

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, March 14, 2021 ***The Sunday of the Casting out of Adam & Eve from Paradise***

— **REMEMBER: Set Clocks *AHEAD* an Hour!** —

(Cheese fare Sunday / Forgiveness Sunday)

Apostolic Reading: Romans 13:11-14:4

Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21

Tone 7 • Matins Gospel 7

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

GREAT LENT begins tomorrow, March 15th.

THE WEDNESDAY PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGIES will begin this Wednesday, March 17th, and each Wednesday thereafter until Holy Week. Because of Covid, we will not be rotating the Liturgies as we've done in years past. Each Liturgy will be here at St. Nicholas starting at 6:00 pm. Plan on attending these services. Set aside your Wednesday evenings and use this as one way to spiritually prepare for Pascha.

BRING YOUR FAVORITE ICON TO CHURCH NEXT SUNDAY! Sunday March 21st is the Sunday of Orthodoxy. We're asking the children of the Parish to process with Icons toward the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. The adults can hold theirs high from the pew. Parents encourage your children to bring their favorite icon. It will make the procession even more meaningful for them.

VESPERS AND CONFESSION will be held each Saturday evening at 5:00 pm during Great Lent. Fr. Nick will be available for confession each week after Vespers, and before Vespers by appointment ([e-mail Fr. Nick](#)).

THE PARISH COUNCIL will hold its regular monthly meeting on Thursday, March 18th at 7:00 pm. Parish Council Members, please let [Chris Seith](#) know if you are unable to attend.



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 BEFORE LENT. The last of the preparatory Sundays has two themes: it commemorates Adam's expulsion from Paradise, and it is also the Sunday of Forgiveness. There are obvious reasons why these two things should be brought to our attention as we stand on the threshold of the Great Fast. One of the primary images in the Triodion is that of the return to Paradise. Lent is a time when we weep with Adam and Eve before the closed gate of Eden, repenting with them for the sins that have deprived us of our free communion with God. But Lent is also a time when we are preparing to celebrate the saving event of Christ's death and rising, which has reopened Paradise to us once more (Luke 23:43). So sorrow for our exile in sin is tempered by hope of our re-entry into Paradise:

O precious Paradise, unsurpassed in beauty,
Tabernacle built by God, unending gladness and delight,
Glory of the righteous, joy of the prophets, and dwelling of the saints,
With the sound of thy leaves pray to the Maker of all:
May He open unto me the gates which I closed by my transgression,
And may He count me worthy to partake of the Tree of Life
And of the joy which was mine when I dwelt in thee before.

Note how the Triodion speaks here not of 'Adam' but of 'me': 'May He open unto me the gates which I closed'. Here, as throughout the Triodion, the events of sacred history are not treated as

happenings in the distant past or future, but as experiences undergone by me here and now within the dimension of sacred time.

The second theme, that of forgiveness, is emphasized in the Gospel reading for this Sunday (Matthew 6:14–21) and in the special ceremony of mutual forgiveness at the end of Vespers on Sunday evening. Before we enter the Lenten fast, we are reminded that there can be no true fast, no genuine repentance, no reconciliation with God, unless we are at the same time reconciled with one another. A fast without mutual love is the fast of demons. As the commemoration of the ascetic saints on the previous Saturday has just made clear to us, we do not travel the road of Lent as isolated individuals but as members of a family. Our asceticism and fasting should not separate us from our brothers and sisters but link us to them with ever stronger bonds. The Lenten ascetic is called to be a person for others.

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 continues to be Covid Free. There are no new updates at this time and no new changes to the current visitation process and guidance.

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).

NEW ADMISSIONS — Holy Trinity is now accepting new residential admissions. To inquire about admissions, either long-term or short-term rehab, please contact Sheryl DiLorenzo at sdilorenzo@htrn.net or call: 508-852-1000.

JOB OPENINGS — Holy Trinity is hiring, and the staff is excellent to work with. There are 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.

REHABILITATION — Short term rehabilitation at Holy Trinity is round the clock medical care and therapeutic Services designed to help people recover from an illness, surgery, or accident. How can Holy Trinity help you? If the health problems being faced by your loved one are more than you can care for at home, then our rehabilitation team can provide the services to help regain independence for a safe discharge to home.

ACTIVITIES — March is the month of luck. Our Activities staff have planned a *Saint Patrick's Day party* with a musical entertainer. There will also be a bake sale and raffle. We also have the celebration of *Greek Independence Day on the 25th*, with a special video presentation "Travel to Greece." The *hairstylist is back* and scheduling appointments. A welcomed spirit of normal life is returning..

DIVINE LITURGY celebrations have resumed, just as we begin our Lenten journey to Pascha.

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!

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,

Lend an ear, Lord, and answer us, for we are poor and miserable! Look after our souls, for we are your friends; save your servants, O God, for we trust in you! Attend to our prayers, and show us a sign of your favor as we struggle for true repentance during this lenten season. Enable us to grow in the spirit of the prophets, to exercise the faith of the apostles, to win the nobility of the martyrs, to attain the wisdom of the fathers, and to imitate all the virtues of the saints, so that with them we may arrive at the paschal mysteries of your only Son.

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

For If You Forgive Others ...

This is last Sunday before beginning Great Lent. Today we remember the Casting out of Adam and Eve from Paradise — the price they paid for not obeying God and eating from the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Sharing in their condition, we too feel the pain of living outside of Paradise. Our Lenten journey is meant to help us find our way back.

The Gospel reading for today (Matthew 6:14-21) is like a road map for that journey. We call today the "Sunday of Forgiveness." In the opening verse of the Gospel lesson the Lord tells us: "If you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you" (v. 14). The first step on our Lenten journey is to forgive one another.

We have the custom on this day, as a necessary precondition for entering Lent, to go and ask forgiveness of each other, sealing our request with a holy kiss. It is a powerful ritual. In asking our loved ones to forgive us the small and large hurts that we might have inflicted on them during the past year, we can lift a weight from our shoulders, lightening our load for the journey. Asking and giving forgiveness from those friends and acquaintances who we might have truly offended brings healing to our heart and theirs.

The Lord continues his admonition by reminding us; “If you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (v. 15). The remembrance of wrong is like a cancer that eats away at us. To not forgive others is just as wrong as to deny our own sin and not ask to be forgiven. A right-relationship with God can only be had if we have a right-relationship with one another. In these two verses Jesus is explaining the words of the Lord’s Prayer, in which we ask our heavenly Father “to forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

The Lord then goes on to speak of the three aspects of what is often simply referred to as “fasting”: abstinence from food, prayer, and almsgiving. Embracing these three elements comprises the essence of what it means to truly observe the Fast. Fasting is spiritual discipline; it is like athletic training. We must build up to it, carefully balancing each aspect of the training, never neglecting or overdoing any part. Also, like athletic training, we submit ourselves to it in obedience. We don’t make up our own rules. We seek the advice of someone with experience, ideally our spiritual father.

By abstaining from food we aim to lighten ourselves, both physically and spiritually. Abstaining from animal products gives our bodies a rest from the heaviness of certain foods. Consigning food to its proper place by eating lightly and appropriately, allows our spirit to control our body, not the other way around.

Abstinence from food is also a way for us to understand and practice abstaining from all the other material distractions that lead us away from Christ. Abstinence from food is an especially useful spiritual exercised because there are few things that can compel us more strongly than our stomach. By trying to control our stomach, we can come to understand the subtle ways in which the glitzy things of this world can control us. Our spiritual struggle is to learn how to control the pull that material things have on us.

Devoting ourselves to more regular prayer strengthens and focuses us. Fasting is not simply dieting; it is spiritual exercise. It does us no good to abstain from food if we do not feed our souls. Our true food is “every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). When we read and meditate on the Holy Scriptures, when we open our hearts to God in prayer, when we remain still and silent giving God room to speak to us, we nourish ourselves with the food of everlasting life.

Finally, we are not to store up for ourselves treasures on earth, but rather in heaven (cf. v. 19-20). Sharing with those in need is a natural progression as we grow into the fullness of Christ. We show the fruits of our growth by loving and helping others, tangibly. Almsgiving is a critical part of the “three-legged stool” that is the Fast. We must fast from food, pray regularly, and give to those in need, all in equal measure. To neglect one or the other inhibits our growth during Great Lent.

And so, in the words of the hymn: "Brothers and Sisters, as we fast bodily, let us also fast spiritually. Let us untie everything that binds us to iniquity. Let us cut through the tangle of every settlement made by intimidation; let us tear up all unjust agreements. Let us give bread to the hungry and welcome the homeless poor into our homes, so that we may receive from Christ our God great mercy."

Fr. Nicholas Apostola

Dates To Remember

Sun, March 14 Cheesefare/Forgiveness Sunday
Mon, March 15 Great Lent begins
Wed, March 17 PreSanctified Liturgy, 6 pm
Sat, March 20 Vespers/Confession, 5 pm
Wed, March 24 Vesperal Liturgy-Annunciation, 6 pm
Sat, March 27 Vespers/Confession, 5 pm
Wed, March 31 PreSanctified Liturgy, 6 pm
Sat, April 3 Food Pantry, 9:00 am-noon
Vespers/Confession, 5 pm
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