

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, March 6, 2022

Sunday of Forgiveness

Cheesefare Sunday
The Casting-out of Adam & Eve from Paradise

Apostolic Reading: Romans 13:11-14:4
Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21

Tone 4 • Resurrection Gospel 4

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

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

GREAT LENT begins tomorrow, March 7th.

THE FOOD PANTRY is THIS SATURDAY March 5th. Help is needed to staff our monthly responsibility at the Orthodox Food Center. 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 once a month, please e-mail Nicole Apostola at nicole.apostola@gmail.com. She can give you more details. You'll see what a difference it makes.

PITA DOUGH ROLLING SESSION is this **Saturday 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!***

VESPERS AND CONFESSION will be held each Saturday evening at 5:00pm during Great Lent, beginning March 5th. Fr. Nick will be available for confession each week after Vespers, and before Vespers by appointment ([e-mail Fr. Nick](#)).

UKRAINIAN RELIEF. The **Saint Paraskeva Orthodox Charity** in partnership with our Metropolia is working with the Archdiocese of Suceava and Rădăuți to support Ukrainian war refugees in transit or intending to stay in Romania. This region of Romania is one of the major entry points for persons fleeing the invasion of Ukraine. Funds collected will assist the monasteries and parishes in the diocese that have set up more than 500 fully equipped shelters. If you would like to learn more about this effort and contribute, please [click here for the website of Saint Paraskeva Charity](#) or go to their [Facebook page](#).

THE FIRST PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY during the Lenten season will be held at **St. George Cathedral** on Anna Street in Worcester on March 9th at 6:00pm. For the full PreSanctified Schedule, scroll down below.

THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY is March 13th. We'll be gathering for **VESPERS** at St. Spyridon Cathedral at 6:30pm to celebrate together on this first Sunday of Lent. ***Please plan on being there.***

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.

OUR ON-LINE GIVING SYSTEM HAS BEEN UPGRADED! Please check it out by [clicking here](#), or by using the [ON-LINE](#) link on our parish homepage. You may use this option to submit one-time or recurring payments.

The Town of Shrewsbury has lifted its masking order. While encouraged for persons with certain medical conditions or are

unvaccinated, masks are no 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.

THE SUNDAY BEFORE LENT. The last of the preparatory Sundays has two themes: it commemorates Adam's expulsion from Paradise, and it is also the Sunday of Forgiveness. There are obvious reasons why these two things should be brought to our attention as we stand on the threshold of the Great Fast. One of the primary images in the *Triodion* is that of the return to Paradise. Lent is a time when we weep with Adam and Eve before the closed gate of Eden, repenting with them for the sins that have deprived us of our free communion with God. But Lent is also a time when we are preparing to celebrate the saving event of Christ's death and rising, which has reopened Paradise to us once more (Luke 23:43). So sorrow for our exile in sin is tempered by hope of our re-entry into Paradise:

O precious Paradise, unsurpassed in beauty,
Tabernacle built by God, unending gladness and delight,
Glory of the righteous, joy of the prophets, and dwelling of the saints,
With the sound of thy leaves pray to the Maker of all:
May He open unto me the gates which I closed by my transgression,
And may He count me worthy to partake of the Tree of Life
And of the joy which was mine when I dwelt in thee before.

Note how the *Triodion* speaks here not of 'Adam' but of 'me': 'May He open unto me the gates which I closed'. Here, as throughout the *Triodion*, the events of sacred history are not treated as happenings in the distant past or future, but as experiences undergone by me here and now within the dimension of sacred time.

The second theme, that of forgiveness, is emphasized in the Gospel reading for this Sunday (Matthew 6:14–21) and in the special ceremony of mutual forgiveness at the end of Vespers on Sunday evening. Before we enter the Lenten fast, we are reminded that there can be no true fast, no genuine repentance, no reconciliation with God, unless we are at the same time reconciled with one another. A fast without mutual love is the fast of demons. As the commemoration of the ascetic saints on the previous Saturday has just made clear to us, we do not travel the road of Lent as isolated individuals but as members of a family. Our asceticism and fasting should not separate us from our fellow men but link us to them with ever stronger bonds. The Lenten ascetic is called to be a person for others.

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.

PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY SCHEDULE

Wednesday, March 9, 2022
St. George

Wednesday, March 30, 2022
St. Spyridon

Wednesday, March 16, 2022
St. Nicholas

Wednesday, April 6, 2022
Sts. Anargyroi

Wednesday, March 23, 2022
St. Mary

Wednesday, April 13, 2022
St. Nicholas

Each Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts will begin at 6:00 p.m. The faithful should prepare themselves for Holy Communion in the usual way: prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and regular confession. There will be a modest 'pot-luck' lenten meal offered after the Liturgy. People are encouraged to bring something to share with others

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

Our Holy Trinity team is growing! Recently joining are: Director of Plant Operations, **George Goyco**, and Administrative Assistant to the CEO, **Dorothy Millhofer**. Feel free to e-mail her at dmillhofer@htnr.net to share your thoughts and recommendations with our senior team.

NEW ADMISSIONS - We have limited number of beds available at this time; to inquire about long-term or short-term rehab admissions, please call **Mary Charmchi** at (508) 852-1000, ext. 204, or e-mail her at mcharmchi@htnr.net.

COVID-19 UPDATE - Holy Trinity continues to be Covid-Free. There is a dedicated section for Covid patients, which can include patients admitted to Holy Trinity for rehabilitation.

JOB OPENINGS. Come work for an organization that cares about your well-being! We have openings for nurses, physical and occupational therapists, 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.

VOLUNTEERS – We need fully vaccinated volunteers who are willing to: (1) do one-on-one visits with room-bound residents; (2) donate needed items for our monthly mock auction, including pocketbooks and wallets, stuffed animals, and trinkets; and (3) donate recent magazines for our Village residents. Please call Director of Activities **Donna Benard** at (508) 852-1000, ext. 282, or e-mail her at dbenard@htnr.net to discuss one of the many ways you can lend a helping hand.

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.

SPREAD THE WORD - Our recent 5-star rating from the Federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services places us as a leader in providing superior short-term rehabilitation and long-term care.

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

At times, O forgiving Lord, it is difficult not to harbor grudges when we have been offended by treacherous speech and hurt by words that bruise our pride. We desire to rid ourselves of such feelings, but our own powers are not up to the task. Nor would we want, in any case, to rely solely on our own strength. You yourself must give us what we need to purify our minds and hearts, to dispel all these negative sentiments, lest we perish for breeding and nurturing them.

For blest and glorified is your most honorable and magnificent name, 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.**

For If You Forgive Others ...

This is the last Sunday before beginning Great Lent. Today we remember the Casting-out of Adam and Eve from Paradise — the price they paid for not obeying God and eating from the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Because we share their condition, we too feel the pain of living outside of Paradise. Our Lenten journey is meant to help us find our way back.

The Gospel reading for today (Matthew 6:14-21) is like a road map for that journey. We call today the “Sunday of Forgiveness.” In the opening verse of the Gospel lesson the Lord tells us: “If you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you” (v. 14). The first step on our Lenten journey is to forgive one another. We have the custom on this day, as a necessary precondition for entering Lent, to go and ask forgiveness of each other, sealing our request with a holy kiss. It is a powerful ritual. In asking our loved ones to forgive us the small and large hurts that we might have inflicted on them during the past year, we can lift a weight from our shoulders, lightening our load for the journey. Asking and giving forgiveness from those friends and acquaintances that we might have truly offended brings healing to our heart and theirs.

The Lord continues his admonition by reminding us: “If you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (v. 15). The remembrance of wrong is like a cancer that eats away at us. To not forgive is as wrong as to deny our sin and not ask for forgiveness. A right-relationship with God can only be had if we have a right-relationship with one another. In these two verses Jesus makes clear the words of the Lord’s Prayer in which we ask our heavenly Father “to forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

The Lord then goes on to speak of the three aspects of what is often simply referred to as “fasting”: abstinence from food, prayer, and almsgiving. Embracing each of these three elements comprises the essence of what it means to truly observe the Fast. Fasting is spiritual discipline; it is like athletic training. We must build up to it, carefully balancing each aspect of the training, never neglecting or overdoing any part. Also, like athletic training, we submit ourselves to it with discipline and in obedience. We don’t make up our own rules. We seek the advice of someone with experience, ideally our spiritual father.

By abstaining from food we aim to lighten ourselves, both physically and spiritually. Abstaining from animal products gives our bodies a rest from the heaviness of certain foods. Consigning food to its proper place, eating lightly and appropriately, allows our spirit to control our bodies, not the other way around. Abstinence from food is also a way for us to understand and practice abstaining from all the other material distractions that lead us away from Christ.

Abstinence from food is powerful because there are few things that compel us more strongly than our stomach. But other glitzy things of this world are equally difficult to resist, even as the compulsion driving us toward them seems less obvious. This is our supreme struggle, and Lent helps us to see it more clearly.

Devoting ourselves to more regular prayer strengthens and focuses us. Fasting is not dieting; it is spiritual exercise. It does us no good to abstain from food if we do not feed our souls. Our true food is “every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). When we read and meditate on the Holy Scriptures, when we open our hearts to God in prayer, when we remain silent and still, giving God room to speak to us, we nourish ourselves with the food of everlasting life.

Finally, we are not to store up for ourselves treasures on earth, but rather in heaven (cf. v. 19-20). Sharing with those in need is a natural impulse especially as we grow into the fullness of Christ. We show the fruits of our growth by loving and helping others, tangibly. Almsgiving is a critical part of this three-legged stool that is the Fast. We must equally: fast from food, pray regularly, and give to those in need. To neglect one or the other inhibits our growth during Great Lent.

There is a hymn we sing during the first week of the Fast that summarizes our challenge: “Brothers and sisters, as we fast bodily, let us also fast spiritually. Let us untie everything that binds us to iniquity. Let us cut through the tangle of every settlement made by intimidation; let us tear up all unjust agreements. Let us give bread to the hungry and welcome the homeless poor into our homes, so that we may receive from Christ our God great mercy.” May it be so for each one of us. And, while I hope to speak to each of you individually during Lent, and especially on this Sunday of Forgiveness, still, let me now and personally beg of you forgiveness for whatever I might have done. Forgive me a sinner!

— Fr. Nicholas Apostola

DATES TO REMEMBER

Sat, March 5 Food Pantry, 9 am - noon
Pita Dough Rolling, 9 am - noon
Vespers/Confession, 5 pm
Sun, March 6 Forgiveness Sunday/Cheesefare Sunday
Mon, March 7 Great Lent Begins
Wed, March 9 PreSanctified, St George Cathedral, 6 pm
Sun, March 13 Sun of Orthodoxy Vespers, St. Spyridon, 6:30 pm
Wed, March 16 PreSanctified, St. Nicholas, 6 pm
Sat, March 19 Vespers/Confession, 5 pm
Mon, March 21 Movie, Man of God, Life of St. Nektarios
Wed, March 23 PreSanctified, St. Mary, 6 pm
Fri, March 25 Feast of the Annunciation
Sat, March 26 Vespers/Confession, 5 pm
Wed, March 30 PreSanctified, St. Spyridon 6 pm
Sat, April 2 Food Pantry, 9 am - noon
Vespers/Confession, 5 pm
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