

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN MARCH 21, 2010

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

Because of the Feast of the Annunciation, instead of the usual **Pre-Sanctified Liturgy**, we will be celebrating a Vespertal Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom this **Wednesday, March 24th at 6:00 pm at St. George 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.

Next **Saturday, March 27, is Lazarus Saturday and the beginning of the cycle of Holy Week services leading up to Pascha**. On that day, Divine Liturgy will be at 10 AM and Great Vespers at 5 PM. Fr. Nick will be available for confession after Vespers, and before Vespers by appointment (e-mail Fr. Nick). Evening services during Holy Week will be at 6 PM daily. There are separate announcements containing the service schedule, donation list, and details regarding specific events. Please pick one up at Church.

The annual "**Palm Sunday Dinner**" will be held on Sunday, March 28, following Divine Liturgy. A traditional fish dinner will be served. **Tickets are \$20.00 per adult and \$5.00 per child (non-fish meal). Reservations are absolutely required and should be made with Eleanor Sedares by no later than**

USHERS TEAM 5:
BRYAN DONABED &
GEORGE DEMAKE
ALTAR TEAM B



THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT — ST. MARY OF EGYPT

EPISTLE: HEBREWS 9:11-14

GOSPEL: MARK 10:32-45 (REQUEST OF THE SONS OF ZEBEDEE)

TONE 8 - RESURRECTION GOSPEL 8

Sunday, March 21st or by calling or e-mailing the church 508-845-0088. We may not be able to accommodate "walk-in's" the day of the dinner.

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 TODAY 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.

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

DATES TO REMEMBER

- Wed, March 24 Vespertal Liturgy for Annunciation at St. George
- Sat, March 27 Vespers/Confession 5 pm
- Sun, March 28 Palm Sunday
- March 27-April 4 Holy Week
 - Sat, April 3 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry
 - Sun, April 4 Great and Holy Pascha
 - Sat, April 24 Spring Dance

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A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas

A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

LORD GOD of all perfection: Our mistakes constantly humiliate us and we seek to compensate for this by running after comfort and consolation at every turn. But we always look for this in the wrong place. Teach us that only in you can we find what we seek. Furthermore, to make up for our mistakes, we think that we have to plunge into something else, into some new project. But you do not ask for this. You ask us simply to stay with what we are doing, but do it well for love of you.

For you are a merciful and loving God, and we give you glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages, amen.

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

Did you know? Holy Trinity Nursing

and Rehabilitation Center, along with Holy Trinity Hospice, accepts many different insurances. Please call for more information.

COMMUNITY NEWS

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

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

March 25

The Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos

V. Gerald Belba
Lea Christo
Mary Anna Dymek
Vangjush Lolo
Linda Marie Miner
Evan Sparages
Evan Stamoulis
Lynne Tonna
Evans Tsoules

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.

ARCHDIOCESE NEWS

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



ST. MARY OF EGYPT AND ST. ZOSIMA

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 christmated 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

THE HEAVENLY LITURGY

WITH THE FIFTH SUNDAY of Great Lent we stand ready now to once again experience the central belief of our faith: the self-sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, which He did for us, as well as His Resurrection from the dead. To assist us we continue to read from the Letter to the Hebrews that addresses the issue of how the animal sacrifices offered under the Old Law prepare us for the sacrifice of Jesus, and how His sacrifice accomplishes the healing reconciliation between us and God, in a way that no other sacrifice could. The selected reading for today, Hebrews 9:11-14, speaks directly of this sacrifice.

In our modern urban society most of us have had very little experience with slaughtering an animal. The language of blood and offering of blood seems at best an abstraction; we more than likely would rather not think about it in real terms. The Scriptures, however, are full of this language. The Eucharist, the primary Christian celebration, centers on partaking of the Body and Blood of our Lord. I am sure that most of us have questioned, at least on one occasion, what could possibly be meant by so graphic an image.

Blood is the source of life. The Hebrews believed that being the source of life it was also a sign of the divine within us. This shouldn't be difficult for us to understand. When we describe someone who has had a mortal wound, we say that "the life is draining out of them." We speak of "the life that courses through our veins." If we are composed mainly of water, most of that water is in the form of blood.

Blood does at least two things in our bodies: it brings the 'nutrients' to every part of our body that allows our cells to grow and be maintained; it also takes away the waste. It is the means for feeding and cleansing our body.

When an animal was sacrificed, especially when the animal was sacrificed on the Day of Atonement, its blood

was used to purify and sanctify, not unlike the way in which we use Holy Water. The High Priest, when he offered his sacrifice, offered a double sacrifice: one for himself and his family, the other for the people of Israel. Jesus had no need for the first. We have need for the second. Let us take a look at the text of today's reading:

"But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent [or, Tabernacle] (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." (Heb 9:11-14)

It is important to remember that the author of Hebrews is speaking of a Heavenly altar. The earthly temple is modeled on the one in Heaven. In this earthly temple only the High Priest could enter the inner sanctuary, the Holy Place, and just once a year, and only after he had purified himself with a sacrifice. Jesus has no need of this purification. Rather, because he offered himself as a sacrifice, he carries within himself the purifying blood. He is the sacrifice. During the Liturgy the priest prays, to Christ: "you are the offer and the offered, the one who receives and is distributed." To understand this phrase is to enter into the mystery of our salvation.

God comes to us in the person of Jesus the Christ, the Word of God. He offers himself up as the one to be sacrificed at the same time as he himself is the one who is offered. Let me offer you

this example so that you can understand this image more clearly. During the Communist persecutions, there were people, priests, who knew they were going to be killed for Christ the next day. As is our rule, Liturgies are usually celebrated on altars in which the relics of saints have been placed. Knowing that they themselves would be sacrificed as martyrs shortly, these men celebrated the Liturgy on themselves. This is a way for us to understand the phrase: "offerer and offered."

When we partake of the life-giving Body and Blood of our Lord, we are redeemed and reconciled to God the Father through His sacrifice. We are purified and changed. Moses constructed the earthly Tabernacle after the image given him by God (Exodus 25). When we celebrate the Divine Liturgy, the Eucharist, we participate in the one Sacrifice of the Son of God. We enter into the Heavenly Liturgy where God's Name is proclaimed.

It may be difficult for us to envision this Heavenly Liturgy; a place where Christ is enthroned, and the angels and saints glorify God continually, but it exists. Occasionally, we might glimpse a piece of this during the Liturgy in our parish, if God should so grace us. In it we find a foretaste of God's promise.

During the coming Paschal celebration, when we are given the opportunity to contemplate Jesus' suffering and sacrifice, let us ask God to give us this vision of the Heavenly Liturgy. Let us remember those people who continually sacrifice themselves for us — not least of whom are the young people of the armed services serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Blood is spilled in many places; let us always hope that this blood is not shed in vain, but rather serves as a way for us to be reconciled with God.

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA