

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, December 12, 2021

The Twenty Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

(Sunday of the Holy Ancestors)

Apostolic Reading: Colossians 3:4-11

Gospel: Luke 14:16-24

(The Parable of the Great Banquet)

Tone 8 • Resurrection Gospel 3

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

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WE ARE IN THE NATIVITY FAST. Let us use this time to withdraw from the noise of the "Christmas Season," and the stresses of the "world," in order to reflect on the great mystery of Emmanuel: God-with-us!

REHEARSALS FOR THE CHRISTMAS PAGEANT will be held **Saturdays December 11 and 18** in the afternoon from 5:00-7:00pm, in addition to Sundays during Religious Education classes. The Saturday rehearsals will be broken up with a Christmas and St. Nicholas movie. Any question, please see [Gina Skaff](#) after Sunday Liturgy, or [e-mail her](#). If you'd like to offer a little adult help in organizing the Pageant, this too would be greatly appreciated.

IF YOU OFFERED TO PURCHASE CHRISTMAS GIFTS for Holy Trinity residents, please make sure to bring them to Church this Sunday, December 12th so that we can deliver them to the Nursing Center. Questions? Eleanor Sedares (508-753-3106).

OUR NEXT MUSTARD SEED MEAL is **THIS coming Friday, December 17th**. We are grateful to **the Cocavessis family and the Sassine family** who are sponsoring this month's meal. If you or your family would like to 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 have questions or would like to help.

THE PARISH COUNCIL will hold its regular meeting **Thursday, December 16th at 7:00 pm**. Parish Council Members, please let [Chris Seith](#) know if you are unable to attend.

THANKS TO THE FOOD PANTRY VOLUNTEERS for working the Orthodox Food Center on behalf of our parish this past Saturday. It is a great blessing to help those who could use the help. So, if you're open to sharing a small part of your Saturday morning, please e-mail Nicole Apostola at nicole.apostola@gmail.com. She can give you more details. You'll see what a difference it makes.

THE 2022 CHURCH CALENDARS are here, in both English and Romanian. Pick them up at the candles. Please consider a small donation to cover the costs

CELEBRATE THE FEAST OF ST. SPYRIDON with our sister community of St. Spyridon Cathedral. **Great Vespers THIS Saturday, December 11th, at 6:30 pm.**

The Town of Shrewsbury has issued a MASKING ORDER. Masks are required in all indoor spaces, including Churches. We are now asking that all persons attending the Divine Services wear masks until is order is lifted.

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

HOLY TRINITY

- Has been awarded a 4-star ranking by CMS
- Specializes in short-term rehabilitation with the goal of getting residents back to the community as quickly as possible.
- Is committed to providing exceptional care in a patient-centered environment. Whether residents are there for a short or long-term stay, all aspects of care are focused on meeting the individual's recovery goals.

LONG TERM CARE. Holy Trinity offers long-term care and end-of-life services. Knowledgeable and compassionate care is provided for long-term residents with chronic illnesses, dementia and other conditions. Residents are assisted to achieve as much independence as possible while enjoying the highest quality of life. Compassionate and dignified end-of-life services are also provided in a comforting, supportive environment.

SUB-ACUTE TRANSITIONAL CARE. Holy Trinity provides caring, compassionate, and skilled care in a nurturing environment to patients needing additional recovery time after a hospitalization, with staff experienced in caring for even the most serious health conditions and diagnoses. Interdisciplinary care plans play a vital role in ensuring that residents' physical, emotional and spiritual needs are met and that rehabilitation goals are attained.

We specialize in caring for patients with cardiovascular disease, neurological conditions, such as stroke, and post-surgical needs.

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

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

Blessed are you, Lord God of our fathers and mothers, for giving us your only Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ, as our refuge and stronghold, that evil might never master our lives nor the enemy enslave us! Now, as we offer you these prayers in watchfulness and expectation, enable us to call on your holy name, filled with understanding and love. Prepare us for the celebration of your Son's birthday by renewing in us a spirit of true dedication and discipleship, and grant that we may always enjoy your saving power.

For you are one to have mercy on us and save us, O God, and we give you glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Please Respond

This week's Gospel lesson is the Parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:16-24). St. Matthew also has an account of this parable (cf. 22:1-4) that we hear on the 14th Sunday after Pentecost. However, while both Evangelists relate a similar story, the different contexts in which each is placed shifts the focus of the parable. St. Matthew places his account of the Wedding Feast in a sequence of other parables that Jesus spoke intending to challenge the hypocrisy of the religious authorities of his time. St. Luke places his account in the context of Jesus teaching about humility and hospitality.

In trying to explain what the Kingdom of Heaven is like, Jesus uses the image of a Great Banquet. In an earlier part of this chapter (v. 8-9), he says, "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down in the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host, and the host who invited both of you may come and say, 'Give up your place to this man.' And then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place." He goes on to say that "all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" (v. 11).

Jesus then moves on to speak about hospitality. He says, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case that they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you" (v. 12-14).

Very often we struggle to truly understand what St. Paul means when he says, "by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). In the Lord's teaching on hospitality we gain an insight into what St. Paul means when he says we have been saved "by grace." When we read this parable many of us perhaps think of ourselves as the host who extends the invitation and is turned-down by his guests. But, in actuality, we are the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind who have been invited to the banquet, even dragged in off the streets. We are the ones who do not have the ability to repay. We have a place at the table only because of God's grace and His love.

This Parable of the Great Banquet can be very helpful for us in another way as we prepare for the Feast of the Lord's Birth. When the Lord tries to show us what the Kingdom of God is like, he gives us joyful images like a banquet (Luke 14:16), or a wedding feast (Matthew 22:1), or a bridal chamber (Matthew 25:1, John 3:29). He also gives us transformative images like yeast (Luke 13:20), or a mustard seed (Luke 13:18). He wants us to see the Kingdom of God as something that will bring happiness to our lives even as we are being changed by it.

And, who does God send to extend his invitation for us to attend this Banquet? God sends the invitation in the form of His Son, who embodies the very humility he preaches to us. This Son does not take the first seat, but the last. He does not impose himself, but comes as a vulnerable child. And showing us what he means by hospitality, he invites not only the rich and powerful, but also the lowly and the unimportant, the meek and the poor. He invites us.

We all know it is hard to focus on the spiritual importance of the holiday. Even if this were a "usual" Christmas time, we would probably be, wittingly or unwittingly, distracted from responding to the Lord's invitation as we should. But add the two years of the virus and everything has a different character to it. Yes, there are decorations to hang and gifts to buy. Commercial interests still conspire to twist the miracle of Christ's birth in order to increase the bottom line. And of course, we are especially concerned about family and friends. Yet still, we are neither captives nor victims. We can choose. This is the point of the Parable. People were invited to feast at God's table, yet some chose the distractions and cares of life over the joy of God's Kingdom.

God has invited us to the Feast, but if we choose not to attend, the Banquet Hall will not remain empty. The Lord will fill His House, and He will fill it as it pleases Him (v. 23). We should take care not to be blinded by the frenzy of the season, and as a result reject what has been offered us — refuge in that quiet cave in Bethlehem, where rests a young child, the pre-eternal God.

— Fr. Nicholas Apostola

DATES TO REMEMBER

Mon, Nov 15 Christmas Lent Began
Sat, Dec 11 Pageant Rehearsal, 5-7:00 pm
Thurs, Dec 16 Parish Council, 7pm
Fri, Dec 17 Mustard Seed Meal
Sat, Dec 18 Pageant Rehearsal, 5-7:00 pm
Sun, Dec 19 Children's Christmas Program
Sat, Dec 25 Nativity of the Lord

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