

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

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The Fifteen Sunday after Pentecost

(09.25.2022.)

Matthew 22:35-46

Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked Him a question, tempting Him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer Him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions. ***(KJV)***

The Sunday before the Exaltation of the Precious Cross

John 3:13-17

And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. ***(KJV)***

Two Gospels readings are prescribed for today's Divine Liturgy. The reading from St. Matthew's Gospel describes the great commandment to love God completely with the heart, mind and soul and to love thy neighbor as thyself.

Jesus Christ wants the believer to whole-heartedly love God and neighbor. The Church reads this lesson of St. Matthew's Gospel every year. The believer's love for God and for neighbor are intended to increase with each reading.

Believers are expected to grow from the time of Holy Baptism until departure from this life. Holy Apostle Paul describes the continuous growth in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians.

St. Paul wrote these words on Christian growth: “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor.3:18)

Personal change that results in complete love of God and neighbor requires giving up views and values that inhibit full love of God and full love of neighbor. The parish church is where this change is fostered and is to take place.

The Lord God is alive and present in parish churches. Christian love is learned and practiced in the parish church. Seeing the image, likeness and presence of Christ in each person is a permanent expectation in parish life.

Tears of repentance are often necessary before the tears of joy accompanying new birth in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ’s death on the Cross was in advance of joy realized in the Resurrection.

Parishes and individuals are to go through periods of growth until Christ’s glorious Second Coming. World events and changes in life encourage, spur and necessitate parishes and individuals to change and grow.

Any changes in parishes and believers are to be consistent with the beliefs and teachings of God’s Holy Church. Parishes are always to remain true to the founding consecration. Believers are to always remain true to their Holy Baptism.

The Gospel is to be preached to all peoples. (Mt .28:19-20) Apostle Paul underwent a great change in his life when He experienced Jesus on the road to Damascus. Paul went from being a persecutor of Christ to being a great apostle. (Acts 9:1-20)

If we are honest with ourselves, we are all persecutors of Christ. We sin in word, deed and thought. We live lukewarm lives in Christ. Repentance and change are always timely and beneficial for believers.

Eternal life is possible for each person because Jesus experienced death on the Cross and rose from the Tomb. Believers repenting and completely believing in the Crucified and Resurrected Christ become new in Christ.

Both Gospels readings for today intend change and growth for attentive listeners. Attentive listeners seek to love God completely and to love each person in daily life.

Loving necessitates looking beyond the externals to see Christ in each person. Loving includes the sincere willingness to forgive others holding different views. Practicing love in daily life is the way to build and not destroy relationships.

Healing, repairing and restoring relationships comes through repentance, prayer and change of heart, mind and soul. The parish church is where the heart, mind and soul are nourished and educated in Christian growth and change.

Healing occurs in relationships founded in love and forgiveness. The Church is where to practice love and forgiveness at all times. The Church is known for love and forgiveness. Love and forgiveness are the message of Christ on the Cross.

Jesus went to the Cross out of love. (Jn.3:16) Jesus forgave the persecutors who put Him on the Cross. At the time of His crucifixion Jesus said: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Lk/23:34)

Today the Church celebrates the Sunday before the Exaltation of the Precious Life-giving Cross. Now is the time for growth and change according to Jesus Christ. Today is the day for love and forgiveness to be alive in our personal lives.

The Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost. The Sunday before the Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross. September 12/25, 2022. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.
Father Rodney Torbic

The Prologue from Ochrid St Nicholai of Zhicha

1. THE EXALTATION OF THE HONORABLE CROSS

Two events in connection with the Honorable Cross of Christ are commemorated on this day: first, the finding of the Honorable Cross on Golgotha and second, the return of the Honorable Cross from Persia to Jerusalem. Visiting the Holy Land, the holy Empress Helena decided to find the Honorable Cross of Christ. An old Jewish man named Judah was the only one who knew where the Cross was located, and, constrained by the empress, he revealed that the Cross was buried under the temple of Venus that Emperor Hadrian had built on Golgotha. The empress ordered that this idolatrous temple be razed and, having dug deep below it, found three crosses. While the empress pondered on how to recognize which of these was the Cross of Christ, a funeral procession passed by. Patriarch Macarius told them to place the crosses, one by one, on the dead man. When they placed the first and second cross on the dead man, the dead man lay unchanged. When they placed the third cross on him, the dead man came back to life. By this they knew that this was the Precious and Life-giving Cross of Christ. They then placed the Cross on a sick woman, and she became well. The patriarch elevated the Cross for all the people to see, and the people sang with tears: "Lord, have mercy!" Empress Helena had a silver case made and set the Honorable Cross in it. Later, the Persian Emperor Chozroes conquered Jerusalem, enslaved many people, and took the Lord's Cross to Persia. The Cross remained in Persia for fourteen years. In the year 628 A.D. the Greek Emperor Heraclius defeated Chozroes and, with much ceremony, returned the Cross to Jerusalem. As he entered the city Emperor Heraclius carried the Cross on his back, but suddenly was unable to take another step. Patriarch Zacharias saw an angel preventing the emperor from bearing the Cross on the same path that the Lord had walked barefoot and humiliated. The patriarch communicated this vision to the emperor. The emperor removed his raiment and, in ragged attire and barefoot, took up the Cross, carried it to Golgotha, and placed it in the Church of the Resurrection, to the joy and consolation of the whole Christian world.

2. SAINT PLACILLA, THE EMPRESS

Placilla was the wife of Emperor Theodosius the Great. In mind and deed, she was a true Christian. She was especially distinguished for helping the needy and the sick. When some people told her that this was not consistent with imperial dignity, she replied: "It becomes the imperial calling to assist with money; however, in my personal efforts concerning the poor, I give to Him who deigned to give me this calling." She rested peacefully in about the year 400 A.D.

3. THE VENERABLE MARTYR MACARIUS OF THESSALONICA

Macarius was a disciple of Patriarch Niphon when the latter was laboring in stillness at Vatopedi [on Mount Athos]. Macarius longed to be martyred for Christ the Lord, and begged St. Niphon for his blessing. The clairvoyant patriarch, seeing that this was the will of God, blessed his path to martyrdom. Macarius went to Thessalonica and, in a crowd of Turks, began to speak about Christ as the One True God. The Turks beat him and threw him into prison. When they brought him to trial, Macarius cried out to them: "Oh if you only knew the truth, and were baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit!" The Turks beheaded him in 1527 A.D. At that very moment, St. Niphon saw this in the spirit and told a monk of Macarius's death by martyrdom, saying: "Know this, my child, that today your brother Macarius died a martyr's death and is borne to heaven, celebrating and rejoicing in the Lord. May we, by his prayers, be made worthy of blessedness."

4. THE VENERABLE MARIA OF TARSUS

She lived a life of total debauchery. Two monks traveling through Tarsus stayed at the inn where Maria plied her trade. When she approached the monks, they rebuked her and pushed her aside as unclean. She suddenly repented, and vowed never to sin again. The monks took her to a convent, where Maria lived a life of asceticism until old age. She was made worthy of working miracles even during her lifetime.

HYMN OF PRAISE

THE HONORABLE CROSS

Save, O God, Thy people!

Save, O Lord--

By Thine Honorable Cross, Thou dost shine upon us,

By the Cross, Thou dost lead us!

The Cross is power and a sign;

The Cross is salvation.

Save, O God, the Patriarch
And the Assembly of Serbian Bishops;
Grant them strength to serve
Thine Honorable Cross!

The Cross is power and a sign;
The Cross is salvation.

Save, O God, all those
Who are in authority;
May the Most-holy Cross protect them
From dark destruction!
The Cross is power and a sign;
The Cross is salvation.

Save, O God, all people
Who pray to Thee.
By Thy Cross, may they quickly overcome
Every difficulty.
The Cross is power and a sign;
The Cross is salvation!

REFLECTION

Just as a candle is lighted from another candle, so also a good work is born from a good work. A patrician wanted to donate a gold cross to a church. He summoned a young but experienced goldsmith, gave him a great deal of gold that he weighed out, and told him to fashion whatever sort of cross he desired. The poor goldsmith, seeing what a large donation this patrician was making for the sake of his soul, became inflamed with love for God in his own heart, and decided that he would add his own ten pieces of gold to the amount of the patrician's gold. When the cross was completed, the patrician weighed it, and discovered that it was heavier than the gold that he had given to the young man. He immediately began to scold the young man as a thief, suspecting that he had taken some of the gold and replaced it with some other heavy metal. When the young man saw the patrician so angry, he confessed his deed. He said: "I added from my gold, as the widow gave two mites, in order to receive Christ's reward with you." Hearing this, the patrician's heart was touched, and he said to the honorable young man: "From this day, I take you as my son, and the heir of all my goods."

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the transgression of Jeroboam and the punishment of God (I Kings 12, 13):

1. How Jeroboam cast two golden calves and ordered the people to worship them as gods;
2. How the prophet declared God's displeasure to Jeroboam, and miraculously broke the altar before the idols;
3. How Jeroboam raised his hand against the prophet, but his hand withered, and only after the prayers of the prophet was it made whole again.

HOMILY

on the truthfulness of Christ's witness

Though I bear record of Myself, yet My record is true (John 8:14).

The light witnesses truthfully when it witnesses to the existence of the sun, and it does not lie. In the same way, the Lord Jesus witnesses truthfully to all that He testifies. He descended among men as a heavenly witness, to affirm the existence of the Triune God, the existence of the angelic world and of men's souls, the love of God for men, God's providence toward men, the power of justice over injustice, the might of truth over falsehood, the blessed immortality of the righteous and the eternal torment of the sinners, the resurrection from the dead, the Judgment of God and many other things that men--under the veil of sin--only felt as a faint premonition, but did not know of or strongly believe in. Most of all, He witnessed that He is the Son of the Living God, equal to His Father in Essence, power and love, and equal to the Holy Spirit of God. For the Witness had to witness first to Himself, so that by His witnessing to other mysteries, He could be believed. From the point of view of a pure and immutable truth, every witness of Christ is true; but from the point of view of the darkened Jews, it was not true. For God, and the angels of God, and the righteous ones, and for eternity, and for all time--His witnessing is true, and that is why He also said: *My record is true*. But for the darkened minds of the hardened sinners, this witness is not true. That is why He said to the Jews earlier: *If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true* (John 5:31). In other words; "It is not true for you Jews, but in essence it is true in and of itself."

O Most-blessed Lord Jesus, Son of the Living God and our only Savior, deliver us from the weakness of a sinful mind, and the wickedness of a sinful heart. Illumine us with the light of Thy words, eternally true.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Services this Week

- ❖ ***Tuesday – 09.27. '22 – The Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross – 09:30 AM Divine Liturgy***
- ❖ ***Friday 09.30. '22 – Holy Martyrs Faith, Hope and Love with their mother Sophia - 09:30 AM Divine Liturgy***
- ❖ ***16th Sunday after Pentecost – October 2nd – 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy***

Donations September 18, 2022

Offering - \$1,377.00 Candles - \$57.00 Dues - \$100

Building Fund

In Memory of Sam Vuckovich from Lori Vuckovich - \$40

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

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, today, 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!

CEVAP LUNCHEON!!!

Sunday October 16th

Following Divine Liturgy