liturgy is every Wednesday at 9:30 a.m.

A Prayer of Fr. Laurence

Let us pray to the Lord,

O God, mighty Lord, of all who are true to you: Enable us to learn from the painful emptiness that so often assails us. Help us to understand that only you can fill that emptiness, but only if we truly desire it. Help us to love you and acknowledge your name. Assist us in our struggles to attain some wisdom and understanding, enabling us to attain a life that grows richer in quality with every day that passes. And grant that we may taste your saving power.

For you deserve all glory, honor, and worship, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

We Choose

People are funny. Have you ever noticed how when things are going wrong in our life we begin to look for scapegoats? We tend to place the blame for our successive low points on those around us: our enemies, our friends and even our family. Or we choose something more encompassing like fate or even God. Actually, when things are going really badly it is usually God who takes the blame. We usually look everywhere to find the source of our misfortune except where we should: ourselves.

There is a basic spiritual principle we might want to keep in mind: in the final analysis we are the ones who choose. We decide, not others, not fate, and remarkably, not even God. How we ultimately navigate the twists and turns of our life does not depend on anyone other than ourselves. We can surrender ourselves to 'fate' or 'chance' or 'luck' or 'misfortunes', but even in surrendering, we decide. No matter what might befall us, we are still in control of how we receive whatever good or ill has been dealt us. It is in the deciding we find out the kind of person we are or will be, and this then will shape us.

Those of you who know me might begin to wonder what kind of water I've been drinking. You know that I believe economic, political and social forces are always pushing and pulling us. They sometimes present opportunities or limit our choices. Some are advantaged and some disadvantaged. These forces and more exert great pressure on each of us. Where we are born. Who our parents are (or aren't). Where you go to school. Who your friends are. These and more are profoundly influential. I haven't changed my understanding of how these externals impact us. But, this is not the whole story.

We are living in a turbulent period of history. I guess one could say this of almost any time period, but in truth, some periods are calmer than other. It's hard not to think that perhaps the Chinese curse — "May you live in interesting times" — has been visited upon us. So, yes, we do not get to decide when and where we are born, but we do get to decide how we will face whatever difficulties and joys we encounter. How we shoulder these will test our mettle. Will we find comfort and strength in the wisdom in our Lord's Gospel? Or, will we look for it elsewhere?

St. John Chrysostom has a small (small, at least, by his standards) treatise entitled: "No one can harm the person who does not injure himself." In this work he speaks of what it means to be a human being; what truly injures a person; what virtue is and what makes a person virtuous. I feel the need to quote him at length. I usually avoid long quotes when writing these reflections, but at times I think it important for all of us to come in direct contact with these great people that we usually only reference from a distance. Most of us know of St. John only through the Liturgy that bears his name. But even those of his works still available to us today — yes even in English — could fill a whole section in any library. We all should read more directly from the great spiritual people who devoted themselves to God's Word over the millennia, to sharing the Good News with all would want to hear it. It is inspiring to listen to these persons in their own voice. As you read, you'll find that our concerns were their concerns. The things we are feeling and suffering are not new, but have been experienced by human beings from the time of Adam and Eve. So, listen to Chrysostom in his own words, as he preached to his own congregation:

"Let us determine what the virtue of a person is, and let us regard that alone as an injury which is destructive to it. What then is the virtue of a person? Not riches that you should fear poverty; nor a healthy body, that you should dread sickness; nor public opinion, that you should view an evil reputation with alarm; nor life simply for its own sake, that death should be terrible to you; nor liberty, that you should avoid being enslaved: but carefulness in holding true doctrine, and rectitude in life. Of these things not even the devil himself will be able to rob a person, if he or she who possess them guards them with needful carefulness. And, that most malicious and ferocious demon is aware of this. For this reason, he robbed Job of everything, not to make him poor, but that he might force him into saying something against God. And, he tortured his body, not to make him sick, but to upset the virtue of his soul."

Let me caution you, St. John Chrysostom doesn't speak in short sentences. He was trained by the greatest pagan rhetorician of his day. Public speaking was both art and entertainment, and St. John was a master, hence the title: Chrysostom (Golden-mouth). So, be patient as you read, but be entertained as well. Notice the twists and turns of phrase and the subtle allusions he

makes. Today thousands show up for rock concerts and sporting events. It may be hard to imagine, but people showed up in the thousands just to listen to him. We are still reading his sermons one thousand and seven hundred years later. He was (and is) something.

Now, let's look at the passage above. Chrysostom points out that we often define who we are through the externals of our life. We judge ourselves through the eye of our neighbor, or at least what we think they might think of us. We want a nice house, beautiful possessions, a handsome body, great wealth, a good job so that we can gain people's respect. To our shame, we often use these externals of life to judge others, so, it is not unreasonable to think that other people use these same criteria to judge our worth. "Keeping up with the Joneses" is not a new phenomenon. People pretend and exaggerate on social media to impress. It's commonly understood that lots of postings are simple lies. To some degree, the world-wide economic and political crises that we seem not to be able to escape are caused by people and nations wanting to live beyond their means in order to make a "good" impression. "Vanity of vanities" (Ecclesiastes 1:2), "all is vanity," as the saying goes.

As a remedy, Chrysostom introduces us to a different kind of way of thinking about these things captured in a word: virtue. Virtue is an idea that has almost passed from our consciousness. If we use the word at all it usually has to do with moral behavior. In Chrysostom's world virtue, it had to do with the measure a person's worth. In speaking of your own virtue, it meant how you measured your own worth, as against what you said you believed. When Chrysostom speaks of 'virtue' he's talking about the measure of person's worth or integrity. He reminds us our worth is not in the externals, but resides in the very depth of the heart. Do we do what we say? Is our word worth anything? Our virtue shapes how we behave and act.

We are also living in a time where our collective material wealth is on the increase, yet the way in which this collective wealth is shared is uneven at best. The disparities are very troubling. Some have substantial wealth, but many more have lost a job or have had to take a cut in pay. Others are working two or three jobs to make ends meet. Even as the economy seems to have improved for many, life remains tenuous for many many others. Given the outlook, I am sure many of us have all asked ourselves: what if all my possessions were taken away, as in the case of Job? Who am I then? How much do these 'things' really define who I am? Do I become less of a person because I am poor or sick, unemployed or underemployed? Where should I look when I want to understand myself, in my 'things' or in my soul's virtue?

A person is really injured or harmed not when some evil happens to them, but when they allow that offense to touch their soul. At first this may seem ridiculous. Each of us has felt the touch of evil and how it can affect us. However, St. John Chrysostom is not primarily concerned with the evil intent, but rather concentrates his gaze on how we either allow or resist an attempt by person or event to touch and affect us. He tells us that it is how we respond that really matters.

St. John was himself a person who suffered many hardships at the hands of Christian rulers and Church authorities. He wasn't speaking in the abstract, giving advice without having had the

experience. In fact he died during his second harsh exile after having been tortured and starved. But he never speaks of his own sufferings, rather he points to the life of St. Paul as an example.

“Didn’t [St. Paul] suffer so many distresses that even to make a list of them is no easy matter? He was put in prison, loaded with chains, dragged here and there, scourged by the Jews, stoned, lacerated on the back not only by thongs, but also by rods, he was immersed in the sea, oftentimes beset by robbers, involved in strife with his own countrymen, continually assailed both by foes and by acquaintances, subjected to countless intrigues, struggling with hunger and nakedness, undergoing other frequent and lasting mischances and afflictions: and why do I have to mention all these? He was dying every day: but yet, although subject to so many and such grievous sufferings, he not only uttered no blasphemous word, but rejoiced over these things and gloried in them: and on one occasion he says ‘I rejoice in my sufferings,’ and another time ‘not only this but we also glory in afflictions.’ If then he rejoiced and gloried when suffering such great troubles, what excuse will you have, and what defense will you make if you blaspheme when you do not undergo even the smallest fraction of them.”

Being the consummate preacher that he is, Chrysostom answers the question that’s taking shape in our minds, even before it reaches our lips.

“But some will say he was Paul, and called by Christ. Yet Judas also was one of the twelve, and he too was called by Christ; but neither his being of the twelve nor his call profited him, because he had not a mind disposed to virtue. But Paul although struggling with hunger, and at a loss to procure necessary food, and daily undergoing such great sufferings, pursued with great zeal the road which leads to heaven; whereas Judas although he had been called before [Paul], and enjoyed the same advantages as he did, and was initiated in the highest form of Christian life, and partook of the holy table and that most awful of sacred feasts, and received such grace as to be able to raise the dead, and cleanse lepers, and cast out devils, and often heard discourses concerning poverty, and spent so long a time in the company of Christ himself, and was entrusted with money of the poor, so that his passion might thereby be soothed, (for he was a thief), even then did he not become any better, although he had been favored with such great condescension. For since Christ knew that he was greedy and destined to perish on account of his love of money he not only did not demand punishment of him for this at that time, but with a view toward softening down his passion he was entrusted with the money of the poor, that having some means of appeasing his greed he might be saved from falling into that appalling gulf of sin, checking the greater evil beforehand by a lesser one.”

And so, St. John places two powerful examples before us. Consider, two people with profound opportunities, and each with their own flaws. Paul (Saul) persecuted Christians zealously. Judas had light fingers. Christ embraces them both with mercy and pours out his grace over them. So, while different in personality, they are similar in opportunity.

Paul, who in spite of all that he suffers, or perhaps because of it, becomes a great missionary, and with God’s grace transforms human history.

Judas, who in spite of all the grace poured out on him, rejects this great love and loses everything, especially his soul.

What separates them is not the gift given, but how they responded to it and used it. Actually, if we looked at these two situations as the world might look at them, it is Paul who is the loser. He had the hard life: sickness, prison, exile, beatings, and finally execution. Judas, because he was greedy and ungrateful, even with the advantages he had, but taking no care for his virtue, loses not only his physical existence but his spiritual one as well.

Each of us confronts hardships in our life; most of us never even approach the difficulties encountered by Paul and the other Apostles, or Job and the other prophets and saints. But through their vigilance, perseverance, and faith they didn't allow those injuries to touch them. Rather each trial became an opportunity to glorify God. At the same time, as with Judas, no one is able to help persons who will not help themselves: by being temperate, mustering all their resources, and placing their sights on heavenly things.

Chrysostom concludes this short reflection by repeating what he had said at the outset: if any person is harmed and injured it is because of what they suffer at their own hands, not at the hands of others, even if there are countless numbers who injure and insult. "So if a person does not injure him or herself, not all the creatures who inhabit the whole earth and sea if they combined to attack would be able to hurt one who is vigilant and sober in the Lord. Let us then, I beseech you, be sober and vigilant at all times, and let us endure all painful things bravely that we may obtain those ever-lasting and pure blessings in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory and power, now and ever and through all ages. Amen."

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

Tuesday, Oct 27 - Holy Trinity General Assembly, 7 PM

Saturday, Nov 7 - Food Pantry (9 AM - NOON)

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church

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www.StNicholasChurch.org

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