

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, February 20, 2022

The Thirty Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Parable of the Prodigal Son

Apostolic Reading: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Gospel: Luke 15:11-32

Tone 2 • Resurrection Gospel 2

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

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

OUR MUSTARD SEED MEAL is **THIS Friday, February 18th**. We're still adhering to a Covid protocol, so the meals are pre-packaged and ready to be distributed by the regular staff of volunteers. We are grateful to **Maria Dumitriu** who is sponsoring this month's meal in memory her husband Nița Dumitriu, recently fallen asleep. 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.

PITA DOUGH ROLLING SESSIONS will be held on **Saturdays February 19th and March 5th**. If you'd like to help, please contact Betty Anderson by **[e-mail](#)** or phone: **508-353-9449**. Remember: There's a job for everyone!

THE SATURDAY OF THE SOULS / SÂMBĂTA MORȚILOR is NEXT **Saturday, February 26th**. Matins at 9:00am and Liturgy at 10:00 am.

THE MOVIE MAN OF GOD on the **[life of St. Nektarios](#)** will be shone on **Monday, March 21st at 7:00pm**, at the Regal Cinema in Marlborough. We are buying a block of tickets. Please let **[Fr. Nick](#)** know if you would like to go and how many tickets you will need. **It's important that we have a count**. Before the showing that night, at 5:15pm, Fr. Greg will be holding a compline service at Sts. Anagyroi in Marlborough. The relics of St. Nektarios will be there for veneration. We've been given is a unique opportunity.

SUPPORT IOCC ON SOUPER BOWL SUNDAY! Last Sunday was Souper Bowl Sunday. If you haven't made a donation recently, please consider helping IOCC's work. If you'd like more information, go to **[IOCC.ORG](#)**.

The Town of Shrewsbury lifted its masking order. While encouraged for persons with certain medical conditions or are unvaccinated, masks are not longer required in indoor spaces.

LENTEN RESOURCES

We are beginning the journey toward Pascha, the Lord's Resurrection. To help along the way, each week we'll be posting some resources and reflections aimed at assisting and informing.

THIS SUNDAY WE RECALL THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON. (Gospel reading: Luke 15:11–32). The parable of the Prodigal forms an exact ikon of repentance in its different stages. Sin is exile, enslavement to strangers, hunger. Repentance is the return from exile to our true home; it is to receive back our inheritance and freedom in the Father's house. But repentance implies action: 'I will rise up and go ...' (verse 18). To repent is not just to feel dissatisfied, but to take a decision and to act upon it. On this and the next two Sundays, after the solemn and joyful words of the Polyeleos at Mattins, we add the sorrowful verses of Psalm 136, 'By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept ...'. This Psalm of exile, sung by the children of Israel in their Babylonian captivity, has a special appropriateness on the Sunday of the Prodigal, when we call to mind our present exile in sin and make the resolve to return home.

NEXT SATURDAY IS CALLED the Saturday of the Dead. On the day before the Sunday of the Last Judgment, and in close connection with the theme of this Sunday, there is a universal commemoration of the dead 'from all the ages'. (There are further commemorations of the dead on the second, third and fourth Saturdays in Lent.) Before we call to mind the Second Coming of Christ in the services on Sunday, we commend to God all those departed before us, who are now awaiting the Last Judgment. In the texts for this Saturday there is a strong sense of the continuing bond of mutual love that links together all the members of the Church, whether alive or dead. For those who believe in the risen Christ, death does not constitute an impassable barrier, since all are alive in Him; the departed are still our brethren, members of the same family with us, and so we are conscious of the need to pray insistently on their behalf.

FASTING RULES. One question that often comes up is: *What are the Fasting rules?* [We've linked here](#) one of the better explanations of the rules around fasting. It is taken from the *Lenten Triodion*, translated and edited by Metropolitan Kallistos Ware and Mother Mary. If you've never been exposed to the whole discipline of the Fast, reading the rules can seem very daunting. You should seek advice from your spiritual father; no one should try this without guidance.

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.

NOTES FROM HOLY TRINITY

COVID-19 UPDATE - Holy Trinity continues to be Covid-Free at this time. We do have a dedicate section for Covid + patient whom admit to Holy Trinity for rehabilitation.

VISITORS - Holy Trinity families and friends are now able to visit in our designated area and resident rooms. Per the guidance, visitation may vary based on individual status. All visitors are required to do a temperature check, sanitize their hands, and wear a new medical grade mask upon entry. **NEW ADMISSIONS** - Holy Trinity is open for admissions. To inquire about admissions, for either long-term or short-term rehab, please call (508) 852-1000.

VOLUNTEERS – We are especially excited to invite back our church groups who may be interested in hosting a luncheon or coffee social or assisting with liturgy. We also are looking for someone who is interested in leading a Mens Group (card games, sports, model cars), assisting with Greek Club, or lending their artistic talents in the areas of painting, sewing, knitting, etc. Those who are fully vaccinated may be considered to volunteer. Please call [Donna with the Activities department](#) at (508) 852-1000 to discuss one of the many ways you can lend a helping hand.

JOB OPENINGS. Come work for an organization that walks the talk and cares about you and your well-being! We have openings for Physical and Occupational Therapists, Nurses, and CNAs for all shifts. [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.

DIVINE LITURGY is celebrated each Wednesday morning at 9:30 am for the residents. We welcome volunteers and visitors who would like to attend and be involved.

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

O Lord and Master of our lives: Educate us, your ignorant servants, by letting your wisdom enlighten our minds and hearts. Make us alert, lest the deceits of this world seduce us. Teach us how to distinguish between substance and appearance, how to discern what is of our the Holy Spirit and what is not. Do not leave us to fight the enemy of our life by ourselves, for he is constantly striving to silence the word of life within us. Rather, be with us today, and every day, through your loving mercy.

For you alone are good and full of love for us, O God and we give you glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

The Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian

**O Lord and master of my life!
Dispel from me the spirit of discouragement and slothfulness,
of ambition and vain talk!**

**Instead, give me
the spirit of prudence and humility,
of patience and charity.**

**Yes, my king and Lord,
let me look at my own sins and refrain from judging others:
For you are blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.**

And, He Came to Himself

This is the second Sunday of the Triodion, the Sunday of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). By way of preparing us for Great Lent and assisting us on our journey, the holy fathers have given us this Gospel reading as another example of repentance. As with the parable of the Publican and Pharisee, we are asked to draw from this story hope and faith in God's love for us.

In one important respect this parable is very much like that of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). It has entered into our cultural imagination and vocabulary, even for those people who would be hard-pressed to know its scriptural context. The story of the Prodigal coming home remains a powerful image of repentance and forgiveness, of return and acceptance.

There are three important 'players' in this story: the father, the elder son, and the younger son. It is not an uncommon dynamic: sibling rivalry, youthful excesses, rebellion against parents. The elder is being groomed to be the heir. From the story we can see that he takes this role seriously. He is hardworking and diligent. The younger son is a 'lost soul.' He is every parent's sleepless night. He resents his brother and chafes at his father's love.

Out of the blue the younger son demands of his father his inheritance (v. 12). There is a subtle 'knife' here. The son wants his inheritance before his father is even dead. In a sense, he is cutting himself off from his father as though he were already dead. Nonetheless, his father grants his request and divides his wealth, giving his younger son what would have been his only after he were gone.

The younger son gets his 'freedom.' (Don't we often equate money with freedom?) Because he has the means, now he can do whatever he wants. And he does so, that is until the money runs out. Having now found the limits to his 'freedom' the younger son has to find some way to support himself. The only work he can find is to feed pigs (v. 15); this would be no more palatable to him then, than it would be to us today. This was his 'down and out' moment. Feeling the pangs of hunger, and envious of what the pigs themselves were eating, "he came to himself" (v. 17).

I believe that the whole parable turns on this one phrase. Having been stripped of everything, but especially his dignity, the younger son finally can see himself clearly — he comes to himself. This is the first step toward real repentance, to see ourselves as we really are. It is also a dangerous moment, because it can lead us in either of two directions: to despair or to change.

Instead of despairing, this young man chooses to go back to his father and beg for forgiveness. We know he's sincere because he decides that he's not worthy of 'sonship.' Rather, he will ask his father simply to give him a job, to treat him like a hired servant (v. 18-19).

The Lord says that his father, even when the young man “was still far off ... saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him” (v. 20). Dismissing the son’s pleas concerning his sins, the father rejoices at his return and restores everything.

The elder brother, when he returns home from working in the fields, and finding that his profligate brother had come back, was understandably angry and resentful. He blows up at his father, furious at the easy way he welcomed back this brother. The resentment he felt from years of having been the faithful son, doing his father’s will, always doing the “right thing,” comes out in a torrent of anger and hurt (v. 28-30).

The father tries to comfort his eldest son, even as he tries to teach him compassion and love, and encourages him to accept his brother, once dead to them, and now alive (v. 32).

This story is so powerful because we know these people intimately. We are the prodigal who needs to turn back and be embraced and loved by our Heavenly Father. We are the hardworking older child in need of learning compassion, forgiveness, and how to welcome back those who want to change. We too are the parent who grieves at the foolish and wayward ways of our children, standing at the window, waiting for them to come home. In this one story we find ourselves, but most importantly, we also find our way back home, but only if we first come to ourselves.

— Fr. Nicholas Apostola

DATES TO REMEMBER

Fri, Feb 18 Mustard Seed Meal
Sat, Feb 26 Saturday of the Dead, Liturgy 10 am
Sun, Feb 27 Last Judgment/Meatfare Sunday
Week of Feb 27 Fasting from Meat - Cheese/Dairy Allowed
Sun, March 6 Forgiveness Sunday/Cheesefare Sunday
Mon, March 7 Great Lent Begins
Sun, April 17 Western Easter
Sun, April 24 Great and Holy Pascha

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