

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, April 11, 2021

Fourth Sunday of Great Lent
St. John of Sinai,
Author of the *Ladder of Divine Ascent*

Apostolic Reading: Hebrews 6:13-20

Gospel: Mark 9:17-32

(Healing of the Epileptic Boy)

Tone 3 • Matins Gospel 11

➔ **For COVID Guidelines, [click here](#)**

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

BAKING ORDERS FOR EASTER need to be in by **THIS 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.

MUSTARD SEED MEAL. We are providing a meal for the Mustard Seed **THIS COMING 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 THIS 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. 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](#).

THE LATEST ISSUE OF **THE CREDINȚA / THE FAITH** quarterly magazine of our Metropolia may be [downloaded here](#). Please take an opportunity to read it.

THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO CONTRIBUTED to the flowers for the Holy Cross last Sunday. Because of your generosity, we were also able to purchase new ceramic "very heavy" planters for the walkway to replace the ones that were stolen last year. Look for them later in the season!

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 after Vespers, and before Vespers by appointment ([e-mail](#) Fr. Nick).

ON THE DATE OF EASTER. This is a perennial question, and especially this year when the dates are so far apart. If you'd like a very readable and complete explanation on the difference in dates, [click here](#). It's written by John Fotopoulos, a friend, and also an Associate Professor of New Testament in the Department of Religious Studies at Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana.

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.

PASCHA DONATIONS

General donations to help defray the cost of decorations for the Paschal Feast in any amount, are most appreciated. Please see or email [Betty Anderson](#) to make a donation

Some specific needs are:

Flowers for Palm Sunday Icon	\$50.00
Palms	\$100.00
Flowers for Bridegroom Icon	\$50.00
Holy Thursday Gospel Candles	\$60.00
Wreath for Cross (Great Friday)	\$75.00
Wreath - Cross (Resurrection)	\$75.00
Resurrection Icon	\$50.00
Bay Leaves for Holy Saturday	\$100.00
1 Gallon of Olive Oil	\$25.00
1/2 lb Incense	\$40.00
Priest's Paschal Candle	\$50.00

Rose Oil for Epitaphion	\$25.00
Flowers for Epitaphion	\$600.00
Decorations for Pascha	\$250.00
Easter Candy/Gifts for Children	\$100.00

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 FOURTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT. On this day is commemorated St. John Climacus, abbot of Sinai (sixth–seventh century), who is assigned a special Sunday in Lent because, by virtue of his writings and his own life, he forms a pattern of the true Christian ascetic. St. John is the author of *The Ladder of Paradise*, one of the spiritual texts appointed to be read in church during Lent. His memorial, like that of St. Theodore, has been transferred to the movable from the fixed calendar, where he is remembered on 30 March. The first Canon at Mattins on this Sunday is based on the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–5): the repentant Christian is likened to the man who fell among thieves.

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. The main dining room had its grand opening this week, and staff helped create a seating plan that allowed residents to sit with friends.

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 — Are you looking for short-term rehabilitation services for your loved one and would like to have more involvement in their care? At Holy Trinity, family and caregivers are always welcome to attend therapy sessions, as per the patient's wishes, and we offer teaching sessions by appointment for family members to assist in training for a safe discharge for their loved one. For more information, please contact our Director of Rehab, [Heather Walsh](#).

ACTIVITIES — With an increase in socialization and the arrival of Spring, our activities department has been busy. This week, residents enjoyed a peer-led painting class, personal hobbies outdoors, and continued visits from our therapy dog, Nova.

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

STAY CONNECTED – Be sure to like our [Facebook page](#) for frequent updates and photos.

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)

A Prayer of Fr. Laurence

Let us pray to the Lord,

Eternal Lord and master: By the inscrutable mystery of your divine wisdom, your only Son suffered for us, giving us an example to follow. He had done no wrong and there had been no perjury in his mouth. Though he was insulted, he did not retaliate with insults; though he was tortured, he made no threats, but placed his trust in you, his Father. When he was dying on the cross, he bore our faults in his own body. Therefore, master we entreat you: Let his wounds heal us, so that we may die to every form of wrongdoing and live for you alone.

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

Promises Given and Kept

This Fourth Sunday of Great Lent brings us closer to our spiritual goal: the light of our Lord's Resurrection. Today's Apostolic reading is taken from the Letter to the Hebrews, 6:13-20. There are two aspects of this passage that I would like to concentrate on. The first is Melchizedek: who he is, the nature of his priesthood, and how he figures into the prophecy of the coming Messiah. The second is God's promise to Abraham, how he kept it and what this promise means for us.

I have always been fascinated by Melchizedek. Before I was even able to really consider who he was and why St. Paul wrote about him so extensively, I just loved his name. It means "king of justice", but without knowing that, I thought it sounded exotic and made me want to find out more about him.

The reality is that there is very little written about him in the Bible. The only place where he actually appears is in Genesis. Here is what is recorded: "After [Abram's] return from the defeat of Ched-or-laomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). And Mel-chizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!' And Abram gave him a tenth of everything" (Genesis 14:17-20).

From these three verses a whole understanding of how the Messiah's coming would change the nature of our relationship with God was developed and written about in the Jewish community. St. Paul's description in the 7th chapter of Hebrews follows the commonly held beliefs of rabbis and Jewish scholars compiled in the Talmud (the accepted commentary on the Jewish Scripture).

The first thing that they understood is that the Messiah is to be eternal king and priest. Because Melchizedek appeared “out of nowhere” and then “disappears,” without father and mother, they saw this as a sign of the eternal Messiah.

The next insight taken from these verses is that Melchizedek is superior to Abram (later to be Abraham). After his victory against the kings who were in and around Jerusalem, Abram offers tithes (a tenth) to Melchizedek. This means that he recognized him as a priest of “God Most High.” This action would later be interpreted in the Talmud and by St. Paul as recognizing the eternal priesthood of Melchizedek. Christian writers saw the offering of bread and wine as a foreshadowing of the Eucharist.

Melchizedek is the king of Salem, which later became known as Jerusalem. “Salem” means peace. So, Melchizedek is the King of Peace (another title of the Messiah). In addition, through Melchizedek’s encounter with Abraham, it is clear that God decided Jerusalem would be the center of His earthly presence among us long before the descendants of Abraham return from their captivity in Egypt.

Abraham’s encounter with Melchizedek has a mystical quality to it. At this point in Abraham’s story he has just begun his journey of faith. God Most High has chosen him, but Abram does not know how to respond. Some Church fathers say it is Christ Himself who is appearing to Abram in the person of Melchizedek, in the same way He appeared to Moses in the burning bush. Often, when we need God the most He appears to us, in a mystical guise, to help us and direct us.

This leads me to the second point I would like to highlight from today’s reading: God’s promise, His word. St. Paul speaks of “God’s oath” as immutable — not able to be altered or changed. He uses the human example of giving an oath as a way to remove doubt during a dispute. We are asked to give an oath when testifying at a trial or in other official circumstances as a way to demonstrate that we speak the absolute truth. Our word is our bond. If we lie we are imprisoned. God promised many things to Abraham, and St. Paul says that because he couldn’t swear by anything greater, he swore by Himself. This means God wanted to secure His promise in such a way that Abram would believe Him.

Yet still, Abram needed more assurance of the promise. He wanted to know with some certainty that what God had told him, had promised to him, would indeed come to pass. God promised him a grand legacy, yet he had no heir, no son or daughter. He asked God for a sign.

God told him to look to the heavens, to the night sky, and said that his descendants would be more numerous than the stars he saw. Unfortunately, because of modern nighttime “light pollution” very few of us get to see the night sky in all of its brilliance, but Abram did. “And he believed the Lord; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). He saw the myriad of stars in the heavens and believed the truth of God’s word.

Because of his faith and as a sign of it, God gave Abram a new name: Abraham, and Sarai his wife: Sarah. He chose them, well beyond childbearing years, to found a new people: Israel. From this nation the Savior was born.

So many signs have been given to us, not only in Biblical times, but also here and now. We pray to God and He hears us. We ask for His help and He gives it. The world is full of suffering and

pain; we will not escape this, at least not in this life. However, the Lord gives us the proof of His promise in the suffering of His Son, and His rising from the dead. In Jesus the promise is fulfilled. Everything we endure is not without purpose. God's word is true.

Fr. Nicholas Apostola

Dates To Remember

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
April 26-May 1 Holy Week
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