

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

## **Sunday, July 25, 2021**

### **The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost** ***The Fathers of the Fifth Œcumenical Council***

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**Apostolic Reading: Romans 10:1-10**  
**Gospel: Matthew 8:28-9:1**  
***(Jesus Heals the Gadarene Demoniacs)***

**Tone 4 • Resurrection Gospel 5**

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

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

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**FOOD PANTRY. VOLUNTEERS.** Help is needed to staff our monthly responsibility at the Orthodox Food Center, **Saturday, August 7th from 9 am - noon.** This commitment of our parish is a vital part of who we are as faithful Christians. While we talk about it on a regular basis, it's still important from time to time to remind ourselves that every first Saturday of the month a group of volunteers works the Food Pantry to distribute groceries and other goods to people in need. They are not only doing God's work, they are also representing us. Each of the four Worcester area Orthodox parishes similarly commit to work their particular Saturday. **BUT, we need more volunteer help from our parish.** It's not a large time commitment, but it has huge spiritual benefits. If you'd like to share a small part of yourself, please e-mail Nicole Apostola at [nicole.apostola@gmail.com](mailto:nicole.apostola@gmail.com). She can give you more details.

**BAKING.** We have decided to gently ease back into baking. This will mean a measured approach to baking teams and dates. We have to keep in mind that we don't have the same amount of working space. And we are need to reconfirm our pool of baking volunteers. **If you are willing and able to help with the baking,** please either [e-mail](#), or call (508-756-4848) **Betty Anderson.**

**MANY YEARS** to the newly baptized **Margareta Elena Seith**, daughter of Christopher and Ana Stefania Seith, who received the Mystery of Holy Illumination this past Saturday, July 17. **Many Years** also to her Godparents Floretina and Alin Rus. **May our Good and Loving Lord bless and keep them!**

The April-June issue of the Archdiocesan quarterly **CREDINȚA / THE FAITH** is available [for download here](#). It is full of spiritually uplifting articles, as well as the Pascha Pastoral Letters of His Eminence Metropolitan Nicolae and His Grace Bishop Ioan Casian. **Please take advantage of this beautiful opportunity.**

**THE 2021 CREDINȚA ALMANAC** has arrived and is available at the candles. **Please take a copy home with you!**

**IN KEEPING WITH CDC GUIDELINES,** masks are required for people who have **NOT** been fully vaccinated. If you are fully vaccinated, mask-wearing is optional. Hand-washing and physical distancing are strongly encouraged. We all need to remember the goal is to keep everyone as safe as possible so that each one of us feels comfortable attending Liturgy.

## **VACATION CHURCH SCHOOL 2021**

**PARENTS PLEASE TAKE NOTE!** Vacation Church School this summer will be held on **Thursday August 5th 9 - 12:15 (snacks provided), and Friday August 6th 9 - 2 (snacks and lunch provided).** We will again be holding it in conjunction with Sts. Anargyroi in Marlborough and the sessions both days will be held there. This year's theme is: **"Who is the Holy Spirit?"**

**All ages welcomed.** All activities will be held outdoors, weather permitting. In the case that activities move indoors, masks will be provided or may be brought from home. Hand sanitizer and soap and water will be readily available. **Please RSVP to [Valarie Stamoulis](#) as soon as possible.** Remember to include your child's name and grade.

We're looking forward to hosting your children for some summer fun in the name of Christ!

Just one other thing. If you can, we'd appreciate the help of 1-2 volunteers on one or both days. Please consider it.

*-Presvytera Eleni & Valarie Stamoulis*

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

## HOLY TRINITY NEWS

**MESSAGE FROM THE CEO.** I want to introduce myself formally. I am **Rodolfo Parra**, born in the Dominican Republic. I received a B.A. degree in International Relations and Economics from Lake Forest College, Lake Forest, IL. I've been married for 7 years, and we have 2 kids. I believe Holy Trinity is the best nursing facility in the Worcester area. It's now my third week at Holy Trinity. Being able to see how things operate at Holy Trinity, up close, I am really impressed at how our staff is clearly dedicated to the care and well being of our residents. We should all be proud.

**NEW ADMISSIONS.** See for yourself what makes Holy Trinity a top choice for both long-term care and short-term rehab! To inquire about admissions or to schedule a tour, please call (508) 852-1000.

**VOLUNTEERS.** Come share a special skill or interest while helping our seniors stay active in mind, body, and spirit. Those who are fully vaccinated may be considered to volunteer. Please call **Donna Benard**, with the Activities department, at 508-852-1000, or [e-mail her](mailto:donna@holytrinity.org) to discuss one of the many ways you may lend a helping hand. We are especially excited to invite back our church groups who may be interested in hosting a luncheon, coffee social, or assisting with liturgy.

**REHABILITATION.** Did you know that Holy Trinity offers more than just long-term nursing care? A leader in short-term rehabilitation, our team works with both the patient and the family to provide individualized treatment plans for physical, occupational, and speech therapies. If you have questions or would like more information, please contact our Director of Rehab, [Heather Walsh](mailto:heather@holytrinity.org).

**JOB OPENINGS.** Now hiring! We have openings for nurses and CNAs for all shifts, including sign on bonuses and great benefits. [Click here](#) for a full listing with detailed job descriptions. If you have questions, please contact the Human Resources Generalist, [Kimberly Hescocock](mailto:kimberly@holytrinity.org). Recent grads and people familiar with the languages and cultures of our Orthodox communities are encouraged to apply.

**DIVINE LITURGY** continues in-person for residents on Wednesday mornings. We welcome volunteers and visitors who would like to be involved.

**STAY CONNECTED.** Be sure to like our [Facebook page](#) for frequent updates and photos. This week, our ever-active residents kept busy with Greek Club, crocheting, cards, bowling, baking, and welcomed St. Mary's Church for a coffee social.

## 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*

**Lord, our sovereign God:** Let us acquire the treasure of love, for it is a grace that only your unspeakable generosity can provide. Let us understand that it is not only an act, but a state of the will, an attitude of the mind and heart, whereby we wish

nothing but the very best for all others. In so doing, enable us also to perceive that emotions, the feelings we have for those we love, while all well and good, are not love, though they very frequently accompany it. Help us, Lord, to understand a little more of life.

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

## ***“Have You Come To Torment Us Before The Time?”***

**This Sunday’s Gospel lesson touches on a topic** both very interesting and somewhat sensitive: demonic possession and mental illness. It is the account of the healing of the demoniacs of the Gadarenes (or, Gergesenes) found in the Gospel of Matthew (8:28-9:1). There are parallel accounts of this exorcism also found in Mark 5:1-20 and Luke 8:26-39.

Throughout the Gospels, we find many people who come to the Lord asking for healing. Today we might describe many of these as suffering from various mental illnesses. The Evangelists record them as having, or being possessed by, a demon, which was their commonly held understanding. Today, we view abnormal behavior through the lens of modern social and medical science, and this informs and shapes our understanding. However we might describe them, we know how such maladies can lead a person to suffer greatly, and sometimes do many horrible things, both to themselves and to others. We could fairly describe these people as not being themselves, not being “in their right mind,” not reflecting the true essence of who they are. This Gospel passage provides us with an opportunity to look at mental illness and demonic possession from both a spiritual and social scientific perspective.

In Matthew’s account, prior to the Lord’s encounter with the demoniacs, he and the disciples had reached land after having sailed through a tremendous storm. Even though the wind and water were raging, Jesus had been sleeping throughout, but, fearing death, his disciples woke him. He rose, raised his hands, and rebuked the winds and the sea. The disciples marveled, wondering “what sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?” (v. 27)

Shortly afterward, on the shore, the Lord encounters the demoniacs. The demons are similarly awed by Jesus, but they don’t wonder “what sort of man is this.” Unlike the disciples, they recognize him immediately. They know who he is. They say: “What have you to do with us, O Son of God?” (v. 29) But lest we think that the demons are happy to see him, they add: “Have you come to torment us before the time?”

Knowing that Jesus is going to expel them from these men, they ask permission to enter the herd of swine feeding nearby. He says to them: “Go.” They leave the persons they had possessed, and enter the swine, who run down the steep bank and drown in the sea.

There are a number of points we might want to think about in this encounter. First, notice that the demons need Jesus’ permission to leave the persons possessed and enter the swine. The Lord has power over them, and they know it. Second, the demons bring the swine to immediate destruction. It’s unclear in the text exactly why. It could be that they delighted in killing the animals, or that the animals could not tolerate being under their influence. And, third, everyone witnessing this event was frightened. The townspeople even begged Jesus to leave them (v. 34). The reality of demonic possession terrified them. The reality of evil overwhelmed them. But, neither were they ready to accept the alternative that Jesus offered them.

How should we understand this story? There are at least two points that we might take away from this miracle. First, God is always in charge. God’s grace was protecting the people possessed by the demons even while in their state of possession. We see what happened to the pigs when Jesus allowed the demons to enter them. We might want to consider what would happen to us if God allowed the demons free reign.

Second, it is clear that the demons are working constantly for our destruction. Sometimes we give them entry into our lives through our passions: greed, envy, pride, and even laziness, and jealousy. When given access they play with us. Before we know it we are under their influence. Sometimes they use the genetic or biological fissures in our flesh that make us susceptible to their power, and we fall victim. Addictions, mental illnesses, and more are often the result of many complicating factors. Most people so afflicted keep their suffering to themselves. And sometimes people struggling with addictions and mental illness hurt and destroy both themselves and others around them. They can feel disassociated from their actions, as though someone or something else were controlling them and causing bad things to happen. If this not “possession,” what is? All sickness has both physical and spiritual components. And, no one of us is exempt. We need to carefully cultivate the love and empathy that God has planted in each of us.

Mark and Luke add one more interesting aspect to this encounter. Once they had been freed from their captivity, the men formerly possessed asked the Lord if they might follow him; become his disciples. While they certainly would become powerful witnesses, he charges them rather to go back home, to become living witnesses among their family and friends, testifying to what God had done for them. This is something that God asks each of us to do. We should constantly reflect on how God has changed our lives, and share that good news with those around us.

## **DATES TO REMEMBER**

**Sun, Aug 1** Dormition Fast Begins  
**Th/Fr, Aug 5-6** Vacation Church School  
**Fri, Aug 6** Feast of Transfiguration  
Liturgy at Marlborough, 9 am  
**Sat, Aug 7** Staff Orthodox Food Pantry, 9am-noon  
**Sat, Aug 14** Dormition Vespers at St. Mary's 6 pm  
**Sun, Aug 15** Feast of the Dormition  
**Thurs, Aug 19** Parish Council 7 pm  
**Fri, Aug 20** Mustard Seed Meal  
**Sat, Sept 4 Sept** Staff Orthodox Food Pantry, 9am-noon  
**4-6** Marlboro Greek Festival

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*Sunday Services: Matins at 9:00 am and Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am*