

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, January 23, 2022

The Thirty-First Sunday after Pentecost

Apostolic Reading: 1 Timothy 1:15-17

Gospel: Luke 18:35-43

(Jesus Heals the Blind Man near Jericho)

Tone 6 • Resurrection Gospel 9

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

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

HOLY WATER AND HOUSE BLESSINGS. Because of Covid, Fr. Nick will not be making his usual house visits, but will come to your home if requested. **For questions about House Blessing, please see below.**

FOOD PANTRY THIS COMING SATURDAY. Help is needed to staff our monthly responsibility at the Orthodox Food Center, **this coming Saturday, January 29th from 9 am - noon.** (This is our fifth Saturday obligation.) And, the **Saturday after that, February 5th.** 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.

STEWARDSHIP CONTRIBUTION. Please remember to send in your Stewardship Contribution for 2021. So many have responded to the letter we sent out a few weeks ago. Thank you! This has been a great blessing for our parish.

THE ANNUAL PARISH GENERAL ASSEMBLY will be held following the Divine Liturgy, on **Sunday, February 6th.** Please plan on staying and participating.

THE FALL 2021 CREDINȚA / THE FAITH magazine of our Metropolia is available for download. Take some time to look it over. **[Just click here!](#)**

SUPPORT IOCC ON SOUPER BOWL SUNDAY! February 13th is Souper Bowl Sunday. Please come prepared to make a donation to support IOCC's work. If you'd like more information, go to IOCC.ORG.

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 the order is lifted.

HOUSE BLESSING

WE CELEBRATED THE FEAST OF THEOPHANY earlier this month to 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 with the reserve of water that they keep next to the household Ico. 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.

NOTES FROM HOLY TRINITY

We are humbled by your recent expression of support to Holy Trinity. Your gift to our Treasured Generations Annual Appeal honors those we serve and ensures that we are able to continue to provide care and comfort to all seniors in need as we look ahead to the future.

COVID UPDATE. We currently have 15 COVID-19 positive employees. Employees are vaccinated, doing ok, with mild symptoms. We have been testing every 3 days, of which all long-term care residents have continued to test negative. We continue to be flexible to maintain safety for ourselves, patients and residents, and the community. This does not require you to change your own plans for visiting with resident, but you should be aware and make decisions you are comfortable with. Masking is more important than ever right now. As always, we will be in touch with any further updates.

COVID-19 REHABILITATION UNIT. At this time, we have a dedicated unit for COVID-19 Patients. We are registered nurses, patient care technicians who take care of COVID-19 patients. We provide essential treatment with PPE precautions including gowns, N95 masks, shields and googles. We play a critical role in escalating care for our most at-risk patients. We are key in triaging and escalating care, and we navigate PPE and isolation procedures to ensure our patients and all of our staff are safe. Rules and procedures change frequently as the pandemic continues and knowledge about the virus changes.

REHABILITATION. At Holy Trinity, we understand and respect your desire to return to your greatest level of independence after recovering from an illness, injury or surgery. Our nurses and licensed therapists focus on helping short-term rehabilitation patients recover successfully and return home as quickly as possible.

JOB OPENINGS. We are confident you will come to see that Holy Trinity is an organization that offers the not only an exceptional program for employees, but a working environment that is the best in the area! If you choose Holy Trinity, with its inspiring and rewarding organizational culture, you will join an organization that values employees as its greatest asset and nurtures an environment of trust, respect, and encouragement. Come work for an organization that walks the talk and cares about you and your well-being! 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)

[Council of Eastern Orthodox Churches of Central Mass.](#) (CEOC)

A Prayer of Fr. Laurence

Let us pray to the Lord

Many are the demons that assail us, almighty Father, that try their best to drag us away from you! Rise up and put them down, and let your hand snatch us out of their clutches. Give us victory in our struggles with them. Grace us with the might to cling to the ways of your commandments, in your footsteps, lest we stumble.

By the grace and mercies and love for us of your only Son, whom you are blest, together with your all holy, good, and life-giving Spirit: now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

I Am the Chief Sinner

The Epistle lesson for this thirty-first Sunday after Pentecost is taken from St. Paul's first Letter to his disciple Timothy: 1:15-17. This letter, along with second Timothy and Titus, form a unique group: pastoral letters addressed to particular persons, heads of Churches. In them St. Paul takes up the challenges of local church leaders even as he sets an overarching direction for the whole early Church.

The three verses of today's reading are not so much addressed to Timothy as they are a moment of self-reflection on St. Paul's part. In these and the few preceding verses, he looks back on his former life — what he characterized as zealous but totally misdirected — and the degree to which God, in His mercy, had completely transformed it.

In verse 15 he gives us a statement that lies at the heart of the Christian proclamation: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." He says that this saying "is sure and worthy of full acceptance." In other words, we can rely on it and trust that it is true. We shouldn't doubt it.

One reason St. Paul states this so categorically is that, in spite of the fact that many people did accept these words as Good News, many others did not. While this shouldn't surprise us, since we often experience the same reaction today, there is an important difference between St. Paul's time and ours. People of the Roman world had a better sense of what sin is than we do today. It isn't that they were more moral than us — anyone who has read a history of the Roman Empire can testify to that — it is that even while they were sinning they could more readily recognize it as such. We have a harder time.

One characteristic of sin is that it is always easier to recognize it in someone else than in yourself. Another characteristic is that sin reflects a violation of relationships: between us and God, between us and our loved ones, between us and people we don't even know; and finally between our true selves and the mask that we put on to fool ourselves.

St. Paul sets us on the right trajectory for understanding sin with what he says at the end of this verse. After telling us that Jesus has come to save sinners, he adds: "of whom I am the foremost." This whole verse is part of the prayer we say before Communion attributed to St. John Chrysostom. It begins: "I believe and confess that you are the Christ the Son of the living God ..." As we recite this prayer, we come to recognize ourselves as the "chief sinner."

While logic tells us we all can't be the "chief sinner," St. Paul's assertion isn't about logic, it's about point of view. We stop looking at the speck in the eye of another and concentrate on the log lodged in our own (cf. Matthew 7:3ff). By speaking of his own sins, St. Paul provides us both an example to follow, and gives us the courage to embrace the "sure and worthy" news that God loves us. He says as much to Timothy in verse 16. His argument is that if we could see how God poured His mercy on Paul, after all of the things he had done against God and His Christ, then we would gain the strength to accept God's mercy and forgiveness for ourselves.

It is probably harder for modern people to accept the second characteristic of sin, that sin is a violation of relationships. In spite of the deep aloneness and isolation so many people feel, it remains difficult to break out of our narcissistic shell and truly engage those around us; to allow them and their needs to be more important to us than our own. Our airwaves are populated by endless talk shows on building relationships; innumerable books and articles are written on the subject; millions upon millions of people open Facebook accounts, each one "friending" hundreds of people. Yet, the pain of our aloneness grows. The root cause is that the hard shell of our egos prevents us from truly engaging those around us. We live virtual lives. We text the person sitting next to us instead of looking into their eyes. We crave experiences rather than relationships. This is the heart of sin: the distance we keep from one another.

God did not send us an ambassador. He came Himself. He didn't ask anything of us, except our love. In fact, He gave us His love without waiting for our response. St. Paul says He did this, dying for us, while we were still His enemies (cf. Romans 5:10). It would be a sin not to love God in return.

We make a great deal about people who put themselves in harm's way for the sake of a friend or even a stranger. Police and

firefighters do this all the time. Soldiers do this defending their nation. We call them heros, and rightly so. These are people who in one instant will forget about themselves and completely give of themselves for the sake of the other. They crack open their shell of narcissism and become vulnerable, even to death.

Each of us can do the same. We don't necessarily have to die, except to ourselves, but we can take responsibility for our own actions, rather than blame someone else. We can hold our tongues while listening to someone with whom we disagree. We can suffer through painful moments in our relationships, hoping to bridge the gap that separates. We can be faithful, loyal and honest, even when others are duplicitous. We can love the ones around us more than we love ourselves. All of this is possible when we realize that we are the "chief sinner," and still God loves us.

"To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen" (v. 17).

— Fr. Nicholas Apostola

DATES TO REMEMBER

Sat, Jan 29	Staff Orthodox Food Pantry
Sat, Feb 5	Staff Orthodox Food Pantry
Sun, Feb 6	General Assembly Meeting
Sun, Feb 13	Triodion Begins
Fri, Feb 18	Mustard Seed Meal
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

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