

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, February 21, 2021

Thirty-third Sunday After Pentecost

**The Parable of the Publican & the Pharisee
The Triodion Begins**

***Apostolic Reading: 2 Timothy 3:10-15
Gospel: Luke 18:10-24***

Tone 4 • Matins Gospel 4

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE TRIODION BEGINS TODAY. The Triodion is the Church's hymnbook for the period from now, through Great Lent, until Pascha. The next three weeks are meant to prepare us for Great Lent that begins on Monday, March 15th.

THIS COMING WEEK is totally fast-free.

THANKS TO THE MUSTARD SEED MEAL CONTRIBUTORS. We provided a meal for the Mustard Seed this past **Friday, February 19th for 75 people.** We'd like to thank our dependable crew who shopped and assembled the meal. We'd also like to thank **Kosmas Karadimitriou and Maria Kalpidou** for underwriting the cost of this month's meal. God bless each of them! If you and your family would like to help with the next meal (April 16th), please contact **Deb Sedares** — by e-mail or phone 508-509-6678.

THE PARISH COUNCIL OFFICERS were elected at its first meeting last Sunday following the administering of the Oath of Office. These are: **Christopher Seith**, President; **Dimitri Saffron**, Vice President; **William Tsoules**, Treasurer; and **Margarite Landry**, Secretary. ***Congratulations!***

A YOUTH SNOW TUBING OUTING is being held in cooperation with Sts. Anargyroi on Friday, March 5th. Notices went out to the kids (and parents) and we have a great group lined up. Particular thanks go to **Valarie Stamoulis** and **Presvytera Eleni Chistakos** for putting this together.

ALL THINGS ORTHODOX TV. A new cable program has been launched on WCCA. Organized and hosted by Fr. Christopher Stamas from St. Spyridon Cathedral, **ALL THINGS ORTHODOX TV** can be found on the Worcester Cable [Channel 194](#). It's also available for viewing on the [WCCA TV's](#) website. 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."



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!**

LENTEN RESOURCES

We are beginning the journey toward Pascha, the Lord's Resurrection. To help along the way, we'll be posting each week some resources and reflections aimed at assisting and informing.

THE SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND THE PHARISEE (Gospel reading: Luke 18:10–14). On this and the following two Sundays, the theme is *repentance*. Repentance is the door through which we enter Lent, the starting-point of our journey to Pascha. And to repent signifies far more than self-pity or futile regret over things done in the past. The Greek term *metanoia* means 'change of mind': to repent is to be renewed, to be transformed in our inward viewpoint, to attain a fresh way of looking at our relationship to God and to others. The fault of the Pharisee is that he has no desire to change his outlook; he is complacent, self-satisfied, and so he allows no place for God to act within him. The Publican, on the other hand, truly longs for a 'change of mind': he is self-dissatisfied, 'poor in spirit', and where there is this saving self-dissatisfaction there is room for God to act. Unless we learn the secret of the Publican's inward poverty, we shall not share in the Lenten springtime. The theme of the day can be summed up in a saying of the Desert Fathers: 'Better a man who has sinned, if he knows that he has sinned and repents, than a man who has not sinned and thinks of himself as righteous.'

FASTING RULES. One question that often comes up is: [What are the Fasting rules? We've linked here](#) one of the better explanations of the rules around fasting. It is taken from the *Lenten Triodion*, translated and edited by Metropolitan Kallistos Ware and Mother Mary. If you've never been exposed to the whole discipline of the Fast, reading the rules can seem very daunting. You should seek advice from your spiritual father; no one should try this without guidance.

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

COVID-19 UPDATE – Holy Trinity is currently COVID-19 free. There are no employees out or residents with active COVID. **We are excited to announce that visitations will be welcomed** at the designated visitation area, please schedule your visit [online at our website](#) or call the activities department to schedule an in person visit with your loved one. With this comes more exciting news for our residents that we will open for small group activities with social distancing and continue to encourage that residents wear their masks. We will now implement weekly employee testing per DPH guidance and continue to rapid test visitors as indicated.

JOB OPENINGS – Holy Trinity is hiring, and the staff is excellent to work with. At present, there is an **opening for an HR Generalist**, and for a **Staff Development Coordinator**. Also, **openings** for nurses and CNAs for 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 — With the opening of small social distancing group activities our activity department is reviewing and revising the activities and will be distributing new events this weekend. Our staff is looking forward to this change and we are looking forward to seeing our residents increase their activity and socialization.

TREASURED GENERATIONS ANNUAL APPEAL – If you wish to donate to the Treasured Generations fund please [click here](#). Remember to type "Treasure Generations" in the memo field. And, we thank you for your support!

DIVINE LITURGY celebrations will resume when DPH allows us to do so.

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,

Though we constantly provoke you, Lord God, in your boundless mercy you never abandon us. In your own mysterious ways, you ease the burdens of our life, giving us the strength to bear them, and you answer us, again in your own way, when we cry out to you in distress. Still, though we seldom hear or understand your response, by faith we try to remember that you are there and that you hear us. Teach us to live as you wish us to, and, in your loving kindness, increase and confirm our faith.

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

Continue in What You Have Learned and Firmly Believed

This Sunday we begin the Triodion, the Church's hymn book for Great Lent leading to Pascha. While Lent is still a few weeks off, the Fathers decided to help us get ready for it by focusing our attention through Scripture readings and hymns. Today's Gospel lesson is the parable of the Publican (tax collector) and the Pharisee (Luke 18:10-14). The Epistle reading is from St. Paul's second letter to Timothy, 3:10-15.

Today's selected reading from St. Paul comes out of a portion of this second letter to Timothy concerned with the End-Times, that is, the Second Coming of Jesus. St. Paul is predicting what will happen to people as the time for the Lord's arrival draws near. He is particularly trying to encourage and strengthen his beloved disciple Timothy, who we learn from St. Paul's letters and in Acts, is a quiet and retiring person, not the kind of strong personality that St. Paul himself is.

The first advice St. Paul offers Timothy is his own example. He has done this in other situations as well, for example when he tells the Corinthians that they might have many teachers but not many fathers (1 Corinthians 4:15); or when he tells them to "be imitators of me as I am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). So, in a more gentle way, he says to Timothy: "You have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions, and my suffering the things that happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I endured! Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them" (v. 10-11). St. Paul had suffered in many places, but in this passage he only mentions those places that Timothy would personally remember, especially Lystra, where St. Timothy was born, raised, and first met St. Paul.

He then tells Timothy a sobering reality: "All who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (v. 12). He is speaking first and foremost out of his own personal experience. When he was a committed disciple of the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem, he persecuted the followers of Christ mercilessly. When Jesus appeared to him on the way to Damascus causing him to become a follower of Jesus, he himself now became the one persecuted. In our own time Christian believers are being firebombed and killed even in their own Churches, in Nigeria, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Syria, the Philippines, and Indonesia — only to mention a few places. For

these and others a choice to openly confess their faith in Jesus Christ may very well mean a choice to suffer and die. Not so many years ago the same was true in all of Russia and the Eastern Bloc.

This is not to say that people of other faiths do not also suffer persecution — sometimes at the hands of ‘Christians’ — but suffering because of faith in the person and teachings of Jesus the Christ has distinguished His followers throughout the centuries, from the very outset. Most of us have grown up in a political situation where we have never had to choose between our life and our faith. Unfortunately, from the beginning, many Christians have. Regardless, it is never easy to be Christian. And, while we might not be forced by others to put our lives on the lines, we are still asked by the Lord Himself to die to ourselves in order to truly live, in Christ.

The second point, a corollary, is that: “wicked people and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived” (v. 13). One of the titles of the devil is the “Deceiver.” It was through his deception that Eve took the fruit in the Garden. It was she who naïvely deceived Adam to share in it (cf. Genesis 3:1ff). St. Paul speaks of a cycle of evil and wickedness. One feeds on the other. It becomes difficult, if not impossible, to stop. Only with God is it possible to break this cycle (cf. Matthew 19:25-26).

St. Paul offers Timothy this instruction, both to strengthen his resolve in the face of persecution, as well as to prepare him to face the wickedness of the world. “Continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (v. 14-15).

Timothy’s mother was a pious Jewish woman married to a pagan. Theirs was what we might call today a “mixed marriage.” Nevertheless, she educated Timothy according to Jewish tradition; beginning from age five all Jewish children were to be instructed in the Sacred Writings. Yet even while recommending the study of Scripture, St. Paul also emphasizes the role of those people who taught him. We can infer that he meant first his mother. Just as he had offered himself as an example to follow, so too is he now reminding Timothy of his mother’s example of faith. As parents we are the primary example our children look to for everything, but especially regarding our faith; the way we integrate and manifest what we say we believe in how we actually behave is what our children will remember and incorporate into their lives.

Finally, he reiterates the power of Scripture to “instruct for salvation.” Until recently it was common for children to memorize Scripture, and especially the Psalms. One requirement for ordination to the episcopacy is to be able to recite the entire Books of Psalms by heart. Verses of the Sacred Text that are engraved on our hearts come to our aid when we are struggling and in need of consolation. “Through our faith in Christ Jesus” the comforting words inspired by the Holy Spirit bring peace to our hearts and salvation to our souls.

Maranatha! (“Lord, come!”)

Fr. Nicholas Apostola

Dates To Remember

Sun, Feb 21 Publican & Pharisee. Tridion begins
Week of Feb 21 No Fasting
Fri, March 5 Youth Snow Tubing, 6-8 pm
Sat, March 6 Saturday of the Souls, Liturgy 10 am
Food Pantry, 9:00 am-noon
Sun, March 7 Meatfare Sunday
Sun, March 14 Cheesefare/Forgiveness Sunday
Mon, March 15 Great Lent begins
Sun, April 4 Western Easter
Sun, April 25 Palm Sunday
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