

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, October 17, 2021

The Twenty First Sunday after Pentecost

Apostolic Reading: Titus 3:8-15

Gospel: Luke 8:5-15

(Parable of the Sower and the Seed)

The Sunday of the Fathers of the 7th Œcumenical Council

Tone 8 • Resurrection Gospel 6

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

[\(Click here for a PDF version of this week's news\)](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PITA BAKING sessions are set for **Tuesday, October 19th and Tuesday, October 26th at 9:00 am**. All help welcomed and needed. Questions? Contact: [Betty Anderson](#).

OUR NEXT MUSTARD SEED MEAL is **NEXT Friday, October 15th**, for 80 visitors. Given the virus, the meals are now pre-packaged and ready to be distributed by their regular staff of volunteers. We are grateful to **Lisa Demake** who is sponsoring this month's meal for the health and well-being of her family members, and in memory of those fallen asleep. If you or your family would like to sponsor a meal or help with meal preparations, the team is gathering at 1pm on Friday. Please contact [Deb Sedares](#) — by e-mail or phone: 508-509-6678, if you'd like to help.

THE PARISH COUNCIL will hold its regular monthly meeting **Thursday, October 21st** at 7:00 pm. Parish Council Members, please let [Chris Seith](#) know if you are unable to attend.

THE CDC HAS REVISED ITS MASKING GUIDELINES due to the increase in infections because of the highly contagious Delta variant. It recommends that **people vaccinated against the coronavirus resume wearing masks** in public indoor spaces and schools where the virus is surging, and that **unvaccinated persons seek a vaccine** as soon as possible. Following this recommendation, we are now asking that all persons attending the Divine Services wear masks until the numbers are more favorable.

YOUTH EVENTS UPDATE

ATTENTION: Young Adults, Teens, Tweens, and younger; (and, of course, parents)

We're planning a few events for this fall: get-togethers, retreats, and more.
Please take a look at the list below and save the time and dates on your calendar!

► **SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23 — Pumpkin Carving and Painting event.** **DETAILS: Location:** St. Nicholas. **Time:** 2:30 - 5:30pm. It is a fun filled outdoor event for school-aged kids (grades k-12). Masks required. **Questions or RSVP's:** please contact: [Gina](#) (508-873-9600), [Fadi](#), or [Cristina](#). **Looking forward to being together!**

BEE-TREATS FOR TEENS. SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 6th. Target age group: Grades 7-12. Teens from around Central Mass are all invited. Place: [Sts. Constantine and Helen](#) in Webster. **Steven Christoforou** is leading the retreat. Many of you know him from the "Be the Bee" videos. [Click here for the flier](#) with more information.

That same evening at 6:00 pm there will be a **Young Adult Coffee House/"Theology on Tap"** — and evening of fellowship and sharing. [Click here for the flier](#) with more information.

A FALL RETREAT is planned for **Thursday, November 11th** (Veteran's Day — it's a school holiday). The theme is: **"Who Is The Holy Spirit."** Details will be available soon!

CHRISTMAS IS COMING (as the saying goes). We're going to dedicate a couple of the **Saturdays in December to PAGEANT REHEARSALS** and some more enjoyable activities for the kids. Dates and times will be forthcoming.

COMMUNITY NEWS

ALL THINGS ORTHODOX is a weekly show hosted by Fr. Christopher Stamas of St. Spyridon Cathedral. Fr. Chris interviews people active in the life of the Church on questions of faith and action. It is aired on the **Worcester Cable channel 194** on **Mondays** at 7 pm, **Saturdays** at 8 pm and **Sundays** at 9 pm. Also look for it on the Cable website: wccatv.com, or the **Worcester TV** Roku app.

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

NEW BOARD MEMBERS ANNOUNCED. Holy Trinity is excited to welcome the following new Board members: Sam Bitar, Lea Christo, Joanne McMahan, Fr. Selim Milad, and Samir Tokatli. We greatly appreciate their time and talents in helping support our mission and guiding the direction of the organization.

REHABILITATION. When it comes to short-term rehabilitation, choose the experts in the field. We offer physical, occupational, and speech therapies, with a commitment to the highest level of quality care, a focus on customer service, and providing a nurturing environment for both patients and families. If you have questions or would like more information, please get in touch with our Director of Rehab, [Heather Walsh](#).

WELLNESS TIP OF THE WEEK. Even though the pandemic may have put travel to farther destinations on hold, autumn in New England is the perfect time to take a staycation to relax, reset, and avoid burnout. Take a daytrip to enjoy the fall foliage, go for a hike, or pick pumpkins – or simply unwind and get cozy at home with a hot beverage, scented candle, and a good book you've been meaning to read.

ADMISSIONS. Our census continues to climb, and we have limited long-term care beds available. If you are choosing from a group of nursing centers, we encourage you to review the ratings of each facility for potential short term rehabilitative care or long-term placement. We are happy to answer any questions you have along the way and would welcome the opportunity to give you a tour of our nursing center. Please contact Director of Admissions [Karen Barry](#) or call (508) 852-1000, ext. 213.

JOB OPENINGS. Looking to begin a new career in healthcare, but not sure how to get started? While we are always in need of experienced Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs), we also offer training for those interested in the field. An essential role in the care of our residents, CNAs follow care plans to help facilitate daily living and healthcare needs. Our ideal candidate is compassionate, team-oriented, and has strong attention to detail. [Click here](#) for a full listing of our openings with detailed job descriptions, including including HR, rehab, nursing, reception, and dietary. Recent grads and people familiar with the languages and cultures of our Orthodox communities are encouraged to apply.

STAY CONNECTED. Be sure to like our [Facebook page](#) for frequent updates and photos. We are actively seeking volunteers, especially those able to assist with bingo, 1:1 visits, Men's club, events, and specialty hobbies, including knitting, crocheting, and quilting. All volunteers must be fully vaccinated. If your parish, social group, or family may be interested in sponsoring an activity or funding a specific need for our residents, please contact our Director of Development & Communications, [Mackenzie Koch](#).

You can now find us at www.holytrinityrehab.org!

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

Lord God, eternal Father: Give us the justice that will make us flourish like the palm tree; give us also the goodness that will enable us to grow before you like the cedar of Lebanon. Help us to avoid senseless controversy, to eschew judging, censoring, and criticizing, and to resist being enslaved to our own opinions. Planted in your courts, O Lord, may we grow by abandoning ourselves to your perfect will.

By the mercies 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.

Avoid Stupid Controversies

The Epistle lesson this week is related to the commemoration of the Fathers of the Seventh Œcumenical Council, the second held in Nicæa, in 787ad. This was the Council that addressed the issue of the proper role of icons in the Church and in worship. The selection today is from St. Paul's letter to his disciple and co-worker Titus (3:8-15). In it he addresses some of the finer points of pastoring a community, especially an early Christian one that is still influenced by many pagan enticements.

We read today from the very last verses of that Letter. St. Paul, after giving Titus his advice on how to guide the community in a Christian way, tells him: "I desire you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to apply themselves to good deeds; these are excellent and profitable to men" (v. 8). St. Paul is a man of action. He believes the principles of faith are meant to be put into practice. This is equally true of many of the spiritual fathers of the Church. They believed that by practicing acts of charity and good works, a person is able to integrate their faith into their very being. It is not enough for someone to have good intentions in their head; they also need to act on these same intentions with their hands.

He warns Titus to "avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels over the law, for they are unprofitable and futile" (v. 9.) This isn't to say that Titus himself was prone to such controversies, but rather that itinerant preachers were stirring up things everywhere. People in local communities, informed or ignorant, would form camps and tear each other apart. This is St. Paul's concern.

He tells Titus: "As for a man who is factious, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is perverted and sinful; he is self-condemned" (v. 10-11).

The word translated as "factious" is, in the original Greek, "αἰρετικὸν" — "heretical." (This word didn't assume the specific theological meaning we understand today until a few hundred years after St. Paul.) The Greek root of the word "heretical" literally means, "to choose;" that is to say, to single out one particular point and emphasize it to the exclusion of other points of view or understandings. Thus, a "heretic" turns their one central point into the whole truth. Many persons who the Church considers to be heretics were not entirely wrong. The problem was that the one point they clung to and emphasized changed the full meaning of the truth. In effect, their one point became their whole truth. The Church has always had a wider understanding of truth, not wanting to reduce it to a singular idea.

St. Paul calls this "factious" person "perverted and sinful." Even without discussing St. Paul's understanding or intent of that word in the context of the early Church, we can see his point very easily in the way much public discourse happens today in the shouting matches on TV, radio and in the public square. No doubt much of this is theater, contrived for effect; but increasingly it is not. The factious person uses ideas and language to push people to extremes. The part is presented as the whole. In contrast, the truly thoughtful person tries to keep all perspectives in balance.

This does not mean there are no principles we should not defend; of course there are! It is the "stupid controversies" and "dissensions" that St. Paul asks us to avoid; "quarrels" that are "unprofitable and futile." These last two words are key to understanding where and how someone should stand on a question of principle. Will the dispute ultimately build up the Body of Christ, or will it finally be unprofitable and futile? Understanding this difference is what makes one person a saint and another a heretic. It calls for discernment.

Discernment is first and foremost a spiritual gift. It is the ability to distinguish between the various thoughts that enter our mind and to recognize those that come from God and those that are from the devil. As such, the person with discernment can understand both the short and long term consequences of a thought or an action. Like all spiritual gifts, God gives discernment to a person of prayer. We all need God's help so that He might guide us toward people of true discernment to whom we should listen and from whom we can learn.

In St. Paul's last few lines to Titus, we gain insight into how he was so successful in establishing Churches throughout the Roman world. St. Paul had sent Titus to Crete to bring order to the Church there. He tells him he will "send Artemas or Tychicus" to Crete to replace him and then he would like Titus to come to Nicopolis to join him there (v. 12). He asks him to "speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way;" to "see that they lack nothing" (v. 13). We suppose that these two, about whom St. Paul speaks in other letters, had brought this message to Titus. After they leave Crete they will visit other Churches.

Then he offers Titus a final piece of advice: "Let our people learn to apply themselves to good deeds, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not to be unfruitful" (v. 14). While much has been made of St. Paul's principle of justification by faith, not by works (Romans 3:25ff), we see here, as in other places, the emphasis on how our faith should take concrete form, in ministering to those in need.

He reminds us that ultimately the Church is composed of communities of faithful people who love one another. He says: "All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all" (v. 15). And so this is how it should always be, one community, each person embracing the another in the love of Christ.

— Fr. Nicholas Apostola

DATES TO REMEMBER

Fri, Oct 15 Mustard Seed Meal
Tues, Oct 19 Pita Baking, 9am-noon
Thurs, Oct 21 Parish Council 7pm
Sat, Oct 23 Children's Retreat
Tues, Oct 26 Pita Baking, 9am-noon
Sat, Nov 6 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry, 9am-noon
[Be the Bee](#) Teen Retreat
Thurs, Nov 11 Children's Retreat

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