

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, April 4, 2021

Second Sunday of Great Lent **The Veneration of the Precious Cross**

Apostolic Reading: Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:1-6
Gospel: Mark 8:34-38; 9:1

Tone 2 • Matins Gospel 10

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

GREAT LENT is underway. Tomorrow marks the start of the fourth week of Lent.

FOOD PANTRY. Help is needed to staff our monthly responsibility at the Orthodox Food Center, **THIS 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.

MUSTARD SEED MEAL. We are providing a meal for the Mustard Seed on **Friday, April 16th for 80 people.** Given the virus, the meals are now pre-packaged and dropped off, ready to be distributed by their regular staff of volunteers. A generous family of our community, wishing to be anonymous, has offered to sponsor this meal. If you or your family would like to help with meal preparations, please contact **Deb Sedares** — by [e-mail](#) or phone 508-509-6678. Gathering time is 1:00pm Friday, April 16th.

THE PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY will be celebrated this Wednesday evening at 6:00 pm, and each of 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.](#)

THIS SUNDAY IS THE VENERATION OF THE PRECIOUS CROSS. Donations are welcomed toward the flowers that will adorn the Cross. Please see [Tim Rucho](#).

BAKING ORDERS FOR EASTER need to be in by Sunday, April 11th. Clearly things are different, and we're hoping to bake limited amounts of only: baklava, kouroubia, koulourakia,

and Easter Bread. Check the [order form](#) for prices. For questions or to place an order contact Betty Anderson: [e-mail](#) or telephone: (508) 353-9449.

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](#)).

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.

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 THIRD SUNDAY (THE SUNDAY OF THE CROSS). On this day the service of Matins concludes with the solemn veneration of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross; the ceremonies are closely parallel to those at the feasts of the Exaltation of the Cross (14 September) and the Procession of the Cross (1 August). The veneration of the Cross on this third Sunday in Lent prepares us for the commemoration of the Crucifixion which is soon to follow in Holy Week, and at the same time it reminds us that the whole of Lent is a period when we are crucified with Christ: as the Synaxarion at Mattins says, 'Through the forty-day Fast, we too are in a way crucified, dying to the passions'. The dominant note on this Sunday, as on the two Sundays preceding, is one of joy and triumph. In the Canon at Matins, the irmoi are the same as at Easter midnight, 'This is the day of Resurrection ...', and the troparia are in part a paraphrase of the Paschal Canon by St. John of Damascus. No separation is made between Christ's death and His Resurrection, but the Cross is regarded as an emblem of victory and Calvary is seen in the light of the Empty Tomb.

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.

VISITORS — Holy Trinity families and friends are now able to visit in our designated areas, in resident rooms and outdoors. Per the guidance, visitation may vary based on individual status. Please schedule your visit in advance with the Activities Department by calling (508) 852-1000.

NEW ADMISSIONS – Holy Trinity is now accepting new admissions. To inquire about admissions, for 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 looking to add to its excellent staff. There is currently an opening for **Director of Admissions**, as well as for nurses and CNAs for all shifts, including sign on bonuses and great benefits. [Click here](#) for a full listing with detailed job descriptions. If you have questions, please contact the Human Resources Generalist, [Kimberly Hescocock](#). Recent grads and people familiar with the languages and cultures of our Orthodox communities are encouraged to apply.

REHABILITATION — Not all rehabilitation services are the same. At Holy Trinity, we are unique in that we have full time in-house Speech, Occupational, and Physical therapists. Each member of our dedicated interdisciplinary team has over 25 years of experience, providing unparalleled personalized care to meet the needs of each individual.

ACTIVITIES — Our Activities department has started to increase group activities and socialization. This week, residents sent Easter cards and photos to family, with some looking forward to visits with loved ones for Easter dinner on Sunday.

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,

Whom shall we glorify? Whom shall we praise? And to whom shall we give thanks, if not to you, O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for that terrible instrument of the cross on which your Son was put to death for love of us? Though it was a symbol of shame, he transformed it into a resplendent trophy of victory. As we venerate its triumph during these days, and contemplate the salvation it purchased for us, help us truly understand its meaning so that we may share in the resurrection it promises.

Through the same Lord Jesus Christ, with whom you are blest, together with your all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

The Heavenly Liturgy

We've now reached the third and mid-point Sunday of Great Lent, and are asked to pause and reflect on our Lord's Precious Cross. The Epistle lesson is taken from the Letter to the Hebrews 4:14-5:6. St. Paul continues his reflection on Jesus as the high priest who presents our case before the Throne of God. There are two major points that he highlights in this passage. The first is that Jesus is like us in every respect, except for sin, and so he can thoroughly identify with our struggles, and as such present our case before God sympathetically. The second is that because of Jesus and his sacrifice, we can have more confidence before God than would have previously been possible.

St. Paul says that, "We have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God" (v. 14). There is a subtle reference to Moses in this verse; a contrast made between Moses who was prevented from entering the Promised Land because of his sin in Sinai, with Jesus who was permitted to "pass through the heavens" because of his faithfulness. Hebrews is constantly drawing our attention to the possibilities present in the Old Covenant, and now realized in the New.

"For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (v. 15). When St. Paul speaks of the ability of Jesus as high priest to "sympathize with our weaknesses" he is not just referring to

the fact that he is human like us; he is also saying that unlike the high priests of the Jerusalem Temple, he lived the life of a common person, not insulated from the real worries and concerns of daily existence. He also says that in every respect Jesus was tempted as we are, but without sin. There is a nuance to the Greek verb tense “has been tempted” that doesn’t come across in English. It means that he was tempted not just once or only on a particular occasion, but continually. Jesus was tempted all the time to do this or that, in the same way we are; only he did not succumb. He experienced the allure, but he resisted. In short, he can relate to our struggle. More importantly, we can gain courage from his example. He shows us that it is possible to weather the storm of temptations.

St. Paul says that we can, “With confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (v. 16). Christ’s example and position before God gives us access to God.

This is an idea that we might find hard to relate to in our more egalitarian society. We are a democratic society and consider access to power a right, not a privilege. Of course, we know that even in America some people are more equal than others, yet we see this as an aberration of the fundamental egalitarian principle. And so, in order to appreciate what our Lord Jesus did, we need to do some reality-checking. Each of us, from the highest to the lowest, will find ourselves in serious need of help at sometime in our life, especially before God. Unfortunately, we usually realize this only when we’ve hit bottom.

The image of the heavenly temple and God’s throne that St. Paul gives us is much closer to our actual circumstance. If we honestly examine our hearts and our actions, we will quickly realize that we have no way to access God’s grace on our own. Most of us are like that poor man in the parable who shows up at the wedding dressed inappropriately (cf. Matthew 22:12). The king had him arrested, cuffed, and thrown into the outer darkness. This is our plight without Jesus. He’s the one who lends us ‘proper attire’ so that we can confidently approach God’s throne of mercy.

We Orthodox understand the Eucharistic celebration, the Divine Liturgy, as actually being in the presence of God, before his heavenly throne. The celebrant, usually our parish priest, is the living icon of our Lord, who is Himself the only true celebrant. Jesus continually presents Himself before His Father, for our sake. In the Divine Liturgy we are healed of our wounds and changed by grace. Jesus intercedes, presenting Himself as a sacrifice for our sins.

Listen to how St. Paul explains it: “Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness; and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. And one does not presume to take this honor, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you’; as he says also in another place, ‘You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek’” (5:1-6).

Next week I will speak more of Melchizedek. Today, I would like us to reflect on this glimpse that St. Paul gives of the Heavenly Liturgy. St. John in his Revelation (chapter 4) gives us a similar picture of the continual worship taking place in Heaven. Our Eucharist celebration is an image, an icon, of this Liturgy. In the Liturgy, just before the Lord’s Prayer, we thank our loving God for

the fact that the gifts of bread and wine we offered have been received “at His holy, heavenly, and spiritual altar as an offering of spiritual fragrance,” and ask that he “may in return send upon us divine grace and the gift of the Holy Spirit.” It is the heavenly Altar before almighty God to which the prayer is referring.

Next Sunday, when we wake up and are thinking about being late for Liturgy, or even skipping it entirely, let us recall this image of the Heavenly Liturgy, and, hopefully, reconsider.

Fr. Nicholas Apostola

Dates To Remember

Sat, April 3 Food Pantry, 9:00 am-noon
Vespers/Confession, 5 pm
Sun, April 4 Western Easter
Wed, April 7 PreSanctified Liturgy, 6 pm
Sat, April 9 Vespers/Confession, 5 pm
Wed, April 14 PreSanctified Liturgy, 6 pm
Fri, April 16 Mustard Seed Meal
Sat, April 17 Vespers/Confession, 5 pm
Wed, April 21 PreSanctified Liturgy, 6 pm
Sat, April 24 Vespers/Confession, 5 pm
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