

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, January 10, 2021

Sunday After Theophany

Apostolic Reading: Ephesians 4:7-13

Gospel: Matthew 4:12-17

(The Lord Begins his Ministry)

Tone 6 • Matins Gospel 9

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

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WE CELEBRATED THE FEAST OF THEOPHANY this past week. We remember the great self-revelation of God at the Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Jordan by the hand of St. John the Baptist. It is our custom to take Holy Water and bless everything at this time of year, especially our homes — usually. But these are not usual times. ***Because of the Virus, it is neither prudent nor safe to bless homes as we normally do.*** Hopefully we can bless houses later this year. However, there is a solution. ***Each one of us can take the water sanctified at the Great Blessing of Water and bless our own homes.*** This is an ancient and beautiful practice of our Church. Never forget, God is always with us! ALSO, ***please bring your empty Holy Water bottles to the Church.*** We can fill them up again.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY of our Parish will be held on Sunday, January 31st. The election of the new Parish Council for its two-year term will take place then. If you don't feel comfortable in attending Liturgy and the Assembly on that day, the Parish Council is discussing ways for everyone to be able to participate electronically.

THE 2021 CHURCH CALENDARS are here, in both ***English and Romanian.*** Pick them up at the candles. Please consider a small donation to cover the costs. If you know someone who is unable to come to Church but would like a calendar, please pick one up for them.

The ***latest issue of the Metropolitan quarterly CREDINȚA / THE FAITH*** is now available.

[Please click here to download it.](#)

DON'T FORGET to send in your **2020 Stewardship contribution**. If you haven't done so already, please send it in as soon as possible.

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](#).

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 – All staff and residents continue to be tested every 3 days. There is still an admission freeze. At this time 4 employees are out with Covid, and 3 residents have Covid. Routine infection control surveys continue to be conducted. The staff is working on a plan of correction related to the first deficiency since April. **Good News:** vaccines will be available next week. All health care proxies will be contacted to discuss and obtain verbal and written consent. More information will be provided during these calls.

VISITATIONS – There are no changes in the visitation policy. For the protection of residents and family members, all in-person visits are suspended.

JOB OPENINGS – Holy Trinity is hiring, and the staff is excellent to work with. At present, there is an opening for Director of Maintenance. Also, openings for entry level housekeepers for multiple shifts; 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.

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!

DIVINE LITURGY celebrations have been suspended until the current Covid spike has been contained.

A Prayer of Fr. Laurence

Let us pray to the Lord,

Glory to you, eternal Father, for sending us your Son! Glory to you, coeternal Son, for being baptized by John! Glory to you, O life-giving Spirit, for pointing out the Son to all the world! As we celebrate these days of Theophany, enable us to praise you with all your creatures, so that our lives may manifest your majesty and glory at all times, O you whose wisdom fashioned and created all things.

For you are indeed our God, and we give you glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages.

Growing into our Potential

The Lord's Epiphany at his baptism in the Jordan by John marks the beginning of his earthly ministry. Very soon after this, John will be imprisoned and put to death. Jesus will begin preaching and healing. Slowly people will recognize that Jesus is the Messiah. The Scripture readings for this Sunday following the Feast of Epiphany — the Gospel lesson is Matthew 4:12-17 and the Epistle lesson is Ephesians 4:7-13 — speak of the Lord's ministry, and the ministry given to those who have chosen to follow him.

The selected reading from Ephesians is taken from a section of St. Paul's Letter where he speaks of the unity of the Body of Christ and how each of us can contribute to building it up. He says, "each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift" (v. 7). In other words, each of us has been given something by Christ that is essential for the well-being of the whole Church. Christ shares his gifts with us. We are essential participants in Christ's work of salvation. No gift is better or more important than another. Each is needed; all are critical. Our task is to understand our gift and use it for the well-being of others.

In order to emphasize both the power and humility of the Lord Jesus he quotes Psalm 68:18 adding insights from both Jewish Biblical scholars of the time as well as his own. So he says: "When he ascended on high he made captivity [entrapment by the Evil One] itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people" (v. 8). Here is how St. Paul explains this verse: "When it says, 'He ascended,' what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things" (v. 9-10).

St. Paul wants us to appreciate how the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, God's Son, "descended" to the earth. He came and lived among us. Some Biblical scholars say that when St. Paul says he "descended into the lower parts of the earth" this is also a reference to his death and descent to Hades to liberate the souls of the righteous held captive there. St. Paul's

central point is that by both descending and ascending Jesus defeated the Evil One. “He made captivity itself a captive.” And, “he gave gifts.”

What are these gifts that Christ gave us? “The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers” (v. 11). St. Paul gives us other lists of gifts given us, for example in Romans 12:3-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:1-31. However, the list he gives in Ephesians has to do with the Church, particularly offices in the Church. These are not ‘personal’ gifts. Rather, they are gifts “for building up the body of Christ;” and, “to equip the saints [that is us, average Christians] for the work of ministry” (v. 12).

When God gives us gifts, they are always meant to be used for the well-being of others. They don’t belong to us, to use narrowly or even selfishly. This is particularly evident in the four gifts that St. Paul names here: apostles, prophets, evangelists; and pastors/ teachers. Each of these gifts represents a position of responsibility within the Church. The apostles were those with a direct, first-hand experience of Jesus and given a commission to preach Him. A prophet is an inspired preacher who encourages, warns or stimulates the community. An evangelist is an itinerant preacher, proclaiming the Gospel from community to community. The pastor/teacher is the presbyter (priest) or bishop; the one responsible for ministering to and guiding the local community. These gifts, and the responsibilities that come with them, have as their sole purpose the edification, the building-up, of the Body of Christ.

The gifts and offices are given, “until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ” (v. 13). You can see from what St. Paul says that these gifts are not intended to be permanent; that is to say, they are given to us for a purpose and toward an end. The end is that all of us should come to maturity, the full stature of Christ.

Let’s look at some of the phrases St. Paul gives us. He tells us that we are expected to come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God. The “unity of the faith” means that we, each of us in the Church (that is, the whole Church) and each of us in the church (that is, our home parish), come to a common and correct faith. The “knowledge of the Son of God” does not mean to “know Jesus.” Rather, it means to know what Jesus knows; to think and understand as Jesus does.

When we are able to take on “the mind of Christ,” we become mature. We become fully human. When we say that Jesus became fully human, we are not only saying that the Son of God became like us; we are also saying that Christ became what we were intended to be — when He created us. He has come to give us the opportunity to become fully human — but, only if we want to.

God gives us gifts to help one another. He asks us to learn, grow, and fully develop into the kind of persons who look like Adam and Eve in Paradise. He invites us to live up to our full potential. He gives us the gifts we need and the grace to realize it.

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

Saturday, January 30 — Food Pantry, 9:00 am-noon
Sunday, January 31 — GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Saturday, February 6 — Food Pantry, 9:00 am-noon
Monday, March 15 — Great Lent Begins
Sunday, May 2 — Great and Holy Pascha

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