

# **News from St. Nick's**

## **Sunday, April 3, 2022**

**The Fourth Sunday of Great Lent**  
**St. John of Sinai**  
**Author of the Ladder of Divine Ascent**

---

**Apostolic Reading: Hebrews 6:13-20**

**Gospel: MMark 9:17-32**

**(Healing of the Epileptic Boy)**

**Tone 8 • Resurrection Gospel 8**

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

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**GREAT LENT.** Tomorrow marks the start of the fifth week of Lent.

**PITA BAKING SESSION — THIS 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!*

**THE FOOD PANTRY** is **THIS 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](mailto:nicole.apostola@gmail.com). She can give you more details. You'll see what a difference it makes.

**THE PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY THIS WEDNESDAY, April 6th** will be at [Sts. Anargyroi](#) in Marlborough. Set aside your Wednesday evenings and use this as one way to spiritually prepare for Pascha. Each Liturgy will start at 6:00 pm.

**GREAT NEWS! Fr. Vasile Aileni's visa has been approved.** Fr. Vasile and his family will be arriving this coming week. This is a great blessing.

**OUR NEXT MUSTARD SEED MEAL** is **Friday, April 15th.** We are grateful to **Sandra Nedelescu** who is sponsoring this month's meal in memory her father **Alexandru**, grandmother **Ecaterina**, and great-aunt **Victoria**, as well as **Hannah Datz and Sam Scavuzzo** who are sponsoring in honor of their daughter **Clara Genevieve Datz** who was recently baptize. *May our loving Lord bless them!* If you or your family would like to help with meal preparations, the team is gathering at 1:00 pm on Friday. Please contact [Deb Sedares](#) — by e-mail or phone: 508-509-6678.

**PASCHA DONATIONS.** The list of items that people may donate to decorate and enhance our Paschal celebration is [available here for download](#). If you'd like to donate anything, please see **Betty Anderson**, or e-mail her at [bettya16@verizon.net](mailto:bettya16@verizon.net) or call her at: 508-335-9449.

**THE HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE**, from Lazarus Saturday through Pascha, [may be downloaded here](#). This also includes a number of announcements related to Holy Week. *Please read it.*

**THE GREAT FRIDAY CHILDREN'S RETREAT** for the younger children will be held on Great Friday, April 22nd starting at 12:30 pm, and concluding with a celebration of Great Vespers at 2:00 pm. Older children and teens are also welcome. There are many ways each can help. For additional information and offers to assist, contact **Gina Skaff**. Please **RSVP by April 16th** to Gina at [ginaskaff@hotmail.com](mailto:ginaskaff@hotmail.com) or 508-873-9600.

**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 website 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 FOURTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT.** On this day is commemorated St. John Climacus, abbot of Sinai (sixth–seventh century), who is assigned a special Sunday in Lent because, by virtue of his writings and his own life, he forms a pattern of the true Christian ascetic. St. John is the author of *The Ladder of Paradise*, one of the spiritual texts appointed to be read in church during Lent. His memorial, like that of St. Theodore, has been transferred to the movable from the fixed calendar, where he is remembered on 30 March. The first Canon at Mattins on this Sunday is based on the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–5): the repentant Christian is likened to the man who fell among thieves.

**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.

## HOLY WEEK DONATIONS

*General donations in any amount to defray the cost of decorations for the Paschal Feast are most appreciated. Some specific needs are:*

Flowers for Palm Sunday Icon .....	50.00
Palms .....	\$100.00
Flowers for Bridegroom Icon .....	\$50.00
Holy Thursday Gospel Candles .....	\$60.00
Wreaths for Cross (Great Friday) .....	\$75.00
(Resurrection) .....	\$75.00
Resurrection Icon .....	\$50.00
Bay Leaves for Holy Saturday .....	\$100.00
1 Gallon of Olive Oil .....	\$25.00
1/2 lb Incense .....	\$40.00
Priest's Paschal Candle .....	\$50.00
Rose Oil for Epitaphion .....	\$25.00

---

Flowers for Epitaphion .....	\$600.00
Decorations/Plants for Pascha .....	\$250.00
Easter Candy/Gifts for Children .....	\$100.00

*Please see Betty Anderson to make a donation  
call: 508-353-9449 ♦ e-mail: [bettya16@verizon.net](mailto:bettya16@verizon.net)*

## COMMUNITY NEWS

**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](http://wccatv.com), or the **Worcester TV** Roku app.

## **NOTES FROM HOLY TRINITY**

**IN FOND MEMORY** – Holy Trinity would like to acknowledge the passing of:

- **Angelina Lambros** (St. Spyridon) and **Gloria Simo** (St. Mary's Assumption), long-time volunteers for our Divine Liturgy service;
- **Maria Papalilo**, deceased in January 2022 (St. Spyridon), and **Eleanor Saro**, deceased in February 2022 (St. Mary's Assumption);

**To their families and friends, our staff sends our deepest condolences.**

**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](mailto: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.

**CHECK OUT THE LATEST ISSUE OF THE HOLY TRINITY BULLETIN!** [Click here to download it.](#)

## **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**

**Eternal Lord and master:** By the inscrutable mystery of your divine wisdom, your only Son suffered for us, giving us an example to follow. He had done no wrong and there had been no perjury in his mouth. Though he was insulted, he did not retaliate with insults; though he was tortured, he made no threats, but placed his trust in you, his Father. When he was dying on the cross, he bore our faults in his own body. Therefore, master we entreat you: Let his wounds heal us, so that we may die to every form of wrongdoing and live for you alone.

For you deserve all glory, honor, and worship, Father, Son, and Holy 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.

---

## ***Promises Given and Kept***

**This Fourth Sunday of Great Lent brings us closer to our spiritual goal:** the light of our Lord's Resurrection. Today's Apostolic reading is taken from the Letter to the Hebrews, 6:13-20. There are two aspects of this passage that I would like to concentrate on. The first is Melchizedek: who he is, the nature of his priesthood, and how he figures into the prophecy of the coming Messiah. The second is God's promise to Abraham: how he kept it and what this promise means for us.

I have always been fascinated by Melchizedek. Before I was even able to really consider who he was and why St. Paul wrote about him so extensively, I just loved his name. It means "king of justice", but without knowing that, I thought it sounded exotic and made me want to find out more about him.

The reality is that there is very little written about him in the Bible. The only place where he actually appears is in Genesis. Here is what is recorded: "After [Abram's] return from the defeat of Ched-or-laomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). And Mel-chizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!' And Abram gave him a tenth of everything" (Genesis 14:17-20).

From these three verses a whole understanding of how the Messiah's coming would change the nature of our relationship with God was developed and written about in the Jewish community. St. Paul's description in the 7th chapter of Hebrews follows the commonly held beliefs of rabbis and Jewish scholars compiled in the Talmud (the accepted commentary on the Jewish Scripture).

The first thing that they understood is that the Messiah is to be eternal king and priest. Because Melchizedek appeared "out of nowhere" and then "disappears," without father and mother, they saw this as a sign of the eternal Messiah.

The next insight taken from these verses is that Melchizedek is superior to Abram (later to be Abraham). After his victory against the kings who were in and around Jerusalem, Abram offers tithes (a tenth) to Melchizedek. This means that he recognized him as a priest of "God Most High." This action would later be interpreted in the Talmud and by St. Paul as recognizing the eternal priesthood of Melchizedek. Christian writers saw the offering of bread and wine as a foreshadowing of the Eucharist.

Melchizedek is the king of Salem, which later became known as Jerusalem. "Salem" means peace. So, Melchizedek is the King of Peace (another title of the Messiah). In addition, through Melchizedek's encounter with Abraham, it is clear that God decided Jerusalem would be the center of His earthly presence among us long before the descendants of Abraham return from their captivity in Egypt.

Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek has a mystical quality to it. At this point in Abraham's story he has just begun his journey of faith. God Most High has chosen him, but Abram does not know how to respond. Some Church fathers say it is Christ Himself who is appearing to Abram in the person of Melchizedek, in the same way He appeared to Moses in burning bush. Often, when we need God the most He appears to us, in a mystical guise, to help us and direct us. This leads me to the second point I would like to highlight from today's reading: God's promise, His word. St. Paul speaks of "God's oath" as immutable — not able to be altered or changed. He uses the human example of giving an oath as a way to remove doubt during a dispute. We are asked to give an oath when testifying at a trial or in other official circumstances as a way to demonstrate that we speak the absolute truth. Our word is our bond. If we lie we are imprisoned. God promised many things to Abraham, and St. Paul says that because he couldn't swear by anything greater, he swore by Himself. This means God

wanted to secure His promise in such a way that Abram would believe Him.

Yet still, Abram needed more assurance of the promise. He wanted to know with some certainty that what God had told him, had promised to him, would indeed come to pass. God promised him a grand legacy, yet he had no heir, no son or daughter. He asked God for a sign.

God told him to look to the heavens, to the night sky, and said that his descendants would be more numerous than the stars he saw. Unfortunately, because of modern nighttime "light pollution" very few of us get to see the night sky in all of its brilliance, but Abram did. "And he believed the Lord; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness" (Genesis 15:6). He saw the myriad of stars in the heavens and believed the truth of God's word.

Because of his faith and as a sign of it, God gave Abram a new name: Abraham, and Sarai his wife: Sarah. He chose them, well beyond childbearing years, to found a new people: Israel. From this nation the Savior was born.

So many signs have been given to us, not only in Biblical times, but also here and now. We pray to God and He hears us. We ask for His help and He gives it. The world is full of suffering and pain; we will not escape this, at least not in this life. However, the Lord gives us the proof of His promise in the suffering of His Son, and His rising from the dead. In Jesus the promise is fulfilled. Everything we endure is not without purpose. God's word is true.

— Fr. Nicholas Apostola

## **DATES TO REMEMBER**

Sat, April 2 Food Pantry, 9 am - noon  
Pita Baking, 9 am  
Vespers/Confession, 5 pm  
Wed, April 6 PreSanctified at [Sts. Anagyroi](#), 6 pm  
Wed, April 13 PreSanctified at [St. Nicholas](#), 6 pm  
Fri, April 15 Mustard Seed Meal  
Sun, April 17 Palm Sunday  
(Western Easter)  
April 17-24 HOLY WEEK  
Sun, April 24 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](mailto:info@StNicholasChurch.org)  
[www.StNicholasChurch.org](http://www.StNicholasChurch.org)  
*Sunday Services: Matins at 9:00 am and Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am*