

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, March 27, 2022

The Thrid Sunday of Great Lent The Veneration of the Precious Cross

Apostolic Reading: Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:1-6
Gospel: Mark 8:34-38; 9:1

Tone 7 • Resurrection Gospel 7

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

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

GREAT LENT began on, March 7th. Tomorrow marks the start of the fourth week of Lent.

➔ **THIS FRIDAY, MARCH 25th**, is the Feast of the **ANNUNCIATION**. We will celebrate the Feast with our sister parish of [St. Mary's Assumption](#) on Salisbury Street. Divine Liturgy will begin at 9:30am.

TODAY IS THE SUNDAY OF THE VENERATION OF THE PRECIOUS CROSS. DONATIONS ARE WELCOMED toward the flowers that adorn the Precious Cross. please speak with [Tim Rucho](#).

GREAT NEWS! Fr. Vasile Aileni's visa has been approved. This means that in a few weeks he and his family can FINALLY move here and he can assume the position of the Parish Priest at St. Nicholas. Fr. Vasile and his family will be on their way, with God's help, before Palm Sunday. We should have more details soon, so stay tuned and we'll keep you up to date.

THE PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY THIS WEDNESDAY, March 30th will be hosted by [St. Spyridon Cathedral](#) on Russell Street. Set aside your Wednesday evenings and use this as one way to spiritually prepare for Pascha. Each Liturgy will start at 6:00 pm. For the full PreSanctified Schedule, scroll down below.

PITA BAKING SESSIONS are set for **THIS Saturday, March 26th and NEXT Saturday, April 2nd**. 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!**

UPDATE ON THE MOVIE [MAN OF GOD](#) on the [life of St. Nektarios](#). The showings at both cinemas were sold out last Monday, so the cinemas have decided to run the movie **AGAIN, THIS MONDAY, March 28th at 7:00pm**. To purchase tickets click on the links: [Regal Cinema in Marlborough](#) OR the [Blackstone Valley Cinema in Millbury](#). It is a powerful movie and perfect for some Lenten reflection!

OUR SATURDAY AT THE FOOD PANTRY is **NEXT SATURDAY April 2nd** 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.

VESPERS AND CONFESSION will be held each Saturday evening at 5:00pm during Great Lent. 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 wewbsite of Saint Parascheva Charity](#) or go to their [Facebook page](#).

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.

LENTEN RESOURCES

We are journeying 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 THIRD SUNDAY (THE SUNDAY OF THE CROSS). On this day the service of Mattins concludes with the solemn veneration of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross; the ceremonies are closely parallel to those at the feasts of the Exaltation of the Cross (14 September) and the Procession of the Cross (1 August). The veneration of the Cross on this third Sunday in Lent prepares us for the commemoration of the Crucifixion which is soon to follow in Holy Week, and at the same time it reminds us that the whole of Lent is a period when we are crucified with Christ: as the Synaxarion at Mattins says, 'Through the forty-day Fast, we too are in a way crucified, dying to the passions'. The dominant note on this Sunday, as on the two Sundays preceding, is one of joy and triumph. In the Canon at Mattins, the irmoi are the same as at Easter midnight, 'This is the day of Resurrection ...', and the troparia are in part a paraphrase of the Paschal Canon by St. John of Damascus. No separation is made between Christ's death and His Resurrection, but the Cross is regarded as an emblem of victory and Calvary is seen in the light of the Empty Tomb.

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

PSALTIKON will offer a concert entitled: *Byzantine Hymns of the Triodion*, on **Thursday, March 31st, at 7:30pm**, at [St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Cathedral](#), 102 Russell St, Worcester, MA. This program is sponsored by the Hellenic Arts Society.

A MEDICATION TAKE BACK opportunity will be held on **Saturday, April 30th from 10:00am to 2:00pm**, at the Shrewsbury Senior Center, 98 Maple Ave, Shrewsbury. No fee. No proof of identification. No questions. This is open to the general public. Bring in your expired or unused medications for safe and proper disposal. If you're unable to make it that day, you can search for year-round Pharmaceutical Public Disposal Locations by [clicking here](#).

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 - There are currently no Covid-positive Holy Trinity employees. One Covid patient, recently admitted for rehabilitation, is quarantined in a dedicated isolation room.

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.

HOLY TRINITY IS HERE TO HELP! - We have a limited number of beds available, priority is given to our Orthodox members. To inquire about long-term or short-term rehab admissions, please call our **Admissions Director, Mary Charmchi**, on her cell: (774) 502-5745 or, by email: mcharmchi@htnr.net.

JOB OPENINGS - Recent grads and people familiar with the languages and cultures of our Orthodox communities are encouraged to apply. To join our award-winning team and advance your career, [Click here](#) for a full listing of our openings with detailed job descriptions.

NOROVIRUS-TYPE GI-ILLNESS – For the most part, this contact virus has run its course through our facility, except for one resident in the Hillside unit. We are continuing our policy of no activity intermingling between units.

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

Today, Christ Jesus, like David, we again ask you to forgive us all our sins, but especially those against the virtue of love. Forgive us for so often failing to love our neighbor, by disdainful of our peers and resentfully resisting those who have any authority over us, by defaming our brothers and sisters as arrogant while elevating ourselves as models of humility, and by failing to love them and care for them while demanding unreasonable attentions for ourselves. Forgive us, O Lord, for our constant readiness to notice their every fault and failing while minimizing our own. Pardon us all of these, O Christ, and the countless other ways we sin against love, ways we cannot even remember. During these lenten days, turn us around and make of us true lovers, lest we find ourselves rejected from the paschal banquet.

For you, O Christ, deserve all glory, honor, and worship, together with your eternal Father, and your all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit: now and forever, and unto 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.

The Heavenly Liturgy

We've now reached the third and mid-point Sunday of Great Lent, and are asked to pause and reflect on our Lord's Precious Cross. The Apostolic Reading is taken from the Letter to the Hebrews 4:14-5:6. St. Paul continues his reflection on Jesus as the high priest who presents our case before the Throne of God. There are two major points that he highlights in this passage. The first is that Jesus is like us in every respect, except for sin, and so he can thoroughly identify with our struggles, and as such present our case before God sympathetically. The second is that because of Jesus and his sacrifice, we can have more confidence before God than would have previously been possible.

St. Paul says that, "We have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God" (v. 14). There is a subtle reference to Moses in this verse; a contrast made between Moses who was prevented from entering the Promised Land because of his sin in Sinai, with Jesus who was permitted to "pass through the heavens" because of his faithfulness. Hebrews is constantly drawing our attention to the possibilities present in the Old Covenant, and now realized in the New.

"For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (v. 15). When St. Paul speaks of the ability of Jesus as high priest to "sympathize with our weaknesses" he is not just referring to the fact that he is human like us; he is also saying that unlike the high priests of the Jerusalem Temple, he lived the life of a common person, not insulated from the real worries and concerns of daily existence. He also says that in every respect Jesus was tempted as we are, but without sin. There is a nuance to the Greek verb tense "has been tempted" that doesn't come across in English. It means that he was tempted not just once or only on a particular occasion, but continually. Jesus was tempted all the time to do this or that, in the same way we are; only he did not succumb. He experienced the allure, but he resisted. In short, he can relate to our struggle. More importantly, we can gain courage from his example. He shows us that it is possible to weather the storms of temptations.

St. Paul says that we can, "With confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (v. 16). Christ's example and position before God gives us access to God.

This is an idea that we might find hard to relate to in our more egalitarian society. We are a democratic society and consider access to power a right, not a privilege. Of course, we know that even in America some people are more equal than others, yet we see this as an aberration of the fundamental egalitarian principle. And so, in order to appreciate what our Lord Jesus did, we need to do some reality-checking. Each of us, from the highest to the lowest, will find ourselves in serious need of help at sometime in our life, and especially before God. Unfortunately, we usually realize this only when we've hit bottom.

The image of the heavenly temple and God's throne that St. Paul gives us is much closer to our actual circumstance. If we honestly examine our hearts and our actions, we will quickly realize that we have no way to access God's grace on our own. Most of us are like that poor man in the parable who shows up at the wedding dressed inappropriately (cf. Matthew 22:12). The king had him arrested, cuffed, and thrown into the outer darkness. This is our plight without Jesus. He's the one who lends us 'proper attire' so that we can confidently approach God's throne of mercy.

We Orthodox understand the Eucharistic celebration, the Divine Liturgy, as actually being in the presence of God, before his heavenly throne. The celebrant, usually our parish priest, is the living icon of our Lord, who is Himself the only true celebrant. Jesus continually presents Himself before His Father, for our sake. In the Divine Liturgy we are healed of our wounds and changed by grace. Jesus intercedes, presenting Himself as a sacrifice for our sins.

Listen to how St. Paul explains it: "Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness; and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. And one does not presume to take this honor, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you'; as he says also in another place, 'You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek'" (5:1-6).

Next week I will speak more of Melchizedek. Today, I would like us to reflect on this glimpse that St. Paul gives of the Heavenly Liturgy. St. John in his Revelation (chapter 4) gives us a similar picture of the continual worship taking place in Heaven. Our Eucharist celebration is an image, an icon, of this Liturgy. In the Liturgy, just before the Lord's Prayer, we thank our loving God for the fact that the gifts of bread and wine we offered have been received "at His holy, heavenly, and spiritual altar as an offering of spiritual fragrance," and ask that he "may in return send upon us divine grace and the gift of the Holy Spirit." It is the heavenly Altar before almighty God to which the prayer is referring.

Next Sunday, when we wake up and are thinking about being late for Liturgy, or even skipping it entirely, let us recall this image of the Heavenly Liturgy, and, hopefully, reconsider.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Mon, March 7 Great Lent Began
Fri, March 25 Feast of the Annunciation, at St. Mary's, 9:30am
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
Fri, April 15 Mustard Seed Meal
Sun, April 17 Western Easter
Sun, April 24 Great and Holy Pascha

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