

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, December 13, 2020

Twenty-eighth Sunday After Pentecost

Sunday of the Holy Ancestors

*The Holy Hierarch Dosoftei
Metropolitan of Moldova*

Apostolic Reading: Colossians 3:4-11

Gospel: Luke 14:16-24

(Parable of the Great Banquet)

Tone 2 • Matins Gospel 5

- ➔ **For COVID Guidelines, [click here](#)**
- ➔ **For Live Streaming Link, [click here](#)**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WE ARE IN THE NATIVITY FAST. Let us use this time to withdraw from the noise of the “Christmas Season,” in order to reflect on the great mystery of Emmanuel: God-with-us!

MUSTARD SEED MEAL. We are providing a meal for the Mustard Seed NEXT Friday, December 18th for 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 want to thank George Demake who is sponsoring this month’s meal. If you would like to help with the preparation, please contact **Deb Sedares** — by e-mail (dsedares@pinehills.com) or phone 508-353-9449. Gathering time is 1:00pm Friday, Dec 18th.

THE CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM will be held on **Sunday, December 20th** at the end of Divine Liturgy. There will be Zoom rehearsals on Saturday, December 12th, and December 19th. If your child/children would like to participate, please contact [Gina Skaff](mailto:ginaskaff@hotmail.com) (ginaskaff@hotmail.com) or call: (508) 770-8040.

FR. VASILE AILENI has produced a short video introducing himself to the parish. While we wait for the visa process to be completed, we're making use of various electronic media to get acquainted. [Click here to see his video.](#) We're also pulling together any questions you might want to ask him. If you've got a question, please e-mail [George Demake](mailto:Gdemake@charter.net) at gdemake@charter.net. We are also arranging small group video chats so those interested can strike up a direct conversation.

PASTRIES AVAILABLE: Just in time for Christmas, while supplies last, St. Nick's Kitchen has freshly baked **baklava, kouroubia, and koulourakia** available for sale. To order, call [Betty Anderson](mailto:BettyAnderson) at 508-353-9449, or e-mail her at: bettya16@verizon.net.

AN ELECTION FOR THE NEW PARISH COUNCIL WILL BE HELD IN JANUARY. Following Archdiocesan procedures, the Parish Council has formed a Nominating Committee to propose a slate of candidates to the General Assembly. [George Demake](mailto:Gdemake) is the Chair of that Committee. If you would like to serve, or if you would like to nominate someone for the Parish Council, please [e-mail](mailto:Gdemake) him.

THANKS TO THE FOOD PANTRY VOLUNTEERS who staffed our monthly responsibility at the Orthodox Food Center last Saturday. Our next Saturday is January 2, 2021. If you can help in this worthwhile ministry, please e-mail [Nicole Apostola](mailto:NicoleApostola) at nicole.apostola@gmail.com.

THANKS TO THE PARISHIONERS who provided the CHRISTMAS GIFTS for the Holy Trinity Residents. Special appreciation goes to [Eleanor Sedares](mailto:EleanorSedares) and [Deb Sedares](mailto:DebSedares) for coordinating the program for St. Nick's.

CONGRATULATIONS TO NICHOLAS AND CHRYSANTHI CHARALAMBIDES who celebrated their **Fiftieth Wedding Anniversary** on December 5th. May our good and loving Lord continue to bless them and preserve them! *Mulji si Fericiji Ani!*

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!**

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

COVID-19 UPDATE – Holy Trinity is experiencing residents and staff testing positive with Covid. Presently, there are 7 residents and 3 staff members positive. All residents and staff have been tested and the results are currently pending. The families of residents testing positive will be called. The main dining room will be temporarily closed to ensure residents are not mingling between floors. At this time Activities will continue on courtyard and Hillside with social distancing.

VISITATIONS – For the protection of residents and family members, all in person visits are being cancelled.

JOB OPENINGS – We are hiring, and our staff is excellent to work with. We are hiring entry level housekeepers for multiple shifts. We are hiring nurses and CNAs all shifts. [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.

HOLIDAY DECORATING / ACTIVITIES – Holy Trinity staff has and continues to brainstorm every day to think of activities that will help lift our resident's spirits during this difficult time of Covid-19. On December 16th at 2pm join us on Facebook live. Our residents will be participating in decorating gingerbread cookies. Our gingerbread house cart will then deliver fresh baked cookies to our staff and other residents. * Also, during this time we will be offering COVID-19 education and a virtual tour of the inside of the building to show our Holiday cheer. For further information [please see our website](#), over the next 2 weeks we will be presenting a slideshow of all resident activities and will continue to add to this.

TREASURED GENERATIONS ANNUAL APPEAL – This year has been a difficult one for Holy Trinity's staff and residents. Now, more than ever, we need your help. If you wish to donate to the Treasured Generations fund please click [here](#). Every gift helps. And, we thank you for your support!

THE DIVINE LITURGY is celebrated every Wednesday at 9:30a.m.

Prayer of Fr. Laurence

Let us pray to the Lord,

Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ, for allowing us to serve you. In fulfilling the law and the prophets in accord with the Father's divine plan, you raised us to a new covenant, leading us to

worship in spirit and in truth. So, today, as we ponder your birth in our midst, we, your sinful and unworthy servants, entreat your goodness: In our hearts, engrave the mysteries of your incarnation as well as your constant presence within us, give us the strength to serve and worship you at all times, and lead us to that liturgy that never ends.

For you teach us to pray in your name, O Christ, reconciling us with the Father, to whom we give glory in the Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Please *R.S.V.P.*

This week's Gospel lesson is the Parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:16-24). St. Matthew also has an account of this same parable (22:1-4) that we hear on the 14th Sunday after Pentecost. However, while both Evangelists relate a similar story, the different contexts in which each is placed shifts the focus of the parable. St. Matthew places his account of the Wedding Feast in a sequence of other parables that Jesus spoke intending to challenge the hypocrisy of the religious authorities of his time. St. Luke places his account in the context of Jesus teaching about humility and hospitality.

In trying to explain what the Kingdom of Heaven is like, Jesus uses the image of a Great Banquet. In an earlier part of this chapter (v. 8-9), he says, "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down in the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host, and the host who invited both of you may come and say, 'Give up your place to this man.' And then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place." He goes on to say that "all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" (v. 11).

Jesus then moves on to speak about hospitality. He says, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case that they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you" (v. 12-14).

Very often we struggle to understand what St. Paul means when he says, "by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). In the Lord's teaching on hospitality we gain an insight into what St. Paul means when he says we have been saved "by grace." When we read this parable many of us perhaps identify with the host who extends the invitation and is turned-down by his guests. But, in actuality, we are the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind who have been invited to the banquet. We are the ones who do not have the ability to repay. We have a place at the table only because of God's grace and His love.

This Parable of the Great Banquet can be very helpful for us as we prepare for the Feast of the Lord's Birth. When the Lord wants to show us what the Kingdom of God is like, he gives us joyful images like a banquet (Luke 14:16), or a wedding feast (Matthew 22:1), or a bridal

chamber (Matthew 25:1, John 3:29). He also gives us transformative images like yeast (Luke 13:20), or a mustard seed (Luke 13:18). He wants us to see the Kingdom of God as something that will bring happiness to our lives even as we are changed by it.

And, who does God send to extend his invitation for us to attend this Banquet? God sends the invitation in the form of His Son, who embodies the very humility he preaches to us. This Son does not take the first seat, but the last. He does not impose himself, but comes as a vulnerable child. And showing us what he means by hospitality, he invites not only the rich and powerful, but also the lowly and the unimportant, the meek and the poor.

We all know it is hard to focus on the spiritual importance of the holiday. During this time of year we are wittingly or unwittingly distracted from responding to the Lord's invitation as we should. We are preoccupied with family and social obligations. There are decorations to hang and gifts to buy. Commercial interests conspire to twist the miracle of Christ's birth in order to increase the bottom line. Yet still, we are neither captives nor victims. We can choose. This is the point of the Parable. People were invited to feast at God's table yet they chose the distractions of life over the joy of the Kingdom.

We are invited to the Feast, but if we choose not to attend, the Banquet Hall will not remain empty. The Lord will fill His House, and He will fill it as it pleases Him (v. 23). We should take care not to be blinded by the frenzy of the season, and as a result reject the invitation offered us. Rather, we should actively seek out refuge in that quiet cave in Bethlehem, where rests a young child, the pre-eternal God.

— Fr. Nicholas Apostola

Orthodox Links

[Romanian Orthodox Metropolis](#) 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

Thursday, Dec 17 — Parish Council, 7pm
Friday, December 18 - Mustard Seed Meal Prep (1:30 PM - 3:30 PM)
Friday, December 25 - Feast of the Lord's Nativity

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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