

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

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The Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

(09.18.2022.)

Matthew 22:1-14

And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen. (*KJV*)

Just as the king in the current Gospel, the Lord God repeatedly offers invitations to share celebratory joy with Him. God's invitations go to all within reach of hearing the Holy Gospel.

God's Holy Church continuously offers invitations for individuals to come and see. The Church extends to believers the offer to draw near in faith and in love. Regularly individuals decline the Lord's invitations.

People choose not to heed the callings from God's Holy Church. Of those persons drawing near to God, not all remain for the duration of earthly life. Every person baptized into Christ does not remain faithful throughout life.

The world would be much different today if all baptized into Christ remained faithful. If all baptized into Christ through the centuries were fervent, joy would be much more prevalent.

We know from the great amount of crime, depression and despair existing in the world, that dominant numbers of believers are not readily sharing their joy in Jesus Christ.

Some believers baptized into Christ fall away from the Church. Some baptized are weak

in faith and remain lukewarm throughout life. A percentage of believers are faithful. A small number are fervent believers.

In the current Gospel, one person accepting the invitation to the wedding was cast out. We know from Church history there are believers put out of the Church for various reasons including evil actions.

Believers accepting the Lord's invitations share the joy with others making the same decisions. God appreciates all believers welcoming the Divine invitations. Lives are transformed when joy in the Lord is shared.

The value of accepting God's appeals comes through personal experience. Believers deeply feel the Lord's presence, appreciation and joy when accepting the Divine invitations.

Believers sense the Lord's presence in hearing and accepting the invitation. The Lord's invitations come primarily from the Church. The Lord's invitations compete for the individual's attention in the world.

Individuals have the choice of saying "yes" to the Lord and experiencing joy in God's Kingdom or choosing alternatives of lesser value. Reaffirming commitment to God is necessary all the days of life.

Individuals spurning or rejecting the Lord's invitations must live with the results. Accepting the Lord's invitations and remaining faithful leads to lasting joy and eternal life.

Individuals accepting the king's invitation to the wedding valued the king's relationship with his son. Believers embracing the Lord God's invitations value the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Individuals make decisions throughout earthly life. All decisions have results and consequences. God's Kingdom and eternal life require adherence to the narrow path, consistent discipline and commitment.

God's Church helps individuals to identify the important aspects of life and to seek them. The current Gospel makes clear to believers that not all people invited by the Lord end up celebrating with the Lord.

Where and with whom individuals choose to celebrate life reflects the person's inner values and long-range interests. Believers choosing to celebrate with the Lord show an interest in God's Kingdom and eternal life.

The time of earthly life occurs only once. Choosing to invest the time of life in God's Holy Church with like-minded believers opens endless opportunities in God's Kingdom and for eternal life.

The Holy Scriptures speak of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. (I Tim 6:14-16, Rev. 17:14, Rev. 19:16) God's Holy Church is where believers learn more about the Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

Believers hear the Holy Gospel in God's Holy Church and learn about the value of accepting the Lord's invitations. Strength and wisdom come from God in the Holy Gospel and lead to definitive peace and joy.

The Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost. Holy Prophet Zachariah and Righteous Elizabeth, parents of St. John the Baptist. September 5/18, 2022. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic

1. THE NATIVITY OF THE MOST-HOLY THEOTOKOS

The Holy Virgin Mary was born of aged parents, Joachim and Anna. Her father was of the lineage of David, and her mother of the lineage of Aaron. Thus, she was of royal birth by her father, and of priestly birth by her mother. In this, she foreshadowed Him Who would be born of her as King and High Priest. Her parents were quite old and had no children. Because of this they were ashamed before men and humble before God. In their humility they prayed to God with tears, to bring them joy in their old age by giving them a child, as He had once given joy to the aged Abraham and his wife Sarah by giving them Isaac. The Almighty and All-seeing God rewarded them with a joy that surpassed all their expectations and all their most beautiful dreams. For He gave them not just a daughter, but the Mother of God. He illumined them not only with temporal joy, but with eternal joy as well. God gave them just one daughter, and she would later give them just one grandson--but what a daughter and what a Grandson! Mary, Full of grace, Blessed among women, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, the Altar of the Living God, the Table of the Heavenly Bread, the Ark of God's Holiness, the Tree of the Sweetest Fruit, the Glory of the race of man, the Praise of womanhood, the Fount of virginity and purity--this was the daughter given by God to Joachim and Anna. She was born in Nazareth, and at the age of three, was taken to the Temple in Jerusalem. In her young womanhood she returned again to Nazareth, and shortly thereafter heard the Annunciation of the Holy Archangel Gabriel concerning the birth of the Son of God, the Savior of the world, from her most-pure virgin body.

2. THE FEAST OF THE HOLY THEOTOKOS OF KALIŠTO

In the Monastery of the Holy Theotokos near the village Kališto, west of Struga in Macedonia, the Holy Mother of God manifested her power and mercy through numerous miracles. Many of the sick were miraculously healed, and thieves who thought to plunder or desecrate the monastery were severely punished by an invisible power. There is a miracle-working icon of the Holy Theotokos in the church there; nearby, there are two springs of healing water: that of St. Peter and that of St. Ananias. The Chapel of St. Athanasius is located in a cave not far from the main church.

3. THE FEAST OF THE ICON OF THE HOLY THEOTOKOS OF POCHAEV

In the province of Volhynia there is a famous Monastery of the Holy Theotokos, in Pochaev. The Holy Mother of God first appeared in about 1340 to one of two monks who were laboring in asceticism in a cave there. From that time on, the place has been an inexhaustible font of numerous miracles.

THE NATIVITY OF THE MOST-HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

O greatly desired and long awaited one,
O Virgin, thou hast been obtained from the Lord with tears!
A bodily temple of the Most-holy Spirit shalt thou become,
And shalt be called Mother of the Eternal Word.

The Burning Bush they called thee,
For thou wilt receive within thyself the divine fire:
Ablaze with fire but not consumed,
Thou shalt bear the Golden Fruit and offer it to the world.

Thou shalt be the Bearer of Him Who bears the heavens,
To Whom all of heaven offers up praise!
The Miracle of miracles shall come to pass within thee,
For thou shalt bear heaven, thou who art "more spacious than the heavens!"

Thou art more precious to us, O Virgin, than precious stones,
For thou art the source of salvation for mankind.
For this, may the entire universe glorify thee,
O Most-holy Virgin, O white Turtledove!

The King of Heaven shall desire to enter the world,
And shall pass through thee, O Beautiful Gate!
O Virgin, when thou dost become woman thou shalt bear Christ for us;
From thy body, the Sun shall blaze forth.

REFLECTION

St. Dionysius the Areopagite writes of the immeasurable joy, the outer and inner radiance, and the indescribable fragrance that he sensed in the presence of the Holy Theotokos when he visited her in Jerusalem. In his zeal, he says that if he had not known the One True God, he would have recognized her, the Holy Virgin Mary, as God. The Holy Virgin made such a powerful and unique impression on men during her earthly life--and she received an incomparably greater power and glory after her physical death when, by the will of God, she was exalted above the heavenly hosts. Her power comes from her ceaseless prayer for the faithful, for all those who turn to her for help. When St. John of Novgorod and his people prayed to her for help against a hostile army, he understood that she was simultaneously praying to the Lord with tears in their behalf, and Novgorod was miraculously saved. As she was compassionate toward her crucified Son, so the Holy Most-pure One is also compassionate toward all those in need, and who turn to her for help. It could be said that the entire earth is covered by the miracles of her mercy. Even today, there lives in Belgrade a café owner (C.J.), who was born in the village of Labunište (Macedonia) outside Struga. His mother brought him blind to the Monastery of Kališto, where, after the priest prayed over him before the icon of the Holy Theotokos, he received his sight. The first monk at Pochaev saw a fiery pillar extending from earth to heaven, and in that flaming pillar he saw the Holy Theotokos. She was standing on a rock. On the spot where she stood, a spring of healing water sprang forth: even today, it heals many of the sick.

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate God's wonderful gift to Solomon (I Kings 3):

1. How the Lord appeared to Solomon in Gibeon, and asked him his desire;
2. How Solomon asked for *an understanding heart*, in order to judge the people and recognize good and evil;
3. How God gave him that which he sought, as well as that which he did not seek.

HOMILY

on the equality of the Son and the Father

The Son can do nothing of Himself but what He seeth the Father do (John 5:19).

Brethren, how are we to understand these words? In the same way as some heretics understood them--that is, that the Son is lesser and weaker than the Father? In no way. The mouths that interpreted these words of the Lord this way spoke blasphemy. We must understand these words as our Holy Fathers understood them--that the Son is equal to the Father in all things; and that, because of their equality of will, love, and wisdom, the Son can do nothing contrary to the Father's will, or contrary to the love of the Father, or contrary to the wisdom of the Father.

Thus, the Father cannot do anything contrary to the Son, and the Holy Spirit cannot do anything contrary to the Father or the Son. Everything that the Father wills and loves and thinks, is also willed, loved and thought by the Son and the Holy Spirit. Harmony unequalled; unity undivided; being inexpressible! Therefore, it is obvious that the Son can and will do *nothing of Himself*--

nothing of His own accord, nothing without harmony and unity with the power of the Father and the will of the Father. The Lord Himself further witnesses that this interpretation is true by His words: *For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will* (John 5:21). Do you see the equality of will and power? That which the Father wills, the Son wills also; that which the Father can do, the Son can also do.

Therefore, let no one separate Their Divinity, and thus bring down a curse upon himself. God cannot be divided, and one who tries to divide Divinity--and to lessen one Person and to exalt the other Person--cannot be saved.

O Most-holy Trinity, our God, Three in Persons, and One in Essence--Life, Light and Love--look down upon us, and have mercy on us.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Services this Week

❖ *Wednesday – 09.21.'22 – The Nativity of our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever- Virgin Mary – 09:30 AM Divine Liturgy*

❖ *15th Sunday after Pentecost– September 25th – 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy*

Donations September 4, 2022

Offering - \$1,095.00 Candles - \$61.00

Donations September 11, 2022

Offering - \$1,654.00 Candles - \$92.00 Dues - \$100

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

Thank you to all of you who volunteered to make Slavic Fest a success!
(Special thanks to Michael Zahurak, Maddie Zahurak and Meara Gleason!!)



NUT and APRICOT ROLLS

FOR SALE - \$12

PLEASE SEE Rose, Suzette or Dick!

The Kolo Srpski Sestara will be celebrating their Slava, the birth of the Theotokos, on Sunday, September 25th, 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 9th

The kolo will be having their annual basket party once again on Sunday, October 9th in the church hall. Doors open at noon, drawing begins at 2. Admission is \$12 and includes lunch and 26 basket chances. A limited number of tickets will be sold. Please see Kristina with any questions/for more information. Baskets/donations are accepted and can be brought to the church hall anytime now until SATURDAY, October 8th!