

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, November 22, 2020

Twenty-sixth Sunday After Pentecost

Apostolic Reading: Ephesians 5:8-19

Gospel: Luke 2:16-21

(The Parable of the Rich Fool)

Tone 7 • Matins Gospel 2

➔ For COVID Guidelines, [click here](#)

➔ For Live Streaming Link, [click here](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE CHRISTMAS FAST began this past Sunday, November 15th. Fasting is the best way to prepare for Christmas, this year especially. The pandemic will cause us to alter many past practices and customs. One purpose of fasting is to provide us with an occasion to reflect on those things we hold dear, but choose to separate ourselves from, in order to focus on our love for God and our neighbor. Let us use this Fast for our spiritual growth, so that we can really appreciate those we love and wish to embrace, but cannot touch. God's love is abundant, feel it.

TODAY IS IOCC SUNDAY. The International Orthodox Christian Charities is the major charitable arm of the Orthodox Church. Based in the United States, it brings relief to people in need throughout the world and here at home. His Eminence Metropolitan Nicolae is the Liaison from the Assembly of Bishops to the IOCC. [Read his Encyclical here.](#) Our support for this Christian work is needed now more than ever. To donate, go to the website: www.iocc.org, or call: (877) 803 IOCC (4622).

THIS THANKSGIVING will be different from others we've celebrated in many ways. It will certainly be a smaller gathering. There will be less food, perhaps. And the stress of our situation will weigh heavily on us. It will also be an opportunity for us to reflect on everything important to us. And, to appreciate how God has loved and protected us in the good and the difficult. [Here's a prayer](#) you might want to offer at your Thanksgiving table.

SUNDAY SCHOOL FALL RETREAT will be held with our children K-12 on Friday, November 27th together with and at St Anargyroi Church in Marlborough. See [this flier](#) for details and contact information.

PASTRIES AVAILABLE: Just in time for Thanksgiving, while supplies last, St. Nick's Kitchen has freshly baked **baklava, kouroubia, & koulourakia** available for sale. Pickup is on Sunday from 10am to 12:30 pm. To order, e-mail/call [Betty Anderson](#) at 508-353-9449, or bettya16@verizon.net.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR HOLY TRINITY RESIDENTS. Thank you to all the parishioners who have signed up to provide holiday gifts for Holy Trinity residents. All the gift requests have been filled by generous givers. Thanks to [Eleanor Sedares and Deb Sedares](#) for coordinating the program for St. Nick's. They ask that gifts be brought to the church no later than Sunday, December 6. Call Eleanor Sedares: 508-753-3106, Deb Sedares: 508-509-6678 or dsedares@pinehills.com.

EVERYONE IS INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN SERVICES. You may attend Liturgy on Sundays at church. **Of course the usual COVID rules apply.** Here are the [Guidelines](#) for attending Church services. Please follow the directions of ushers for everyone's safety.

WE ARE LIVE-STREAMING THE LITURGY. If you can not physically attend 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](#).

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!**

WE ARE SADDENED at the falling-asleep of **James R. Seferi** this past week. Jim was the son of Sotir Richard and Olga Seferi. You may find his [obituary here](#) and may also leave messages of condolences for his family. **May his memory be eternal!**

WE ALSO REMEMBERED THIS WEEK the servant of God, **Nikolaq Zhaka**, husband of Natasha Zhaka, fallen asleep 3 years. **May the Lord rest his soul among the righteous!!**

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

COVID-19 UPDATE – Holy Trinity is continuing to conduct bi-weekly testing of 50% of the staff per state directive. They 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-offs are 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 may participate in outside, window visits or in the three designated indoor locations. These visits must be scheduled. To schedule a visit, contact the activities staff at 508-852-1000. Compassionate visits may also be scheduled. Please reach out to the nurse manager for individual questions. For more information as protocols are always changing go to <https://www.htnr.net/coronavirus>

JOB OPENINGS –Holy Trinity is hiring! They are looking to hire for our nursing staff including: RN/LPN and certified nurse assistant positions for all shifts. They are also looking for: Activity Aides, Receptionist, Dietary Aides, Housekeeping/Laundry, and Director of Advancement. [Click here](#) for a full listing with detailed job descriptions. [People familiar with the languages and cultures of our Orthodox communities are encouraged to apply.](#)

RESIDENT ACTIVITIES CONTINUE – There will be Thanksgiving crafts on November 26th. The main dining room and unit dining rooms are open for meals as well. The hairdresser is back by appointment.

DIVINE LITURGY is celebrated every Wednesday at 9:30am.

Prayer of Fr. Laurence

Let us pray to the Lord,

Blest be your name, O Lord, now and forevermore! From the rising of the sun to its setting, praised be your holy name! And to whom, O Lord our God, shall we offer our grateful praise, if not to you? You are the first and foremost benefactor of our lives. You are the one who bestowed on us all the good that we are and have. You gave us the riches of this world, and in unspeakable wisdom and insight, you revealed to us the mystery of your unfathomable will. Therefore, Lord, as we rejoice now, in preparation of our annual day of thanksgiving, grant that we may always perceive and appreciate the wonders of your creation and accept them from your hand as we should, conscious of your goodness, responsive to your love, and humbled by your generosity.

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.

Walk as Children of Light

This is the twenty-sixth Sunday after Pentecost. The Epistle Lesson is taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians 5:8-19. The section we read last week was concerned about the unity of the Church — what we would normally think of as the parish. St. Paul now directs our attention to the importance of our behavior; how we should live the faith we say we have in Jesus our Lord.

St. Paul is very straight-forward on how he wants the Ephesians to reflect on their behavior. He wants them to think about what their lives were like before accepting Christ, and what their lives are like now that they have accepted Him. He says, “for once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord” (v. 8-10). St. Paul uses an image that is as clear to us as it was to the Ephesians: the spiritual struggle is between the forces of darkness and the forces of light. The difference between darkness and light is like the difference between evil and good. St. Paul isn't being a “dualist.” (Dualists taught that everything could be seen in the stark contrast between black and white.) Yet, he is saying that those who follow God, who follow Jesus, need to distinguish themselves by their way of life. There is a choice in front of us. All we need to do is open our soul's eye to see it. Often the choices are as clear as day is from night.

He caps this verse with the comment: “try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.” Discovering for ourselves what it is that would please the Lord is a helpful guiding principle as we grow spiritually. Light and darkness are only metaphors for the creative tension within our psyche — our soul — as we strive to discern God's will for us. Each of us struggles not to do things we know will be detrimental to us and others, even as we aim do things that we feel will bring us closer to God. The back and forth of it is the essence of what it means to grow spiritually, to grow in the Life in Christ. St. Paul offers us very concrete advice on how to measure our growth. “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret; but when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light” (v. 11-13).

Sunlight disinfects. Some say it's better than Clorox. Hanging clothes out in the sun to dry is not only environmentally wise, it has the additional benefit of purifying on the microbial level. The metaphor of light as a disinfectant points us to a deeper spiritual reality. God's light burns away our sins and purifies us. When acts of sin and evil are exposed to the light, they lose their allure as well as their power. When a person's sins are made known publicly, the glamour of their lives quickly evaporates in the light of day.

“Therefore, it is said, ‘Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light’” (v. 14). Sleep is another way of speaking about deadness to spiritual reality. We have suffered a great world-wide economic crisis, and are in the middle of another, yet many still seem to be asleep to its root causes: personal selfishness, greed beyond conception, and

desire to live beyond not only our own means, but even our planet's ability to sustain us. We are suffering a pandemic not experienced since the beginning of the last century, and yet people are becoming tired of doing the necessary for their own health and that of others. When the Scripture speaks of 'sleep' and 'death' we should think about the deeper spiritual truth that God wants us to understand. When we are awake we are conscious to the things around us and better able to understand their consequences.

This is why St. Paul tells the Ephesians: "Look carefully ... how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil" (v. 15-16). The days were not any more or less evil in St. Paul's time than in ours. Each of us is equally vulnerable to the dangers of our particular time and needs to try to be 'wise.' Do we walk carefully? Do we make the best use of our time? Do we seek out what is pleasing to the Lord? Keeping Judgment Day in front of us will help us focus our attention, if we chose to reflect on it often enough.

"Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (v. 17). When we succumb to temptation, we forget our high calling. Again, our human struggle is experienced as a constant back-and-forth in our minds and in our hearts. It is part of being alive. We face a thousand choices a day, and must remember each has a moral consequence. We may be tempted to cut corners or even sin outright, but when we think about things in the light of day, we realize that doing God's will is really what we ourselves want. It is the foolishness of sinful temptation that keeps us away from truly becoming ourselves.

Finally, St. Paul warns us, "do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit" (v. 18). There was a practice among some of the Mystery cults in his time to become 'high' not by God's Spirit, but by other kinds of more earthly spirits. We must always strive to be filled with the Holy Spirit, truly loving one another and "addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all [our] heart" (v. 19). Faith should be embodied in the way we live. It is not that good deeds justify us before God, but they will make us God's children. The way we treat one another, those who love us as well as those who hate us and wish us harm, is the way the world will know that we follow our Lord, Jesus Christ, crucified and risen!

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

Sunday, Nov 15 - Nativity (Christmas) Fast begins
Thursday, Nov 19 - Parish Council Meeting 7 PM (Zoom)
Thursday, Nov 26 - Thanksgiving Day
Friday, Nov 27 - 2020 Fall Sunday School Retreat at Marlboro
Saturday, Dec 5 - Food Pantry (9 AM - NOON)
Saturday, Dec 5 - Great Vespers for St. Nicholas 6 PM
Sunday, Dec 6 - St. Nicholas Feastday
Friday, December 18 - Mustard Seed Meal Prep (1:30 PM - 3:30 PM)
Friday, December 25 - Feast of the Lord's Nativity

[St. Nicholas Orthodox Church](#)
[34 Gold St | Shrewsbury, MA 01545-6238](#)
[508-845-0088](#) | fax: [508-845-8850](#) | e-mail: ParishCouncil@StNicholasChurch.org
www.StNicholasChurch.org
Sunday Services: Matins at 9:00 am and Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am