

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905

Rev. Presbyter Dragan Vukovic

(814) 244-4063

The Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

(08.21.2022.)

Matthew 17:14-23

And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting. And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry. **(KJV)**

Mental illness has been a problem through the centuries. In the current Gospel the Lord Jesus Christ addressed the issue of the son being afflicted and tormented by the devil.

The father with the afflicted son had the wisdom to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ to address his son's problem. Jesus rebuked the devil and healed the son.

Jesus Christ emphasized the importance of strong faith, fasting and prayer.

Dealing with mental illness and maintaining mental wellness involve complexities. Turning to Jesus Christ first and foremost and remaining focused on Christ helps to put mental illness and mental wellness into perspective.

Having strong faith, prayer and fasting enable individuals to deal with life's stresses including having a family member with mental health issues. Keeping the focus on Christ, strong faith, prayer and fasting facilitate mentally wellness.

Medical and professional mental health workers exist to address the problems of the mentally ill. The Church makes it clear the Lord Jesus Christ remains primary in the healing process for believers.

The Church has specific prayers to address the attacks by the devil. Living the life in Christ serves believers in all circumstances. The root causes of mental illness are not always readily known even after all these years.

Jesus Christ provides necessary nourishment, guidance and strength for believers faced with mental health issues personally or with a family member. The power of prayer, fasting and strong faith cannot be overestimated.

Jesus Christ speaks about moving mountains with strong faith. Having a family member with a lingering mental health issue may become a challenge as large as a mountain.

Faith in Christ, prayer and fasting will strengthen and guide believers to deal with mental health issues affecting the family. Strong faith, prayer and fasting equip believers to address the stresses of personal life.

Being an active believer, following the teachings of Christ and the Church prevents life's stresses from becoming overwhelming. Strong faith, prayer and fasting are preventive measures against depression and despair in life.

The cure for all forms of mental illness is not readily apparent. Jesus Christ is always present to help family members to address the issue of a mentally ill family member and seek the care necessary.

The present Gospel is always timely. The present Gospel reveals Jesus Christ's healing power and authority to rebuke the devil. Dealing with mental illness requires serious attention.

Jesus Christ offers hope to families with a member suffering from mental illness. The father in the current Gospel verifies the value of having hope in Jesus Christ and turning to Christ for help with his afflicted son.

The Gospel remains relevant through the centuries. The Gospel has applicability to daily life. Believers investing in studying the Gospel and reading the Gospel regularly make a lasting investment in mental wellness.

The Lord God is a good and loving God with the power to heal all types of illnesses and infirmities. Wise individuals like the father in the present Gospel turn to Christ for guidance and help.

Jesus Christ did not disappoint the father in the Gospel. Jesus Christ does not disappoint believers exercising strong faith, prayer and fasting. Love for Jesus Christ and for afflicted family members are essential in the Christian life.

The father in the current Gospel loved his son and sought healing for the son. Family members always do well when turning to Jesus Christ for healing of an afflicted loved one.

The Gospel has lasting wisdom. The Gospel documents the love and healing power of Jesus Christ. Seekers of healing benefit immeasurably from the wisdom and content of the Gospel.

God's Holy Church offers daily healing for all forms of infirmities and afflictions. All illnesses and afflictions are not necessarily visible. Jesus Christ is aware of the presence of any hurt in a person's heart, mind and soul.

The illness and cure of the soul are of paramount importance. Jesus Christ

is the way to ensure the soul is tarnish-free and healthy. Being faithful to Jesus Christ in the Church is the pathway to health of the soul.

The Tenth Sunday after Pentecost. August 8/21, 2022. St. Emilian the Confessor. Venerable Zosimas of Tuman. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.

Father Rodney Torbic

The Prologue from Ochrid
St Nikolai of Zhicha

1. SAINT EMILIAN THE CONFESSOR, BISHOP OF CYZICUS

Emilian served as bishop in Cyzicus, during the reign of the nefarious Emperor Leo the Armenian, the iconoclast. Since he did not want to submit to the decrees of the emperor, which demanded the removal of icons from the churches, Emilian and other Orthodox bishops were sent into exile. He spent five years in exile, enduring much pain and humiliation for the sake of Christ. Emilian died in the year 820 A.D. and took up his habitation among the citizens of heaven.

2. SAINT MYRON, MIRACLE-WORKER AND BISHOP OF CRETE

Myron, a married farmer, joyfully and abundantly distributed the fruits of his land to needy people. Once he encountered strangers and thieves stealing wheat from his threshing floor. Not telling them who he was, St. Myron helped the thieves fill the sacks, lift them on their backs, and escape. Because of his exceptional virtue, Myron was ordained a presbyter and afterward consecrated a bishop. He was a great miracle-worker and performed many good and mighty works in the name of the Lord Jesus. Myron died sometime close to the year 350 A.D., in the hundredth year of his life.

3. THE VENERABLE GREGORY THE SINAITE

Gregory is called "the Sinaite" because he received the monastic tonsure on Mount Sinai. During the reign of Emperor Andronicus Palaeologus (about the year 1330 A.D.), he arrived at Mt. Athos to visit the monasteries and to learn more, if possible, about the practice of mental prayer and contemplation. At that time, however, these two forms of spiritual practice were almost unknown among the holy Athonites. The only one who knew them--and practiced them to perfection--was St. Maximus of Kapsokalyvia. Gregory spread his understanding about mental prayer through all the cells and monasteries on Mt. Athos. His most distinguished disciple there was Kallistos, Patriarch of Constantinople, who would later write the biography of St. Gregory. After this, Gregory crossed over to Macedonia and to other Balkan regions, and established communities in which the monks practiced mental prayer. Thus he assisted many in the deepening of their prayer, to their salvation. His writings about mental prayer and asceticism can be found in the book "Dobrotoljublja: *The Philokalia*." Among other things, he wrote the hymn to the Holy Trinity "It is meet and right," which is sung at the Sunday Midnight Service. Gregory was one of the most eminent ascetics and spiritual teachers of the Balkans. He died peacefully after a long and laborious life, and took up his habitation in the Kingdom of God.

4. THE HOLY NEO-MARTYRS TRIANDAPHYLLOS AND SPASO

Triandaphyllos was born in Zagora, and Spaso was born in Radoviste, in the Diocese of Strumica. They were both Slavs, and both were young, simple men--but their love for Christ was more precious to them than this world or this life. They gave their lives and did not betray Christ. They suffered at the hands of the Turks for the Christian Faith: Triandaphyllos, in Constantinople, in the year 1680 A.D.; and Spaso, in Thessalonica, in the year 1794 A.D.

5. THE HOLY MARTYR GORMIZDAS

Gormizdas was a nobleman at the court of the Persian Emperor Yezdegeherd. The emperor confiscated his rank and property, and sent him to tend livestock, because he would not deny his Christian Faith. The emperor hoped that Gormizdas would pine so badly for his rank and property that he would soon worship the idols. However, Gormizdas peacefully tended the livestock and kept his faith. For that, the emperor subjected him to cruel tortures that exhausted the body of Christ's martyr but could not alter his spirit. Finally, Gormizdas was slain, in the year 418 A.D., immediately after the martyrdom of St. Abdus the bishop (March 31). Gormizdas was martyred on earth, and glorified in heaven.

HYMN OF PRAISE

SAINT GREGORY THE SINAITE

The wise Sinaite taught the monks,
And, by his own example, confirmed his teachings:
"Passionlessness is the Promised Land,
And, by the Spirit, the passionless soul is illumined.
A man will be devoid of thoughts
When, through prayer, his mind rests in the heart.
Of all passions, sinful thoughts are the forerunners
Which, in the power of demons, hold the soul.
We are all sick, and the Physician's medicine is ready,
For our healing, and our health.
The name of Jesus, in your heart, speak,
And it will, like fire, consume the passions!
Let that powerful name, with heavenly brightness,

Move in your heart with every breath.
If, in your heart, you do not have the Lord Jesus,
All other ascesis remains like water.
Only Jesus, within me, is able
To turn the water of my being into true wine.
As in a nest, rest your whole mind in your heart,
And glorify Jesus by ceaseless prayer.
'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner!'
Let the prayer be slow, not hurried,
Until the heart, from prayer, bursts into flame;
Then the mind will gaze upon heaven, and forget about the earth."

REFLECTION

Moses spoke to the sons of Israel: *I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life...that you may live* (Deuteronomy 30:19). There are some decisive moments in the life of men when indeed it is left to man to choose between life or death. Judas, in a decisive moment, was corrupted by greed for silver, and he chose death--the sin of avarice. When the general wanted to elevate Marinus the soldier (August 7) to the rank of an officer [centurion], envious men denounced him as a Christian. The general permitted him only three hours to contemplate, and to choose between life or death: either to deny Christ or to die. Marinus, hearing the words of his superior, went to the local bishop, Theotechnus, and asked him for advice. The bishop led Marinus into the church, stood him before the Gospel, and pointed--at first to the Gospel, then to the sword that hung from Marinus's waist--and said to him: "Choose, courageous man, one of these two. Either wear the sword and serve the earthly king temporarily and, after death, be lost eternally; or become a soldier of the Heavenly King, and lay down your life for His Holy name, written in this Book, and reign with Him in eternal life." Marinus immediately decided, kissed the Holy Gospel and departed, through death, into life eternal.

CONTEMPLATION

To contemplate the miraculous appearance of God to the child Samuel (1 Samuel 3 [also known as 1 Kings 3]):

1. How one night, when Samuel was lying down, the Lord called him three times by name;
2. How the Lord told Samuel of the condemnation of the House of Eli [Heli] (because of the corruption of the sons of Eli) and of the condemnation of all of Israel;

3. How the Lord did not want to appear either to Eli the high priest, or to his sons, but rather to Samuel, an innocent child.

HOMILY

About the peace-making of Christ

"And they [the people] shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:4).

How clearly the prophet saw Christ the Peacemaker! The prophet elucidated, one by one, the merits of the Savior. First, the prophet revealed Him as the Lawgiver of the new Law, a law for all the peoples on earth. Then the prophet illustrated His exaltedness above all heights, earthly and historical. In the passage we see above, the prophet shows Him to be the Peacemaker, whose power and love will beat swords into plowshares, and spears into pruning hooks. Has this great prophecy of peace been fulfilled? Yes, it has, in spite of the fact that wars still exist. Behold, wars among Christian peoples are not the same as wars among pagans. Pagans fight with pride, while Christians fight with shame. Pagan faiths give only warriors access to their heavens, while the Christian Faith promises heaven to the saints. As Christians sometimes commit other pagan sins by their weakness, so they also commit the sin of waging war. However, God examines the heart and knows with what disposition the pagans sin, and with what disposition the Christians sin. The Pharisees denied Christ, and Peter also denied Him. But the Pharisees denied Him with unrepentant malice, while Peter denied Him with shame, only to repent and confess Him anew.

Brethren, what can we say concerning the swords and spears of passions, by which we kill our souls and the souls of our fellow men? Oh, when will we beat those swords into plowshares that deeply plow the souls, and sow the noble seed of Christ in ourselves! And when will we beat the spears into pruning hooks, to harvest the tares in our souls and burn them! Only then will the peace of Christ take up abode in our souls, just as it abode in the souls of the saints. Who, then, would even think about war against his neighbors or against neighboring peoples?

Oh, how wondrous is the vision of Isaiah, the son of Amos, the prophet of God!

O Lord, beat the weapons of war within us into instruments of peace by the fire of Your word.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Services this Week

❖ ***Friday – PARACLESIS - THE OFFICE OF SUPPLICATION TO SAINT NECTARIOS -05:00 PM - Confession***

❖ ***11th Sunday after Pentecost– August 21th – 09:00 AM Divine Liturgy***

Donations August 14, 2022

Offering - \$1,305.00 Candles - \$66.00

Large Candles

In Memory of Connie Bartis from the Bartis Family
In Memory of Connie Bartis from Frank Palmer
In Memory of Connie Bartis from Kathy & Gerry Szmyd
In Memory of Nick & Sarah Davich from Carol McAllister
In Memory of Nicholas Davich Jr. from Carol McAllister
In Memory of Dudukovich & Knezevich Families from Mark Stokrp

JOIN US FOR



Thanks to all of you who helped in any way to make our
"Taste of Serbia" a success! Mnogaja ljeta!



Friday September 16th 4:00 PM to 10:00 PM

Saturday, September 17th Noon to 9:30 PM

Sign up to work in the Lobby!!!

**NUT and APRICOT ROLLS
FOR SALE - \$12
PLEASE SEE Rose, Suzette or Dick!**