

# *Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church*

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*The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost*

(09.11.2022.)

**Mt.21:33-42**

Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? (*KJV*)

*The Beheading of St. John the Baptist*

*Mark 6:14-30*

And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee; And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. And she went

forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist. And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother. And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb. And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. *(KJV)*

St. Mathew's Gospel for this Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost describes the killing of the owner of the vineyard's servants and his son. St. Mark's Gospel describes the gruesome beheading of St. John the Baptist.

Both Gospels for today speak of violence. Violence has been a part of the world down through the centuries. Good people have often been victims of violence.

When violence occurs, turn to the Church for comfort, healing and to put violence into perspective. Believers across this nation turned to churches for healing, comfort and answers when America was attacked twenty-one years ago.

Priests in New York became a healing presence when the Twin Towers in New York were destroyed. Services were held in churches throughout the country for believers to attend. People looked to God for direction and understanding.

In both of today's Gospels, the murder victims were innocent human beings. In the September 11 attacks twenty-one years ago, innocent victims lost their lives.

The Church is a place of peace, fosters and facilitates peace. The Lord Jesus Christ embodies peace. The Lord Jesus Christ was an innocent victim experiencing death on the Cross.

Jesus spoke these words not long before His death. He said: "**Peace** I leave with you, **my peace** I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (Jn.14:27)

Believers are challenged in this world to find peace in the Lord Jesus Christ. Violence has become an everyday occurrence in the news. Too often reports are heard of mass shootings and deaths.

Churches themselves have been places of violence. It is only in Christ who turned death into victory can believers find peace that is lasting unto eternal life. Resolute faith in required for peace in Christ.

Christ is ever present for believers to reach out to in faith, love and in prayer. Christ is constantly within our midst. Christ's love is all embracing and all healing. Christ takes away our sins and leads us to the Heavenly Kingdom.

John the Baptist whose beheading we remember today was an innocent crime victim. The people that died in the Twin Towers in New York and in Somerset County, Pennsylvania in the September 11 plane crash were innocent victims.

Jesus was the most innocent victim going to His death voluntarily. Jesus triumphed over death and rose from the grave. The Lord proved He was stronger than death. Jesus rose from the tomb.

Christ's victory over death brings everlasting joy. Christ's Church offers the path to everlasting joy. Seekers of peace and joy find it in God's Holy Church. Today is the day to embrace the way of the Crucified and Risen Christ.

Remember today all the innocent victims having lost their lives on September 11 and throughout the centuries. Emulate the commitment of St. John the Baptist to the Lord Jesus Christ. Love the Lord and seek Him at all times.

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*The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost. The Beheading of St. John the Baptist. August 29. September 11, 2022. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic*

## *The Prologue from Ochrid* *St Nikolai of Zhicha*

### **1. THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH YEAR, OR THE BEGINNING OF THE INDICTION**

The First Ecumenical Council [Nicaea, 325] decreed that the Church year should begin on September 1. The month of September was, for the Hebrews, the beginning of the civil year (Exodus 23:16), the month of gathering the harvest and of the offering of thanks to God. It was on this feast that the Lord Jesus entered the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-21), opened the book of the Prophet Isaiah and read the words: *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn* (Isaiah 61:1-2). The month of September is also important in the history of Christianity, because Emperor Constantine the Great was victorious over Maxentius, the enemy of the Christian Faith, in September. Following this victory, Constantine granted freedom of confession to the Christian Faith throughout the Roman Empire. For a long time, the civil year in the Christian world followed the Church year, with its beginning on September 1. The civil year was later changed, and its beginning transferred to January 1. This occurred first in Western Europe, and later in Russia, under Peter the Great.

### **2. THE VENERABLE SIMEON THE STYLITE**

He was born in Syria of peasant parents. At the age of eighteen, he left home and was tonsured a monk. He undertook the most difficult ascetic practices, and sometimes undertook a strict fast for forty days. He eventually took upon himself a form of asceticism that was previously unknown. He stood day and night on a pillar, in unceasing prayer. At first, his pillar was six cubits high; he later raised it to twelve cubits, then to twenty-two cubits, then to thirty-six cubits, and finally to forty cubits high. \*) On two occasions his mother Martha came to see him, but he refused to receive her, saying from atop the pillar: "Do not disturb me now, my mother. If we become worthy, then we'll see each other in the next world." St. Simeon endured countless assaults from demons, but he conquered them all by prayer to God. The saint worked many

great miracles, healing by word and prayer many who were afflicted. People from all over gathered around his pillar--the rich and the poor, kings and slaves. Simeon helped everyone: healing some of infirmities, comforting those in need, instructing others, and reproaching some who held heretical beliefs. Thus, he turned Empress Eudocia from the Eutychian heresy and brought her back to Orthodoxy. He lived the ascetic life during the reigns of the Emperors Theodosius the Younger, Marcian and Leo the Great. Simeon, the first great stylite in Christianity and a great miracle-worker, lived to be 103 years old. He reposed in the Lord on September 1, 459. His relics were translated to Antioch, to the church dedicated to his name.

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\*) A cubit equals the length of an adult forearm, from the tip of the middle finger to the elbow, or approximately twenty inches. --Trans.

### **3. SAINT JOSHUA, THE SON OF NUN**

Joshua was the leader of the Hebrew people after the death of Moses. Of several hundred thousand Jews who came out of Egypt, only he and Caleb entered the Promised Land. Joshua lived to be 110 years old, and died approximately 1440 years before the Nativity of Christ. (Read of his faithfulness to God, his works and his miracles in the Book of Joshua.)

### **SAINT SIMEON THE STYLITE**

Simeon the Stylite, the first of the pillar-dwellers,  
An illuminated elder, with the radiance of an immortal,  
Bound himself to the pillar as a willing sacrifice;  
He was fully alive to heaven, and dead to the earth.  
Fasting and prayer and all-night vigils--  
By this hard path he sought salvation.  
Early one morning, his mother came by:  
"O Son, come down and let your mother see you!"  
Thus she spoke, but Simeon was silent.  
The mother repeated her plea again and again....  
Simeon at last replied to his mother:

"I am in the service of the Heavenly King.  
This life is a struggle and a preparation.  
There is no time for empty conversation here.  
But go, Mother, and choose the pure path--  
Take care for your soul and live according to Christ!  
After the present struggle is the next world;  
If Christ finds us worthy,  
You will see your son there, Mother,  
And your son will delight in his mother's face."

### REFLECTION

We should use all that is necessary in this world for the cultivation of our souls, for when death separates us from this world we will take nothing to the other world except our souls, in whatever state they have been formed here. When he was eighteen, St. Simeon the Stylite was so concerned about the salvation of his soul that one day he fell face down on the earth and prayed to God that He would show him the path of salvation. And lying thus in prayer for a long time, he had a vision that he was digging a trench for a foundation and, exhausted from digging, stopped to catch his breath. A voice spoke to him, saying: "Dig deeper!" Then he began, with greater labor and effort, to dig yet deeper. Again he stopped to catch his breath. But again he heard the voice: "Dig deeper!" He again began to dig, with even greater labor and effort. At this the voice spoke to him again: "Stop, it is sufficient! Now build what you wish to build; for without labor, you will succeed in nothing." Those who labor little, and build the life of their soul on sensual shallowness, build on sand, which cannot uphold anything, even in this transitory world--and even more so in eternity.

### CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the lawlessness of David (II Samuel 11):

1. How David committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, while Uriah was away at war;
2. How David arranged the death of Uriah;
3. How God became angered with David.

### HOMILY

## **on the Word, the Son of God**

In the beginning was the Word (John 1:1).

The Logos--the rational, intelligent Word--existed in the beginning. This pertains to the Divine Nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. Brethren, by saying, *In the beginning*, do we think that the Word of God has a beginning? Or that there was a certain date in time when the Son of God was born of God the Father? In no way! For the birth of the Son of God can have neither a date nor a beginning, since time is a condition of this transient world, and it does not affect the eternal God, and therefore does not affect anything at all that is of God. Can the sun remain the sun, if the sunlight is separated from it? Will a man remain a man, if his mind is taken away? Would honey still be honey, if its sweetness is separated from it? It cannot. Even less can one conceive of God as separate from His Logos, from His rational Word, from His Intelligence, from His Wisdom--the eternal Father separate from His co-eternal Son.

No, brethren, the words are not about the beginning of the Son of God from God the Father, but rather about the beginning of the history of the created world and the salvation of mankind. This beginning is in the Word of God, in the Son of God. He began both the creation of the world and the salvation of the world. Whoever would speak of the creation of the visible or invisible worlds, or of the salvation of mankind, must begin with the Beginning. And that Beginning is the Word of God, the Wisdom of God, the Son of God. For example, if someone were telling a story about boating on a lake, he might begin it like this: "In the beginning there was a lake, and on it sailed a white boat...." No reasonable person would interpret the words, "In the beginning there was a lake..." to mean that the lake came into existence on the same day that the boat sailed on it. Thus, no rational man could take the words of the Evangelist, *In the beginning was the Word...*, as though the Word of God came forth from God at the same moment that the world was created! Just as the lake existed for thousands of years before the boat sailed on it, so the Word of God existed for a whole eternity before the beginning of creation.

O Son of God, co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, enlighten us and save us.

**To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.**

## **Services this Week**

- ❖ ***Monday - 09.12. '22. Trnsf. Of the Relics of Alexander Nevsky – 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy***
- ❖ ***Wednesday – 09.14. '22. Ven. Simeon Stylite; Ecclesiastical New Year – 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy***
- ❖ ***Friday – PARACLESIS - THE OFFICE OF SUPPLICATION TO SAINT NECTARIOS -05:00 PM – Confession***
- ❖ ***14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost– September 18<sup>th</sup> – 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy***

**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

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**SUNDAY SCHOOL**

Next Sunday, September 11<sup>th</sup> we will have a beginning of the school year prayer during Divine Liturgy. Following will be a very important meeting for all students, parents, and anyone interested in helping this school year. Please make plans to stay and be involved in the spiritual lives of our future!

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**PLEASE Sign up to work in the Lobby!!!**



Friday September 16<sup>th</sup> 4:00 PM to 10:00 PM  
Saturday, September 17<sup>th</sup> Noon to 9:30 PM

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**NUT and APRICOT ROLLS  
FOR SALE - \$12**

**PLEASE SEE Rose, Suzette or Dick!**

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The Kolo Srpski Sestara will be celebrating their Slava, the birth of the Theotokos, on Sunday, September 25<sup>th</sup>, with the blessing of the Slavski kolac and zito with their honored Kuma, Evelyn Walat. A banquet will follow Divine Liturgy. Tickets are \$12.

**BASKET PARTY OCTOBER 9<sup>th</sup> - at the church, doors open at noon.  
Please see kolo members for details.**