

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, December 19, 2021

The Sunday before the Nativity

(Sunday of the Holy Ancestors of the Lord)

Apostolic Reading: Hebrews 11:9-10, 32-40

Gospel: Matthew 1:1-25

(The Genealogy of the Savior)

Tone 1 • Resurrection Gospel 4

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

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THERE ARE TWO IMPORTANT EVENTS THIS SUNDAY:

- ***THE CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PAGEANT*** will be held after the close of Divine Liturgy. The children have been working and rehearsing this for weeks. We're all looking forward to it.
- ***WE WILL BE TAKING A PARISH PHOTOGRAPH.*** The last photograph was a couple of years ago. It's time to update it. At the end of the Pageant, please be patient. We'll be inside and we'll all pretty much stay in place.

THE FULL CHRISTMAS/THEOPHANY SCHEDULE MAY BE [DOWNLOADED BY CLICKING HERE.](#) The schedule of services for the Nativity Feast this coming weekend are:

- Friday, December 24th. Royal Hours, 9:30 am
- Friday, December 24th. Great Vespers, 6:00 pm
- Saturday, December 25th. Nativity of our Lord: Matins 9:00 am and Divine Liturgy 10:00 am
- Sunday, December 26th. Synaxis of the Theotokos: Matins 9:00 am and Divine Liturgy 10:00 am

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.

THANKS TO THE MUSTARD SEED VOLUNTEERS! Those who prepared and helped served the meal this Friday! We are grateful to ***the Cocavessis family and the Sassine family*** who sponsored this month's meal. If you or your family would like to help with future meal preparations, please contact ***Deb Sedares*** — by e-mail or phone: 508-509-6678. The Mustard Seed is a Catholic Worker home providing dinner to about 100 people in need each day.

CONGRATULATIONS TO MARGARETA AND STEPHEN ELLIS on the birth of their daughter: ***Athena Delphi Ellis.*** May our good and loving Lord bless Athena Delphi and her whole family. ***Many years!***

TODAY WE WILL OBSERVE A MEMORIAL for the servant of God, ***Ilia Zhaka,*** the son of Natasha Zhaka. ***May our Lord rest his soul with the just!*** The Zhaka family is sponsoring the coffee hour in his memory.

THERE IS AN INDOOR MASKING MANDATE IN PLACE. Masks are required in all indoor spaces, including Churches. We are now asking that all persons attending the Divine Services wear masks until its order is lifted. Thanks for your cooperation.

Thanks to the Bakers!

Our baked goods have become a significant support for our

Parish. It's a team effort and a lot of our parishioners and friends are involved. It's only fitting that we send out a "thank you" to the people who work very hard producing all of the baked goods we sell. Here they are. Offer each one a personal "thank you" when you see them.

Ken Anderson
Ron Anderson
Katina Cocavessis
Maria Dumitriu
Eileen Favata
Phil Favata
Lisa Mielnicki
Maria Mossaides
Arthur Peterson
Padraic Peterson

Florence Rucho
Tim Rucho
Deb Sedares
Evan Stamoulis
Valarie Stamoulis
Anna Stefania Seith
Chris Seith
Chris Toda
Dianne Tonna
Karen Wilder

And we'd like to especially thank Betty Anderson who headed-up the whole production!

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

We glorify you, Lord Jesus Christ, for allowing us to know you. Everything we have belongs to you and we possess nothing of our own, for it is you who gave us all we have. By coming into our midst, you show us how to let go of everything, and by the poverty of your birth, you teach us to be attached to nothing. As we prepare for the celebration of your earthly birthday, O Christ, keep our hearts fixed only on you, so that we may always sing: Glory to God in the heights; on earth peace, and among all love and understanding.

For you are God and we give you glory together with your Father Who is without beginning, and your all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

God Has Provided Something Better For Us

This is the Sunday before the Nativity of our Lord. The Epistle Lesson is taken from the Letter to the Hebrews 11:9-10; 32-40. This chapter of Hebrews concerns faith. It begins with the famous line: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (v. 1) The rest of the chapter talks about specific people and examples of their continuing faith in God, even though they "did not receive what was promised" (v. 39).

From generation to generation faith in the 'promise' was passed down parent to child. St. Paul says that, "by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (v. 9-10). Abraham left Ur (in modern-day Iraq) at God's bidding and went and sojourned in Canaan (cf. Genesis 12:1ff). He believed in God's promise, that one day this land would be given to him and his descendants. He never saw this, nor did Isaac and Jacob. In using the word "tents" and the impermanence it suggests, St. Paul seems to be saying that Abraham and his offspring understood the promise was not about the land of Canaan, but about their real dwelling place in the heavenly city, the 'city which has foundations.'

St. Paul offers us Abraham's faith as a model to emulate (cf. Romans 4). He is the prototype of the Christian believer. As Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, confident that his descendants would inherit it, so we sojourn on this earth awaiting the promised Kingdom.

This selected reading jumps from verse 10 to 32. In the verses not read St. Paul speaks in detail of the faith not only of Abraham, but also of Sarah, who believed and gave birth in her old age to Isaac. Of Isaac, who on his deathbed continued to believe in the promise and passed this faith to his sons Jacob and Esau. In like manner, Jacob as he died blessed each of his twelve sons by the same faith in the promise as yet unseen.

Paul speaks of Joseph's faith in the land of Egypt, sold into slavery. He reminds us of Moses' faith, viewing the land of promise only from afar. These and others are held up to us as persons to mirror, as well as to be encourage by.

In this Sunday's reading we then skip to verse 32. Even St. Paul himself does not want to tire us by recounting all of the persons who lived by this faith; he feels these few examples are enough to illustrate his point. So he says: "And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets — who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned to death, they were sawn in two, they were killed by the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented — of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground" (v. 32-38).

Reflect for a moment on this list. He could have mentioned more! These were people with real lives, like ours. They lived with all of the difficulties of life, like we do. They passed on to their children the things that they held to most closely, just as we do. These experiences went on for hundreds and thousands of years, not unlike our own, except for one thing.

"Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect" (v. 39-40).

Think about this. People whose faith so surpassed our own, like the earth from the heavens, needed us to 'be made perfect.' Never wavering from their faith, even in the most difficult of circumstances, they waited with certainty knowing that the promised would be fulfilled.

We live in the time of the promise. The Lord has fulfilled His Word in our hearing. It is not only that 'apart from us, [they would not] be made perfect,' we should understand that we would not have been made perfect except for their watchful expectation, certain of God's promise.

The Feast of the Lord's Nativity is often called a 'quiet' celebration. The quietness can be found in the small number of people who knew (Mary and Joseph, perhaps the midwives, shepherds and magi). The quietness is also located in the humble circumstances: a newborn infant, a cave, a small village. We should celebrate this great event quietly as well: in our hearts, in our minds, and yes, in our actions.

The great events of our Lord's coming are yet to be celebrated: the Baptism, the Entry in Jerusalem, the Crucifixion, and finally the Resurrection. However, each of these is wrapped tightly within the swaddling cloths in that cave in Bethlehem. We too await the promise with Abraham and all the others. However, we also await our Lord's birth, not in Bethlehem, but in our hearts and souls.

Brothers and sisters, cut away the noise and distractions of the world. Let us not simply put Christ back into Christmas, but rather, put our Christmas celebration back into Christ. Let us be firm in the hope of the promise given us, putting all our faith in Christ our Lord. While we may be terrified to put our lives in God's hands, remember how He put His life in our hands, through Mary, His mother, and Joseph, His stepfather. When we want to understand God's love for us, meditate on this: the universe's creator allows himself to be nurtured and raised by a teenage mother and a working-class father, in a "back-water" village in Galilee.

***Christ is Born!
Glorify Him!***

— Fr. Nicholas Apostola

DATES TO REMEMBER

Full Holiday Schedule [Click here](#)
Sat, Dec 18 Pageant Rehearsal, 5-7:00 pm
Sun, Dec 19 Children's Christmas Program
Fri, Dec 24 Royal Hours, 9:30 am
Great Vespers, 6:00 pm
Sat, Dec 25 Nativity of the Lord, Lit. 10:00 am
Sun, Dec 26 Liturgy, 10:00 am
Sat, Jan 1 New Year's Lit 10:00 am
Sun, Jan 2 Vespers Liturgy
Wed, Jan 5 Blessing of Water, 6:00 pm

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church
34 Gold St | Shrewsbury MA 01545-6238
508-845-0088 | fax: 508-845-8850 | email: info@StNicholasChurch.org
www.StNicholasChurch.org
Sunday Services: Matins at 9:00 am and Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am