

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, March 21, 2021

The Sunday of Orthodoxy First Sunday of Great Lent

Apostolic Reading: Hebrews 11:24-26; 32-40

Gospel: John 1:43-51

(Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael)

Tone 8 • Matins Gospel 8

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

GREAT LENT began this past Monday. Tomorrow marks the start of the second week of Lent.

BRING YOUR FAVORITE ICON TO CHURCH THIS SUNDAY - March 21st. It 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.

VESPERAL LITURGY FOR THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION will be celebrated this Wednesday evening at 6:00 pm. The PreSanctified Liturgy will be celebrated the remaining Wednesdays of Great Lent, as usual. Please plan on attending these services. Set aside your Wednesday evenings and use this as one way to spiritually prepare for Pascha. Each of these services will be live-streamed. [Click here.](#)

LOOKING FOR A WAY TO HELP? Consider volunteering to be a ***GREETER*** for this period of Great Lent and Holy Week. [Margarite Landry](#) is working on a rotating schedule for the Sundays and Wednesdays of Lent, and each evening of Holy Week. ***Duties are simple:*** Greet people as they come in. Make sure everyone has a mask. Help them to sit at the appropriate distance. It's a wonderful way to help people feel welcomed and comfortable. If you're interested, [please e-mail her.](#)

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](#)).

FOOD PANTRY. Help is needed to staff our monthly responsibility at the Orthodox Food Center, **Saturday, April 3rd 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.

EXPLORING YOUR FAITH is an educational program of our Romanian Orthodox Metropolia. As part of this program **each Thursday at 7:00 pm during Great Lent** a prominent Romanian spiritual father is a featured speaker. These talks are in Romanian, and are available through Zoom. Click here to access the full schedule and the log-on link.



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 ORTHODOXY. The sense of joy and thanksgiving, already evident on the Saturday of St. Theodore, is still more apparent on the first Sunday in Lent, when we celebrate the Triumph of Orthodoxy. On this day the Church commemorates the final ending of the Iconoclast controversy and the definitive restoration of the holy ikons to the churches by the Empress Theodora, acting as regent for her young son Michael III. This took place on the first Sunday in Lent, 11 March 843. There is, however, not only a historical link between the first Sunday and the restoration of the ikons but also, as in the case of St. Theodore, a spiritual affinity. If Orthodoxy triumphed in the epoch of the Iconoclast controversy, this was because so many of the faithful were prepared to undergo exile, torture, and even death, for the sake of the truth. The Feast of Orthodoxy is above all a celebration in honor of the martyrs and confessors who struggled and suffered for the faith: hence its appropriateness for the season of Lent, when we are striving to imitate the martyrs by means of our ascetic self-denial. The fixing of the

Triumph of Orthodoxy on the first Sunday is therefore much more than the result of some chance historical conjunction.

The Triodion gives the text of a special 'Office of Orthodoxy', which is held at the end of Mattins or, more commonly, at the end of the Divine Liturgy on this Sunday. The Office celebrates not only the restoration of the holy ikons but, more generally, the victory of the true faith over all heresies and errors. A procession is made with the holy ikons, and after this extracts are read from the synodical decree of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (787). Then sixty anathemas are pronounced against various heretics dating from the third to the fourteenth century; 'Eternal Memory' is sung in honor of the emperors, patriarchs and fathers who defended the Orthodox faith; and 'Many Years' is proclaimed in honor of our present rulers and bishops. Unfortunately, in many parts of the Orthodox Church today this impressive service has fallen into disuse; elsewhere it is performed in a greatly abbreviated form.

Before the Triumph of Orthodoxy came to be celebrated on the first Sunday, there was on this day a commemoration of Moses, Aaron, Samuel and the prophets. Traces of this more ancient observance can still be seen in the choice of Epistle reading at the Liturgy (Hebrews 11:24–6, 32–40), and in the Alleluia verse appointed before the Gospel: 'Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among them that call upon His Name'.

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.

The Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian

O Lord and master of my life!
Dispel from me the spirit of discouragement and slothfulness,
of ambition and vain talk!

Instead, give me
the spirit of prudence and humility,
of patience and charity.

Yes, my king and Lord,
let me look at my own sins and refrain from judging others:
For you are blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

COVID-19 UPDATE – Holy Trinity continues to be Covid-Free at this time. On Friday March 12th DPH provided long-term care facilities with new visitation guidance.

VISITORS. Spring is here! Residents continue to stay active in body, mind, and spirit, and they continue to enjoy visits from their loved ones Schedule an in-person visit by [clicking here](#) or by calling the Activities Department (508-852-1000).

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

Holy Trinity is happy to welcome **Mackenzie Koch** as the Director of Development. She will be spearheading fundraising and marketing efforts to enhance the services provided at Holy Trinity. If you would like to learn more about how to contribute your time, talent, or treasure to Holy Trinity, please contact Mackenzie at mkoch@htnr.net.

JOB OPENINGS – Holy Trinity is looking to add to its excellent staff. There are openings for nurses and CNAs for all shifts. [Click here](#) for a full listing with detailed job descriptions. Sign-on bonuses are being offered and recent grads are encouraged to apply. If you have questions, please contact the Human Resources Generalist, [Kimberly Hescocock](#). People familiar with the languages and cultures of our Orthodox communities are encouraged to apply.

REHABILITATION — Has your loved one been recommended for short term rehabilitation by your physician? Do you feel your loved one needs further assistance after being discharged from the hospital? Did you know that you can ask your health care provider for rehabilitation? Holy Trinity can help you identify the signs that will help your loved one avoid potential functional and cognitive decline by receiving Physical therapy, occupational therapy or speech therapy related to cognition.

ACTIVITIES — New guidelines allow fully vaccinated residents to congregate together while eating and socializing without social distancing, but while still wearing a mask. This means indoor entertainment may resume and the main dining room will reopen. The first entertainer played piano for Saint Patrick's Day!

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

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 compassionate Lord: At night we sleep comfortably, in spite of the mediocrity of our lives. So now, finding ourselves alive, once more, and able to greet the beauty of another morning, we are disturbed at the lethargy in which we live. We beseech you, therefore: Give us determination to succeed in repentance. During these lenten days, change our ravenous appetites to control everyone and everything into a praiseworthy desire for self-control, so that, learning the wisdom of this self-restraint, we may enjoy the freedom of all your sons and daughters.

By the grace and mercy and love for us of your only Son, with whom you are blest, together with your all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

I Saw You Under the Fig Tree

On this first Sunday of Lent we remember that event in ad 843 when the veneration of holy images was again allowed and the 120-year civil war over their role ended. The ad 843 restoration of icons was an affirmation of the decision of the Seventh Œcumenical Council (ad 787). Since that time the proper place and use of holy images in our worship and devotion has been defined in such a way that all understand that icons are not idols; we worship God alone, not images.

At first glance today's Gospel reading (John 1:43-51) would seem to have little to do with the veneration of icons. It is the story of the Apostle Nathanael's call and confession, which St. John the Evangelist appropriately places at the very beginning of his Gospel.

Jesus is assembling his disciples. The day before Jesus' encounter with Nathanael, two disciples of St. John the Baptist were standing with him as Jesus passed. The Baptist said to them: "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" (John 1:36) They immediately followed him. One of these was Andrew who then went and got his brother Peter, and brought him to meet Jesus.

The next day Jesus found Philip and said to him, very simply: "Follow me" (1:43). And, he did. Then Philip went to find his friend Nathanael and told him: "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth" (1:45).

Philip knew Nathanael to be a careful and (as St. John Chrysostom describes him) exacting man. He was expecting a skeptical response, that's why Philip cited Moses and the prophets. Nathanael didn't disappoint. But, even in his back-handed response — "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" — he showed his reticence to offend his friend by not directly contradicting Philip.

When they came toward Jesus, the Lord said: "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" (1:47) Nathanael wanted to know how Jesus knew him. Jesus tells him: "I saw you under the fig tree, before Philip called you" (1:48).

We don't know what Nathanael was doing or thinking while alone under the fig tree. Some speculate that he was praying, perhaps even asking God to hasten the Messiah's coming. It

doesn't really matter. The point is that it was deeply private. Only Nathanael and God knew. However, when he heard Jesus' words Nathanael knew that he had access to his heart. Jesus knew Nathanael.

This is why Nathanael responded with a solemn confession: "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" (1:49) Nathanael's declaration is similar to Peter's — "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16) — but contrasts with his in one significant way. While the words are almost the same, each understands Jesus differently. Peter's confession springs from his living and traveling with Jesus, his witnessing of miracles and wonders. He declares Jesus to be God. Nathanael marvels and rejoices at the Lord's words, but sees him as a man, the King of Israel.

This becomes evident in the different ways the Lord responded to them. To Peter he said: "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood have not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven" (Matthew 16:17). And to Nathanael he said: "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these" (John 1:50). Here is where we can return to the subject of the holy icons.

The heart of the iconoclasts' argument was that images were warping the understanding of who Christ was and is: the Son of the living God. By the ways in which many were using the images, they were distorting the true significance of Christ's coming. They were stuck on material representations.

The response of the icon supporters was that the image was just that: a representation. The language used to distinguish the "original" from the "copy" became official doctrine: we worship God only, while we only venerate saints and images. The Church saw then, as it sees now, the vital need to affirm the actual physical incarnation of the Son of God in the human we know as Jesus of Nazareth. At the same time, we also need to affirm that God is totally beyond any kind of physical representation. Put another way, Nathanael's witness springs from an outward experience, a miracle. Peter's declaration reveals the Lord's very nature.

One favorite way the Lord chose to describe himself was "the Son of Man," a reference to a vision the Prophet Daniel had of the Messiah (Daniel 7:13). In this phrase the Lord captures his dual nature: God and human; the Mediator between us and heaven. If the icons are truly windows that allow us to peer into heaven, we should treasure them and venerate them, even as we long to be in that very place they reveal to us.

Fr. Nicholas Apostola

Dates To Remember

Sat, March 20 Vespers/Confession, 5 pm
Wed, March 24 Vespers/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

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