

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, April 18, 2021

Fifth Sunday of Great Lent ***St. Mary of Egypt***

Apostolic Reading: Hebrews 9:11-14

Gospel: Mark 10:32-45

(Request of the Sons of Zebedee)

Tone 4 • Matins Gospel 1

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

MUSTARD SEED MEAL. We are providing a meal for the Mustard Seed ***THIS 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.***

PASCHA DONATIONS. The list of items that people may donate to decorate and enhance our Paschal celebration is [available here for download.](#) If you'd like to donate anything, please see Betty Anderson, or [e-mail](#) her at bettya16@verizon.net or call her at: 508-335-9449.

THE HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE, from Lazarus Saturday through Pascha, [may be downloaded here.](#) This also includes a number of announcements related to Holy Week. *Please read it.*

THE LAST PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY during this lenten season will be celebrated Wednesday evening at 6:00 pm, at St. Nicholas. We'll be joined by our brothers and sisters from the Sts. Anargyroi parish of Marlborough. Fr. Gregory Christakos will be celebrating and preaching. Please plan on attending these services. The service will be live-streamed. [Click here.](#)

THE GREAT FRIDAY CHILDREN'S RETREAT for the younger children will be held on ***Friday, April 30th starting at 12:00pm,*** and concluding with a celebration of Great Vespers at 2:00 pm.

Older children and teens are also welcome. There are many ways each can help. Snacks will be served. For additional information and offers to assist, contact **Valarie Stamoulis**. Please **RSVP by April 23rd** to Valarie at valarie.stamoulis@gmail.com or **617-803-3798**.

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

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.

THE ASSEMBLY OF BISHOPS NEEDS YOUR INPUT! The **Mental Health Needs Assessment Survey**, designed by experts on the Assembly's Mental Health Task Force, takes only 15 minutes and consists of approximately 30 questions. **All information you provide is completely anonymous**, and the aggregate data will help the Task Force better understand the mental health needs and experiences of the faithful in order to develop resources and programs for enhanced ministry in your community. [Click here to go directly to the web page](#) to complete the survey.

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 FIFTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT. This corresponds closely to the preceding Sunday: just as the fourth Sunday is dedicated to St. John Climacus, the model of ascetics, so the fifth celebrates St. Mary of Egypt, the model of penitents. Like that of St. John Climacus, her feast has been transferred from the fixed calendar, where she is commemorated on 1 April. Her life, recounted by St. Sophronios, Patriarch of Jerusalem sets before us a true verbal ikon of the essence of repentance. In her youth St. Mary lived in a dissolute and sinful way at Alexandria.

Drawn by curiosity, she journeyed with some pilgrims to Jerusalem, arriving in time for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. But when she tried to enter the Church of the Holy Sepulchre with the others, an invisible force thrust her back at the threshold. This happened three or four times. Brought to sudden contrition by this strange experience, she prayed all night with tears to the Mother of God, and next morning she found to her joy that she could enter the church without difficulty. After venerating the Cross, she left Jerusalem on that same day, made her way over the Jordan, and settled as a solitary in a remote region of the desert. Here for forty-seven years she remained, hidden from the world, until she was eventually found by the ascetic St. Zosimas, who was able to give her Holy Communion shortly before her death. Some modern writers have questioned the historical accuracy of St. Sophronios' narrative, but there is in itself nothing impossible about such a story. In the year 1890 the Greek priest Joachim Spetsieris found a woman hermit in the desert beyond the Jordan, living almost exactly as St. Mary must have done.

On this Sunday the first Canon at Mattins is based on the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31): like the parable of the Good Samaritan on the previous Sunday, this is applied symbolically to the repentant Christian.

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 call (508) 852-1000.

JOB OPENINGS – Holy Trinity is looking to add to its excellent staff. There are openings 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 — April is National Occupational Therapy Month. Is your loved one struggling with daily activities due to an injury, illness, or disability? Our highly skilled staff at Holy Trinity can provide personalized services to help regain and improve life skills vital to independence, safety, and quality of life. For more information, please contact our Director of Rehab, [Heather Walsh](#).

ACTIVITIES — Our Activities department has started to increase group activities and socialization. This week marked the formation of a new bowling league, and residents will be competing on teams in the upcoming weeks, with a banquet and prizes at the end of the season. We were also the recipient of a beautiful baby grand piano, generously donated by Jim and Regina Paltos. Residents and staff are looking forward to enjoying music in the dining room.

DIVINE LITURGY is celebrated every Wednesday morning for our residents.

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)
[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 you who are serenity and peacefulness itself, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: When the cares and labors of another day are over, we come to you with our evening prayers. We stand before you and reflect on the day that has passed, and we pray that, by your grace, this lenten season will make a difference in our lives. Do not permit us to be consumed with thoughts of the past or of the future, but teach us to live always in the present. Take our attention off things that perish, and focus our mind's eye on you and the things that last forever. Enable us to attain a share of the peace that only you can give, so that we may one day join the saints in the paschal celebrations of the world to come.

For you are indeed our God, and we give you glory, Father Son and Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

The Heavenly Liturgy

With the Fifth Sunday of Great Lent the Church, through Scriptural readings and hymns, is preparing us to participate in the cornerstone of our faith: the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We believe that his death is no ordinary death, rather Jesus, innocent and blameless in every respect, consciously and freely offers to take on himself our sin and the resulting consequences of our disobedience: suffering and death. He transforms all of this pain and evil, by responding to the fury meted out upon him not in kind, but will love. His sacrifice emptied evil of the power by which we are held captive. And so, we are offered a new way of life.

Today's Gospel lesson from Mark (10:32-45) tells us of the conversation Jesus had with his disciples in which he directly tells them that he will not only be condemned to death, but that he will rise again three days later. The Apostolic reading is from the Letter to the Hebrews (9:11-14) where St. Paul speaks of the animal sacrifices offered under the Old Law, and how this practice was designed to prepare us to be able to understand and appreciate Jesus' sacrifice.

Sacrifice is a basic part of who we are as human beings. If we love we know about sacrifice. Parents constantly sacrifice for their children. Lovers repeatedly sacrifice themselves demonstrating their love. If we injure or offend someone, we try to find a way to repair what we've done, and it always involves a sacrifice.

Most early religions involved sacrifice of living things to their gods in order to repair and restore their relationship. Sometimes these offerings were acts of thanksgiving — sacrifices of food for a bountiful harvest. Sometimes these were sin offerings and could involve animals and even human beings. God's Covenant with His people, the children of Israel, required such sacrifices, all except human ones. Animals and plants were regularly offered. The Jerusalem Temple was the primary, if not only, place where these offerings were made.

In our modern urban society most of us have had very little experience with slaughtering an animal. The language of blood and offering of blood seems at best an abstraction. (We'd more than likely rather not think about it at all, in real terms.) The Scriptures, however, are full of this language. The Eucharist, the primary Christian celebration, centers on partaking of the Body and Blood of our Lord. I am sure that most of us have questioned, at least on one occasion, what could possibly be meant by so graphic an image.

Blood is the source of life. The Hebrews believed that being the source of life it was also a sign of the divine within us. This shouldn't be difficult to understand. When we describe someone

who has had a mortal wound, we say that “the life is draining out of them.” We speak of “the life that courses through our veins.” If we are composed mainly of water, most of that water is in the form of blood.

Blood does at least two things in our bodies. It brings the nutrients, including oxygen, to every part of our body that allows our cells to grow and be maintained. It also takes away the waste. It is the medium for feeding and cleansing our body.

When an animal was sacrificed, especially when the animal was sacrificed on the Day of Atonement, its blood was used to purify and sanctify, not unlike the way in which we use Holy Water. The High Priest, when he offered this sacrifice, offered a double sacrifice: one for himself and his family, and the other for the people of Israel. The New Testament refers to Jesus as the High Priest, but unlike other high priests, Jesus had no need for the first sacrifice; he was and is pure. However, we are the ones who need the second sacrifice. Jesus becomes this sacrifice for us. This is the text of today’s reading:

“But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Hebrews 9:11-14).

It is important to remember that the author of Hebrews is speaking of a Heavenly altar. The earthly temple is modeled on the one in Heaven. In this earthly temple only the High Priest could enter the inner sanctuary, the Holy Place, and just once a year, and only after he had purified himself with a sacrifice. Jesus has no need of this purification. Rather, because he offers himself as the sacrifice, he carries within himself the purifying blood. He is the sacrifice. During the Liturgy in a prayer addressed to Christ, the priest says to Christ: “you are the offerer and the offered, the one who receives and is distributed.” This poetic phrase captures the mystery of Jesus’ self-sacrifice.

God comes to us in the person of Jesus the Christ, the Word of God. Out of love for us, He offers himself up as the one to be sacrificed. He is both High Priest and Sacrificial Offering.

While not exactly the same, there is an example I can offer that might help illustrate this mystery. During the Communist persecutions, there were people, priests, who knew they were going to be killed for Christ the next day. As is our rule, Liturgies are celebrated on consecrated altars in which the relics of saints (usually martyrs) have been placed. Knowing that they themselves would be sacrificed as martyrs shortly, these men celebrated the Liturgy on themselves. They offered Christ’s sacrifice on the altar of their soon-to-be sacrificed bodies.

We no longer offer animals or other humans; those were meant as a preparation for Christ’s unique sacrifice. His sacrifice put an end to it. Instead, our Lord gave us the sacrifice of bread and wine, the unbloody sacrifice. These he changes, through the Holy Spirit, into his Body and his Blood. When we partake of the life-giving Body and Blood of our Lord, we are redeemed and reconciled to God the Father through Jesus’ sacrifice. We are purified and changed.

Moses constructed the earthly Tabernacle after the image given him by God (Exodus 25). When we celebrate the Divine Liturgy, the Eucharist, we participate in the one Sacrifice of the Son of God. Just as Moses' Tabernacle was made according to the image of the Heavenly Tabernacle, so it is with us when we enter into the Divine Liturgy. We celebrated here on earth the model, the icon, of the Heavenly Liturgy where God's Name is continually proclaimed.

It may be difficult for us to envision this Heavenly Liturgy, a place where Christ is enthroned, and the angels and saints unceasingly glorify God, but it exists. If God should so grace us, we might even catch a glimpse of this Heavenly Liturgy during the celebration of the Eucharist in our own parish. If our hearts are pure, we will be given this foretaste of God's promise.

During the coming Paschal celebration, when we are given the opportunity to contemplate Jesus' suffering and sacrifice, let us ask God to give us this vision of the Heavenly Liturgy. At the same time, we should remember the people who out of love continually sacrifice themselves for us. They may be relatives or friends, but they may also be people whom we do not know, who serve us out of duty and love for all.

We should also ask our Lord to strengthen us for the trials and sacrifices that are asked of us. Love requires sacrifice. If we love, especially as Christ loves, we will be asked to show it.

Fr. Nicholas Apostola

Dates To Remember

Fri, April 16 Mustard Seed Meal
Sat, April 17 Vespers/Confession, 5 pm
Wed, April 21 PreSanctified Liturgy, 6 pm
Sat, April 24 Lazarus Sat. Liturgy, 10 am
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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