

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, January 9, 2022

The Sunday after Theophany

Apostolic Reading: Ephesians 4:7-13

Gospel: Matthew 4:12-17
(The Lord begins His Ministry)

Tone 4 • Resurrection Gospel 7

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

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

REGULAR SERVICES WILL NOT BE HELD THIS SUNDAY. Fr. Nick has tested positive for Corona-19. Services will resume on Sunday, January 16th. Please inform your relatives and friends who may not have e-mail. Also, please consider attending Divine Liturgy at one of our sister Orthodox Churches in the area.

THE GREAT BLESSING OF WATER will be celebrated **after Liturgy on Sunday, January 16th.** We are asking people to **bring their own bottles** for Holy Water. We've run short. For questions about House Blessing, please see below.

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. We are next responsible for staffing the Pantry on **January 29th and February 5th.**

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.

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.

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ON A PERSONAL NOTE, I would like to thank each of you who has sent messages of prayer and concern. I've been very moved. It's hard to get back to each of you personally, but I'll try my best. For now, know that I seem to have a mild case with minimum symptoms. I imagine that having had the three shots very much helped. I'm following the 10-day regime, and hope to be back serving Sunday after next. God bless all of you. — Fr. Nick

HOUSE BLESSING

WE CELEBRATED THE FEAST OF THEOPHANY this past week. We mark the great self-revelation of God at the Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ in the River Jordan by the hand of St. John the Baptist. We partake in the miracle of water restored and sanctified by the work of the Holy Spirit through prayer. We then take God's gift and bless ourselves, our family, our homes, our work places — in short, everything. The local priest, often assisted by faithful parishioners, travels from place to place to spread and share this sanctification. This is the way it usually happens.

But these are not usual times. We are in the middle of a pandemic, and this current variant seems to spread much more quickly and easily. It does not seem prudent or safe to bless homes as we normally do.

However, there is a solution. Each one of us can take the water sanctified at the Great Blessing of Water and bless our own homes. This is an ancient and beautiful practice of our Church. Perhaps many of you have seen pious members of your family bless their homes on a regular basis. You can and should do this yourselves as well.

We've prepared a sheet with simple instructions and a service to follow. [You may download it here](#). If you would like Fr. Nick to come and bless your house, you may either [e-mail](#) him or call him at 508-335-7378, to set up a specific time.

Never forget, God is always with us! And please, return your extra Holy Water bottles. We're running short.

COMMUNITY NEWS

HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE. Father Chris Stamas from St. Spyridon Cathedral will be leading a [trip to the Holy Lands](#) in November, 2022. With a goal of about 100 people, they can still accommodate up to 15 more people! The hope is to accommodate as many parishioners from our local parishes as possible. The dates are November 10-20 and the cost is \$3,500. Click here to see the flyer. For more information, [e-mail Fr. Chris](#).

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

Happy New Year! It is my profound hope that 2022 brings good health and joy to all. It's been a long 20 months since we first started dealing with COVID, and while we've come a long way, I fear we still have many months to go. We are entering a new and challenging phase with Omicron raging through our communities. As the Health Department strongly recommends, if you haven't received your booster shot yet, please get it! — [Rodolfo A. Parra, CEO](#)

COVID UPDATE. Unfortunately, we have identified 5 staff members that tested positive for COVID. These individuals only worked in one of the units, Courtyard. We have not identified any positive residents at this time. We will be regularly testing the Courtyard residents and staff. At this time, Courtyard is in Quarantine. We are permitting visitors.

REHABILITATION. Holy Trinity understands the importance of finding a reliable recovery center for a loved one. Our commitment to rehabilitation and wellness sets Holy Trinity apart for those who require the skilled care of a compassionate nursing staff to recover from acute trauma. Our team is devoted to helping its patients reach their recovery goals in a timely manner within a safe environment. Patients will have access to state-of-the-art equipment and our experienced rehabilitation staff seven days a week, who will work with them to help regain skills lost due to their short-term illness or injury. These skills include:

- Personal care
- Home management
- Meal preparation
- Transfer and gait training
- Therapeutic and balance exercises
- Restorative feeding
- Swallowing and speech retraining

JOB OPENINGS. Holy Trinity is one of the Best Workplaces in the Worcester area. For over 20 years, we've been a company that celebrates people, their stories, and meaningful interactions—because every interaction matters! Holy Trinity is focused on keeping our center healthy and our residents thriving through well-being programs. We have openings for nurses and CNAs for all shifts, Admission Director and Maintenance Director. [Click here](#) for a full listing of our openings with detailed job descriptions. 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.

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)

A Prayer of Fr. Laurence

Let us pray to the Lord

O Lord, our God, light of all the world: The brilliance of this feast of lights dazzles the eyes of our souls. For today you enlighten us with the intimate knowledge that you are three in one. Today, you enlighten us by the appearance and manifestation of the Lord Jesus in the Jordan. Today, you enlighten us with the understanding that your salvation is for all peoples without exception. Therefore, by the never-fading radiance of your light, rescue us from the power of darkness and make a place for us in your kingdom. Fill us with your glory and reveal the splendor of your presence to every nation, that we may all find forgiveness of our sins and true freedom.

For you are indeed our God, the Father of lights, and we give glory to you, your co-eternal Son, and your all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit: now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Growing into our Potential

The Lord's Epiphany at his baptism in the Jordan by John marks the beginning of his earthly ministry. Very soon after this, John will be imprisoned and put to death. Jesus will begin preaching and healing. Slowly people will recognize that Jesus is the Messiah. The Scripture readings for this Sunday following the Feast of Epiphany — the Gospel lesson is Matthew 4:12-17 and the Epistle lesson is Ephesians 4:7-13 — speak of the Lord's ministry, and the ministry given to those who have chosen to follow him.

The selected reading from Ephesians is taken from a section of St. Paul's Letter where he speaks of the unity of the Body of Christ and how each of us can contribute to building it up. He says, "each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift" (v. 7). In other words, each of us has been given something by Christ that is essential for the well-being of the whole Church. Christ shares his gifts with us. We are essential participants in Christ's work of salvation. No gift is better or more important than another. Each is needed; all are critical. Our task is to understand our gift and use it for the well-being of others.

In order to emphasize both the power and humility of the Lord Jesus he quotes Psalm 68:18 adding insights from both Jewish Biblical scholars of the time as well as his own. So he says: "When he ascended on high he made captivity [entrapment by the Evil One] itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people" (v. 8). Here is how St. Paul himself explains this verse: "When it says, 'He ascended,' what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things". (v. 9-10)

St. Paul wants us to appreciate how the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, God's Son, "descended" to the earth. He came and lived among us. Some Biblical scholars say that when St. Paul says he "descended into the lower parts of the earth" this is also a reference to his death and descent to Hades to liberate the souls of the righteous held captive there. St. Paul's central point is that by both descending and ascending Jesus defeated the Evil One. "He made captivity itself a captive." And, "he gave gifts."

What are these gifts that Christ gave us? "The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers" (v. 11). St. Paul gives us other lists of gifts given us, for example in Romans 12:3-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:1-31. However, the list he gives in Ephesians has to do with the Church, particularly offices in the Church. These are not 'personal' gifts. Rather, they are gifts "for building up the body of Christ;" and, "to equip the saints [that is us, average Christians] for the work of ministry" (v. 12).

When God gives us gifts they are always meant to be used for the well-being of others. They don't belong to us, to use narrowly or even selfishly. This is particularly evident in the four gifts that St. Paul names here: apostles, prophets, evangelists; and pastors/ teachers. Each of these gifts represents a position of responsibility within the Church. The apostles were those with a direct, first-hand experience of Jesus and given a commission to preach Him. A prophet is an inspired preacher who encourages, warns or stimulates the community. An evangelist is an itinerant preacher, proclaiming the Gospel from community to community. The pastor/teacher is the presbyter (priest) or bishop; the one responsible for ministering to and guiding the local community. These gifts, and the responsibilities that come with them, have as their sole purpose the edification, the building-up, of the Body of Christ.

The gifts and offices are given, "until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ" (v. 13). You can see from what St. Paul says that these gifts are not intended to be permanent; that is to say, they are given to us for a purpose and toward an end. The end is that all of us should come to maturity, the full stature of Christ.

Let's look at some of the phrases St. Paul gives us. He tells us that we are expected to come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God. The "unity of the faith" means that we, each of us in the Church (that is, the whole Church), and each of us in the church (that is, our home parish), come to a common and correct faith. The "knowledge of the Son of God" does not mean to "know Jesus." Rather, it means to know what Jesus knows; to think and understand as Jesus does.

When we are able to take on "the mind of Christ," we become mature. We become fully human. When we say that Jesus became fully human, we are not only saying that the Son of God became like us; we are also saying that Christ became what we were intended to be — when He created us. He has come to give us the opportunity to become fully human — but, only if we want to.

God gives us gifts to help one another. He asks us to learn, grow, and fully develop into the kind of persons who are like Adam and Eve in Paradise. He invites us to live up to our full potential. He give us the gifts we need and the grace to realize it.

— Fr. Nicholas Apostola

DATES TO REMEMBER

Thurs, Jan 20 Parish Council, 7:00 pm
Sat, Jan 29 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry
Sat, Feb 5 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry
Sun, Feb 13 Triodion Begins
Sat, Feb 26 Saturday of the Dead
Sun, Feb 27 Last Judgment/Meatfare Sunday
Sun, March 6 Forgiveness Sunday/Cheesefare Sunday
Mon, March 7 Great Lent Begins
Sun, April 25 Great and Holy Pascha

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