

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, January 24, 2021

Thirty First Sunday After Pentecost

Apostolic Reading: 1 Timothy 1:15-17

Gospel: Luke 18:35-43

(Jesus Heals the Blind Man near Jericho)

Tone 8 • Matins Gospel 11

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

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY of our Parish will be held **NEXT 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. That information will be sent out this coming week.

FOOD PANTRY. Help is needed to staff our monthly responsibility at the Orthodox Food Center, **Saturday, January 30th, and Saturday, February 6th, from 9 am - noon**. About 4 people are needed. Likewise, donations of food are always needed, and may be dropped off at the Food Pantry housed at St. Spyridon Cathedral. Help is also needed during the week for shopping and stocking the Pantry. If you can help in this worthwhile ministry, please e-mail Nicole Apostola at nicole.apostola@gmail.com.

BLESSING OF HOMES AT THEOPHANY. Normally, in these days following Theophany, the priest would visit every household to bring God's blessing. However, we don't need to be reminded that these are not normal times. Because of the Virus, it is neither prudent nor safe to bless homes as usual. Hopefully, we'll be able to bless houses later this year. But, 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. [You may download this simple service here.](#) Never forget, God is always with us!

PLEASE RETURN YOUR EXTRA HOLY WATER BOTTLES! Many of you have Holy Water bottles at home. Right now, we're running low on bottles. Please return the ones you're finished using by bringing them to Church on Sunday.

ALL THINGS ORTHODOX TV. A new cable program has been launched on WCCA TV this past week. Organized and hosted by Fr. Christopher Stamas from St. Spyridon Cathedral **ALL THINGS ORTHODOX TV.** A new cable program was launched this past week on the Worcester Cable Channel 194. It's also available for viewing on [WCCA TV's](#) website. Organized and hosted by Fr. Christopher Stamas of St. Spyridon Cathedral, the program focuses on topics of interest to both Orthodox Christians and those interested in learning more about our faith. The weekly program airs each Monday at 7pm; Tuesday at 11:30pm; Saturday at 8pm and Sunday at 9pm. It also can be streamed on the [WCCA TV's](#) website. If you're a Facebook user, please be sure to "like" the Facebook page: "All Things Orthodox TV."

The latest issue of the Metropolitan quarterly magazine **CREDINȚA / THE FAITH** is now available. [Please click here to download it.](#)

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.

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.

*It is with sadness that we note the falling-asleep of **DR. NICHOLAS C. MAZANITIS** this past Wednesday. Dr. Mazanitis is survived by his wife Sandra G. Mazanitis, his son Alex, and three daughters: Nicole, Christina and Sophia. The O'Connor Brothers Funeral Home is assisting with arrangements. For a full obituary, [click here](#). **May his memory be eternal!***

WE CELEBRATE TWO MEMORIALS TODAY. We remember the servant of God **Florica Tonna**, fallen asleep one year. We also remember the servant of God Nikolaos Karadimitriou, father of Kosmas Karadimitriou. **May our good and loving Lord rest their souls among the righteous!**



REMEMBER, 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. At this time there are 2 staff members out with Covid, and 1 resident on the Covid wing. There is still an admission freeze. Another infection control survey is expected. No new guidance from DPH related to Covid has been issued. Everyone will be updated as new guidance and regulations are released. The decrease in positive cases indicate that Holy Trinity is heading in the right direction.

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 a 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.

THE ACTIVITIES DEPARTMENT continues to plan Covid-safe activities for the residents. **January is National pizza month**, and the Activities Department organizes doorway pizza socials with pizza word games. **Doorway Bingo** continues to be a favorite. And **Nova**, our quickly growing Saint Bernard, continues to visit two days a week, providing much love and happiness with her room visits.

TREASURED GENERATIONS ANNUAL APPEAL – This past year has been a difficult one for Holy Trinity's staff and residents. Now, more than ever, we need your help, and every donation makes a difference. If you wish to donate to the Treasured Generations fund please click [here](#). Please remember to type "Treasure Generations" in the memo field. And, we thank you for your support!

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

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)

A Prayer of Fr. Laurence

Let us pray to the Lord,

O God, who are good to all: Help us escape the sadness and anger that accompany our recollection of injuries done to us, real or imagined. Let us experience the joy that comes not only from forgiving but also from forgetting them. Clear our minds and memories of whatever we think others have done to us. Make us determined to repay it all only with good, and to give everyone the benefit of the doubt always.

For you are a God of mercy and compassion, and we give you glory: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

I Am the Chief Sinner

The Epistle lesson for this thirty-first Sunday after Pentecost is taken from St. Paul's first Letter to his disciple Timothy: 1:15-17. This letter, along with second Timothy and Titus form a unique group: pastoral letters addressed to particular persons, heads of Churches. In them St. Paul takes up the challenges of local church leaders as he sets an overarching direction for the whole early Church.

The three verses of today's reading are not so much addressed to Timothy as they are a moment of self-reflection on St. Paul's part. In these and the few preceding verses, he looks back on his former life — what he characterized as zealous but totally misdirected — and the degree to which God, in His mercy, had completely transformed it.

In verse 15 he gives us a statement that lies at the heart of the Christian proclamation: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." He says that this saying "is sure and worthy of full acceptance." In other words, we can rely on it and trust that it is true; we shouldn't doubt it.

One reason St. Paul states this so categorically is that, in spite of the fact that many people did accept these words as Good News, many others did not. While this shouldn't surprise us, since we often experience the same reaction today, there is an important difference between St. Paul's time and ours. People of the Roman world had a better sense of what sin is than we do today. It isn't that they were more moral than us — anyone who has read a history of the Roman Empire can testify to that; it is that even while they were sinning, they could more readily recognize it as such. We have a harder time.

One rule of sin is that it is always easier to recognize it in someone else than in yourself. Another rule is that sin reflects a violation of relationships: between us and God, between us and our loved ones, between us and people we don't even know; and finally, between our true selves and the mask that we put on to fool ourselves.

St. Paul sets us on the right trajectory for understanding sin with what he says at the end of this verse. After telling us that Jesus has come to save sinners, he adds: "of whom I am the foremost." This whole verse is part of the prayer we say before Communion attributed to St.

John Chrysostom. It begins: "I believe and confess that you are the Christ the Son of the living God ..." We come to recognize ourselves as the "chief sinner" as we recite the prayer.

While logic tells us we all can't be the "chief sinner," St. Paul's assertion isn't about logic, it's about point of view. We stop looking at the speck in the eye of another and concentrate on the log lodged in our own (cf. Matthew 7:3ff). By speaking of his own sins, St. Paul provides us both an example to follow, and gives us the courage to embrace the "sure and worthy" news that God loves us. He says as much to Timothy in verse 16. His argument is that if we could see how God poured His mercy on Paul, after all of the things he had done against God and His Christ, then we would gain the strength to accept God's mercy and forgiveness for ourselves.

It is probably harder for modern people to accept the second rule of sin, that sin is a violation of relationships. In spite of the deep aloneness and isolation so many people feel, it remains difficult to break out of our narcissistic shell and truly engage those around us; to allow them and their needs to be more important to us than our own. Our airwaves are populated by endless talk shows on building relationships; innumerable books and articles are written on the subject; millions upon millions of people open Facebook accounts, each one "friending" hundreds of people. Yet, the pain of our aloneness grows. The root cause is the hard shell of our egos that prevents us from truly engaging those around us. We live virtual lives. We text the person sitting next to us rather than looking into their eyes. We crave experiences rather than relationships. This is the heart of sin.

God did not send us an ambassador. He came Himself. He didn't ask anything of us, except our love. In fact, He gave us His love without waiting for our response. St. Paul says He did this, dying for us, while we were still His enemies (cf. Romans 5:10). It would be a sin not to love God in return.

We make a great deal about people who put themselves in harm's way for the sake of a friend or even a stranger. Police and firefighters do this all the time. Soldiers do this defending their nation. We call them heroes, and rightly so. These are people who in one instant will forget about themselves and completely give of themselves for the sake of the other. They crack open their shell of narcissism and become vulnerable, even to death.

Each of us can do the same. We don't necessarily have to die, except to ourselves, but we can take responsibility for our own actions, rather than blame someone else. We can hold our tongues while listening to someone with whom we disagree. We can suffer through painful moments in our relationships, hoping to bridge the gap that separates. We can be faithful, loyal and honest, even when others are duplicitous. We can love the ones around us more than we love ourselves. All of this is possible when we realize that we are the "chief sinner," and God loves us.

"To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen" (v. 17).

Fr. Nicholas Apostola

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

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