

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, February 28, 2021

Thirty-fourth Sunday After Pentecost

The Sunday of the Prodigal Son

Apostolic Reading: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Gospel: Luke 15:11-32

Tone 5 • Matins Gospel 5

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FOOD PANTRY. Help is needed to staff our monthly responsibility at the Orthodox Food Center, **NEXT Saturday, March 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](mailto:nicole.apostola@gmail.com) Nicole Apostola at nicole.apostola@gmail.com.

SATURDAY OF THE SOULS/SĂMBĂȚA MORȚILOR is next Saturday, March 6th. Liturgy begins at 10:00AM, preceded by Matins at 9:00AM. If you would like to contribute to the memorial wheat, speak with [Betty Anderson](#). If you have names to be remembered, [e-mail Fr. Nick](#).

A YOUTH SNOW TUBING OUTING is being held in coöperation 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 Christakos** 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 [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 [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.

THIS SUNDAY WE RECALL THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON. (Gospel reading: Luke 15:11–32). The parable of the Prodigal forms an exact ikon of repentance in its different stages. Sin is exile, enslavement to strangers, hunger. Repentance is the return from exile to our true home; it is to receive back our inheritance and freedom in the Father's house. But repentance implies action: 'I will rise up and go ...' (verse 18). To repent is not just to feel dissatisfied, but to take a decision and to act upon it. On this and the next two Sundays, after the solemn and joyful words of the Polyeleos at Mattins, we add the sorrowful verses of Psalm 136, 'By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept ...'. This Psalm of exile, sung by the children of Israel in their Babylonian captivity, has a special appropriateness on the Sunday of the Prodigal, when we call to mind our present exile in sin and make the resolve to return home.

NEXT SATURDAY IS CALLED the Saturday of the Dead. On the day before the Sunday of the Last Judgment, and in close connection with the theme of this Sunday, there is a universal commemoration of the dead 'from all the ages'. (There are further commemorations of the dead on the second, third and fourth Saturdays in Lent.) Before we call to mind the Second Coming of Christ in the services on Sunday, we commend to God all those departed before us, who are now awaiting the Last Judgment. In the texts for this Saturday there is a strong sense of the continuing bond of mutual love that links together all the members of the Church, whether alive or dead. For those who believe in the risen Christ, death does not constitute an impassable barrier, since all are alive in Him; the departed are still our brethren, members of the same family with us, and so we are conscious of the need to pray insistently on their behalf.

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 staff or residents with COVID-19 or flu. Visitors are welcomed back. There are designated visitation areas that allow up to a 45-minute visit with one's loved one. An in-person [visit may be scheduled](#) on the web site or by calling the Activities Department (508-852-1000). If you choose, a rapid Covid test with results in 15 minutes is available prior to your scheduled visit. Employees continue to be tested weekly. **Holy Trinity is now open to admissions to the facility.**

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. Sign-on bonuses are available. People familiar with the languages and cultures of our Orthodox communities are encouraged to apply.

THE ACTIVITIES DEPARTMENT — The Activities Staff is now organizing small-group socially-distanced activities. The return of "Bingo," which is the all-time favorite among the residents, has been greeted with much fanfare. Exercise groups are back. And everyone is happy to see the residents able to interact again.

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 are resuming this coming Wednesday morning!

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 Lord and Master of our lives: Educate us, your ignorant servants, by letting your wisdom enlighten our minds and hearts. Make us alert, lest the deceits of this world seduce us. Teach us how to distinguish between substance and appearance, how to discern what is of the Holy Spirit and what is not. Do not leave us to fight the enemy of our life by ourselves, for he is constantly striving to silence the word of life within us. Rather, be with us today, and every day, through your loving mercy.

For you alone are good and full of love for us, O God and we give you glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

All Things May be Lawful ... But Are All Things Helpful?

This is the second preparatory week before Great Lent — the Sunday of the Prodigal Son.

The Epistle lesson this week is from St. Paul First Letter to the Corinthians, 6:12-20. His major concern in this selection is about illicit sexual relations, but the underlying argument is something deeper and more universal: how are we to act in our present life and body? What is our responsibility to our Lord Jesus Christ and our fellow Christians in the way we behave in the here and now?

The opening verse of this reading is a quote, repeated twice: “‘All things are lawful for me,’ but not all things are helpful. ‘All things are lawful for me,’ but I will not be enslaved by anything” (v. 12). There is a difference of opinion among Biblical scholars. Some say that this is something St. Paul said and is being used by others against him. Others scholars hold that it is a saying of a faction in the Corinthian Church that St. Paul is arguing against. Whichever the case, what we need to understand is that St. Paul, who argued against rigid adherence to the Jewish Law, now feels this argument is being used to open the door to all sorts of license. He offers two arguments against this way of thinking.

The first is that while one might be free from the narrow constraints of the Law — free because of the freedom given us through our Lord’s death and resurrection — it doesn’t necessarily follow that the constraints of the Law were not helpful. For example, just because one might be considered to be mature enough not to need posted speed limits, it does not follow that driving 90 mph down the road is safe. While it might be ‘legal’, it is certainly not helpful to either the driver or any child or adult who might be in the path of the vehicle. We can all think of examples where written rules may not be necessary, because the prudent person already knows how they should act, but the rule helps nonetheless.

His second point is useful to us as we undertake the self-examination required of us as we begin Great Lent. All things may be lawful (but, as St. Paul says), I will not be enslaved by anything. This is the essence of the Fast. Our Lord through His whole Œconomy has opened the path to freedom.

Here is a helpful image. When the children of Israel were subject to Pharaoh they were required to make mud bricks. Because we are subject to our passions, we are forced to make 'mud bricks' out of our foolishness. Pharaoh is a symbol for the Devil. Israel's forty-years in the desert is a symbol of our forty-day fast. To be free from Pharaoh and our sins (mud bricks) we need to change our focus. If we have learned nothing else from the excesses of the past decade we should have learned that nothing is for free; what is 'free' comes with a heavy price — the mud bricks we'll be making for quite some time. God's ways offer us freedom; the Evil One will keep us making bricks without straw forever.

"Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food — and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power" (v. 13-14). St. Paul is giving us an entirely new way of seeing our bodies and our selves. He is telling the persons who were using the beginning verse against him that they completely misunderstand God's purpose. All natural impulses, such as eating to satisfy hunger, were designed for a finite purpose: to minister to our current existence. The life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ manifests to us a new reality. Our present bodies will not be discarded when we die; they will be transfigured. Our call is not simply to purity, but to become the very vessels of holiness.

It is with this in mind that we read the next four verses. "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, 'The two shall become one flesh.' But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body" (v. 15-18).

Remember, in St. Paul's day Corinth was a very free-wheeling place. All sorts of behavior was considered normal and acceptable. The philosophy of "if it feels good, do it" had many followers, including some members of the Corinthian Church. Many of these people felt that the body was a disposable vessel and a prison for the soul, not something holy and sacred. So, when St. Paul said, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God?" (v. 19), this shocked and scandalized them. They wanted to be freed from their bodies.

For us Christians, our Lord's resurrection from the dead changes the way we understand the relationship between our physical body and our soul; between the world around us — God's creation — and the immaterial God who created it.

Finally, St. Paul uses the image of slavery to remind the Corinthians of what they committed themselves to when they decided to follow Christ. "You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (v. 19-20). In the Church we refer to ourselves as the "servant of God." The word "servant" is more accurately translated as "slave." It reminds us that while we may think we are free, we are always subject to something or someone, however, we still can decide. Shall we be slaves to our passions and subject to the Evil One? Or, shall we be slaves to the One who will set us free? That's our choice.

Fr. Nicholas Apostola

Dates To Remember

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

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