

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN MARCH 14, 2010

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

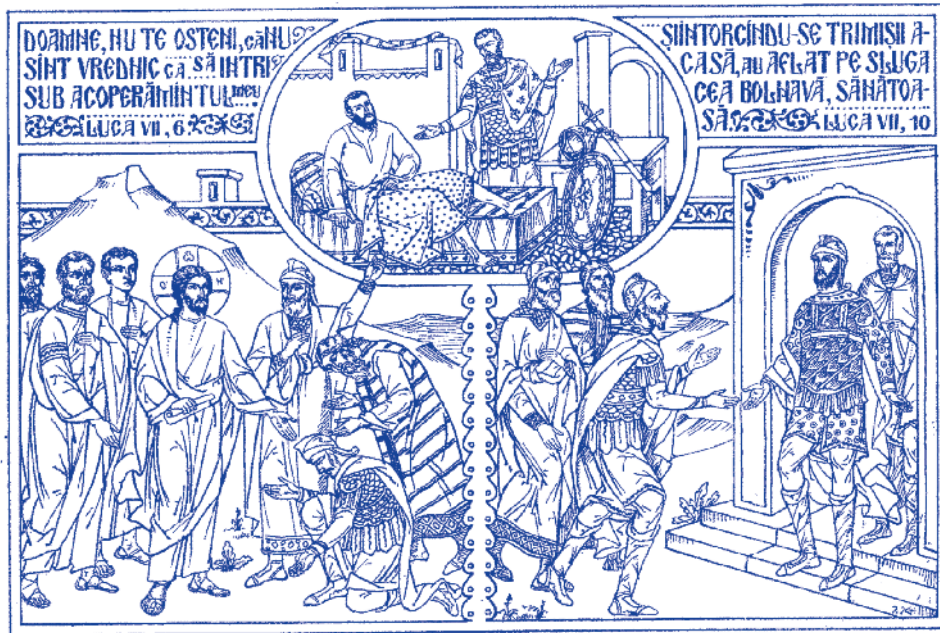
Throughout the weeks of Great Lent, we will hold **Great Vespers each Saturday evening, at 5:00 pm**. Fr. Nick will be available for confession each week after Vespers, and before Vespers by appointment or e-mail Fr. Nick.

The **Lenten Pre-Sanctified Liturgy** sponsored by the Council of Eastern Orthodox Churches this week will be held on **Wednesday, March 17th at 6:00 pm at St. Spyridon Cathedral**. Persons wishing to receive Holy Communion must prepare themselves in the usual manner, including fasting from at least noon. You are also invited to remain for a "pot-luck" Lenten meal after that service.

Are you "tech savvy" and do you enjoy graphic design and marketing? **We need a parishioner to update and manage the Parish web site**. If you have experience with web sites, computers, and software and can provide this important service to our community, please speak with Deb Sedares or Fr. Nick.

Easter Orders for pastry platters and pita must be placed by next Sunday, March 21st. For more information, or to place orders, contact **Chris Toda** for pita and **Betty Anderson**, 508-756-4848, or pastry@stnicholaschurch.org for pastry platters.

USHERS TEAM 4:
DEAN VALORAS & EVAN SPARAGES
ALTAR TEAM A



THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT — ST. JOHN OF THE LADDER

EPISTLE: HEBREWS 6:13-20

GOSPEL: MARK 9:17-32 (HEALING THE CENTURION'S SERVANT)

tone 7 - RESURRECTION GOSPEL 7

If you have not already done so, we ask you to consider your **Stewardship Pledge offering** prayerfully, fill out the pledge form, and submit it today. You may obtain the 2010 Stewardship Pledge Form at the candle stand. For more information, contact Deb Sedares or Fr. Nick.

YOUTH ACTIVITIES

The **St. Nicholas Teen Youth Group** (ages 12 to 18) will be holding its first get together on **Friday evening, March 19th at 7pm at the church**. This will provide an opportunity for the teens to get to know one another, as well as to discuss and plan different type of events that the group would be interested in. Pizza and beverages will be served. Please RSVP to gdemake@charter.net

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

Volunteers needed for Saturdays and Sundays at Holy Trinity Nursing and Rehab Center,

during the hours of 1:00pm to 3:00pm. Please call Catherine Sabatini at 508-852-1000 or e-mail csabatini@htnr.net

Holy Trinity Hospice "Transitions": A Grief and Healing Support Group meets every other Wednesday from 6-7:30 pm at Holy Trinity Hospice, at Washburn House, 1183 Main Street, Worcester, MA. For more info and to

DATES TO REMEMBER

- Sat, March 13 Vespers/Confession 5 pm
- Wed, March 17 Pre-Sanctified Lit at St. Spyridon
- Fri, March 19 Teen Youth Group Meeting 7 pm
- Sat, March 20 Vespers/Confession 5 pm
- Wed, March 24 Vespertal Liturgy for Annunciation at St. George
- Sat, March 27 Vespers/Confession 5 pm
- Sun, March 28 Palm Sunday
- Sat, April 3 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry
- Sun, April 4 Great and Holy Pascha
- Sat, April 24 Spring Dance

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E-MAIL: FRNICK@STNICHOLASCHURCH.ORG ♦ WEB: WWW.STNICHOLASCHURCH.ORG

A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas

A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

ETHERNAL FATHER: Let us escape our constant self-centeredness. Instead, focus our attention on you, that we may learn to love and serve you alone, to live conscious of being in your presence. Prevent our being attached to our own doings and to endless concern over what others think of us. And when we are no longer obsessed by our own small world, let us taste the joys that come with forgetting ourselves and thinking of others.

For yours is dominion, and yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages, amen.

pre-register, call David Day at 508-791-8200.

Did you know? Holy Trinity Hospice has nurses, nurse's aides, social workers, volunteers, spiritual counselors, and others who will come to your home to provide specialized care during a life-limiting illness.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Shiloh, a 5 piece Gospel acoustic band from Central Massachusetts will be performing at the **Facing East Coffee house at St. Michael's Orthodox Church on Saturday, March 13th at 7:00pm** at the parish hall on Romanian Ave in Southbridge. The doors open at 6:30pm. The performance is free and open to the public and a free will offering will be taken. Refreshments will be served. Come join us for some great music, food, and fellowship. For more

information contact Fr. Peter at 508-765-5276 or at: www.stmichaelorth.org

His Grace Ioan Casian, Vicar Bishop of our Archdiocese will be visiting **St. Michael Church in Southbridge on Saturday March 20th** and Sunday March 21st. There will be Great Vespers on Saturday at 5pm and of course Sunday Liturgy with His Grace. Everyone is welcome to come and worship with them in Southbridge.

As the **2010 Census approaches**, each of our households will receive a form. Since the census has such an impact on the communities in which all of us live and work, our organization has partnered with the U.S. Census Bureau to encourage participation. As mandated by the U.S. Constitution, every person living in the United States must be counted – both citizens and non-citizens. Data from this national count help determine key funding and government representation decisions. Please complete and mail back your form and encourage your family, friends and neighbors to do the same. For more information, visit 2010census.gov.

The **Shrewsbury Ecumenical Council** has begun working with the **Shrewsbury Senior Center to reach out to our elderly population in order to help them to remain independent in their homes**. Small jobs like replacing light bulbs, smoke detectors, installa-

NAMEDAYS

March 17

St. Alexios the Man of God

Alex John Johnson

Alexander Knight Seferi

Alex Leo Toda

St. Patrick, Enlightener of Ireland

Patricia Mountzouris

Padraic Donnchadh Peterson

tion of grab bars, doorbells, etc., become significant obstacles for some of our older neighbors. Are you able to help out? The Senior Center provides referrals to the program and volunteers provide the labor. Home owners provide the finances unless they are unable. In those cases, Central One Federal Credit Union has provided \$2500 to make the difference. We hope you will get involved ... the program is depending on you! Contact Walter Rice, Outreach Coordinator at the Senior Center; 508-841-8647 or wrice@th.ci.shrewsbury.ma.us

ARCHDIOCESE NEWS

We have printed copies available of the Archdiocese **March monthly e-bulletin** with news from within the Archdiocese and throughout the world.



WHO IS A FAITHFUL STEWARD OF THE CHURCH?

A faithful steward and member of the Orthodox Christian Church, who can receive or participate as a sponsor in any Sacraments of the church implies that the person:

- Is baptized and christened an Orthodox Christian
- Comes to Church regularly
- Participates in the Life of the Church
- Participates in Holy Communion regularly
- Is a financial steward of the Church
- Goes to Holy Confession when necessary

LISTEN TO THE WEEKLY NATIONAL ORTHODOX RADIO BROADCAST "COME RECEIVE THE LIGHT"

BY WEB OR PODCAST: WWW.RECEIVE.ORG

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 Melchizedek 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 under-

stood 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 descendents 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 talk about 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 descendents 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