



HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH Parish Newsletter

New Parish Center: 20937 Ashburn Rd., #110, Ashburn, VA February 2022

FEBRUARY—DAY 11 HOURS, NIGHT 13

- 12 Sat 5:00 p.m. Vespers — **BEGINS THE TRIODION (WHICH ENDS WITH PENTECOST)**
- 13 Sun^{34•I•Lk21} **GOSPEL: A MAN WHO NEEDS GOD vs. ONE WHO DOESN'T** (Luke 18.9+)
10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy — **Coffee Hour: Smith**
In light of the Gospel reading, no Wednesday/Friday abstinence.
- 19 Sat 5:00 p.m. Vespers
- 20 Sun^{35•II•Lk22} **GOSPEL: WAYWARD SONS, LOVING FATHER** (Luke 15.11+)
10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy — **Coffee Hour: Warden**
- 26 Sat 5:00 p.m. Vespers
- 27 Sun^{36•III} **GOSPEL: JUDGMENT—BEFORE TIME RUNS OUT REACH OUT** (Mat. 25.31+)
10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy — **Coffee Hour: Wayland**
☛ Vespers moves to Sunday evenings.

MARCH—DAY 12 HOURS, NIGHT 12

- 6 Sun^{37•IV} **GOSPEL: FORGIVENESS—LETTING GO** (Mat. 6.14+)
10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy — **Coffee Hour: Adams**
5:00 p.m. Penitential Vespers, followed by Bliny and all the fixings.

ANCIENT TREE TO HELP TURN JERICHO INTO TOURISM HUB

Sycamore believed to be the tree mentioned in the Gospel of Luke



A Palestinian boy pauses in the base of an ancient sycamore tree in the West Bank city of Jericho. The gnarled sycamore is said to be featured in the Gospel of Luke. Associated Press



‘Blowin’ in the wind....’

The bad mix of winds that blew in with the pandemic has winnowed our church community—a noticeable RIF—bringing a welter of questions, but nothing to keep us from holding our Annual Parish Meeting, the first since 2020, on February 6.

The big news: we liquidated our landholding—cash in hand for square feet—and, thanks to Marsha Morrow, we will be paying a few dollars less in rent. We approved Gregory Honshul’s proposed budget and elected Daria Adams, Gregory Honshul, Carlos Mariño, Matthew Matyuf, Marsha Morrow, and Linda Smith to serve as Parish Council. We also committed ourselves to looking into how we can be more resolute in helping neighbors in need (for example, through the local food pantry).

And finally, our sister Janet Cross is in hospice care: remember her and Norman in your prayers.

Keep in mind: the Great Forty Days begin March 7. And the Holy Pasch will be marked on April 22, 23, 24, a week after the Latin Pasch, the Pasch of the Law beginning on the evening of Friday, April 15 (=Latin Holy Friday). Pentecost, our Parish Feast, falls on June 12.

"And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, who was the chief among the tax collectors, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus... but could not because of the crowd, because he was of short stature. And he ran ahead, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said to him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at your house." Luke 19.1–5

JERICHO, West Bank — With a giant trunk and boughs towering 60 feet high, a gnarled sycamore near Jericho's main square has long been touted as the very tree that the hated tax collector climbed to get a glimpse of Jesus.

Now, it's taking center stage in a plan to transform this ancient desert backwater into a tourism hub.

The tree, once tucked obscurely away on a side street, is a featured attraction of a Russian-funded museum complex to be unveiled this month as part of Jericho's 10,000th birthday celebrations.

At the Oct. 10 launch of yearlong festivities, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas will outline ambitious plans for Jericho, a Jordan Valley oasis that bills itself as the world's oldest and lowest-lying town, at some 780 feet below sea level.

"This is to promote Palestine as a destination," Palestinian Tourism Minister Khoulood Daibes said of the venture, which includes a resort to be built on the shores of the nearby Dead Sea. The Palestinians even hope for an airport in the area, though both projects hinge on Israeli approval.

The plans reflect the Abbas government's approach of building a Palestinian state from the ground up, regardless of the ups and downs of negotiations with Israel. Such pragmatism grew out of painful years of conflict, especially in the past decade, when Palestinians across the West Bank saw many economic gains wiped out.

The road leading into Jericho still bears witness to the scars of the fighting, but also fledgling signs of prosperity.

It's now a four-lane highway instead of a potholed country road, and an Israeli army checkpoint that used to snarl traffic and deter visitors has been removed because of a growing atmosphere of calm. But a casino, shut after the outbreak of fighting in 2000, remains closed because the Israeli military believes it is too dangerous for Israelis — the main clientele — to return to Jericho.

Still, more foreign tourists are visiting, about 1 million a year since the Israeli-Palestinian fighting began to drop off in 2006, said Jericho Mayor Hassan Saleh. Their main stops include Tel Sultan, an archaeological dig some say proves Jericho was first settled around 8,000 B.C., and an eighth-century Umayyad palace with intricate mosaics.

Many visitors also stop at the ancient sycamore, usually snapping pictures before getting back on their buses. The hope is that the \$3 million museum and visitors' complex to be opened next to the tree will encourage visitors to linger.

Local lore has long maintained the tree, whose massive partially hollowed trunk measures 7 feet in diameter, is the very one featured in the biblical tale of Jesus and Zacchaeus, the tax collector of short stature who, according to the Gospel of Luke, climbed the tree to get a better look at Jesus.

The tree will eventually be ringed by the perimeter wall of the museum compound.

On Friday, dozens of Palestinian and Russian workers laid brick, rushing to finish the white stone building with two domes and several graceful columns in time for the Oct. 10 opening. The museum, which sits on land bought by the Russian government in the 19th century, will feature Russian art and an exhibit on cultural ties between Russia and Palestine, as well as artifacts discovered during a salvage dig before construction began.

In the garden, workers laid tiles for a walkway from a recently excavated Byzantine-era mosaic to the sycamore tree. Landscape architect Sofiya Minasiyan said she plans to fill the grounds with plants mentioned in the Bible.

Daibes, the tourism minister, said tests are being conducted on the health of the tree, in hopes of finding ways to keep it strong. She said preliminary tests have shown the sycamore is more than 2,000 years old.

Mordechai Kislev, an Israeli archaeobotanist, said it is quite possible for sycamores to live that long, though it's difficult to estimate a sycamore's age because it does not have annual growth rings.

The tree does have a rival — nearby, in the courtyard of a Greek Orthodox church, the huge trunk of a dead sycamore encased in glass is also presented as the biblical tree.

Still, Saleh said the tree in the Russian complex is believed to be the oldest sycamore in Jericho. "People believe that this is the tree," the mayor said.

Some visitors take the uncertainty in stride.

"Of course, we've heard stories from the Bible ... and I can image that it would be like this," said Anna Boertveit, 47, of Stavanger, Norway, as her tour group stopped for photographs.