

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

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Rev. Presbyter Dragan Vukovic

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The Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

(10.16.2022.)

Luke 5:1-11

And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon Him to hear the word of God, He stood by the lake of Gennesaret, And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And He entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And He sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now when He had left speaking, He said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto Him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him (*KJV*)

In the present Gospel Peter observed the abundance of fish caught when they listened to Jesus to try again. Peter realized and confessed his own sinfulness. Peter and those with him had caught no fish prior to listening to Jesus.

Observers examining themselves and carefully listening to Jesus Christ will feel personal sinfulness as did Simon Peter. The loving Jesus Christ did not reject Peter in his sinfulness.

Jesus welcomed the confessed sinner Peter and transformed Peter into a fisher of men. Peter, James and John became Holy Apostles. The present Gospel offers hope and new beginnings in life.

The Lord Jesus Christ has the power to enlist sinners and transform them into followers of Christ. The Holy Apostle Paul was a known persecutor of Christ. Paul was transformed and became a most well-known Apostle. (Acts 9:1-15)

Attentive listeners and active participants in the Divine services of the Church have their lives changed and transformed by Christ. The Epistle to the Hebrews states: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” (Heb.13:8)

The Church is where sinners can enter with their sinfulness and repent. The Church welcomes persons desiring the new life in Christ. Jesus Christ welcomes sinners wanting to put sinfulness behind and to follow Him.

Just as Peter, James and John began anew in Christ, individuals coming into the Church have the opportunity to begin anew and put sin behind. Beginning anew in Christ is encouraged throughout life.

Every person, even the well-motivated, commits sins and offenses against God. Beginning anew is possible as long as there is life in the body and the mind is well-functioning.

Peter, James and John are convincing and lasting witnesses to the value of beginning anew in Christ. Readers of the New Testament learn more about their lives in Christ as Holy Apostles.

The present Gospel is proclaimed in the Church to benefit attentive listeners each year. The Church offers the nourishment enabling transformation to occur within believers.

The Divine Liturgy and other Divine services of the Church offer opportunities for change to active participants. God wants believers to be more than lukewarm in faith. (Rev.3:16)

Persons taking the Divine services of the Church and the teachings of the Church to heart have their lives changed for the better. We know from the Gospel with God all things are possible. (Mk.10:27)

The Holy Mysteries and teachings of the Church create the conditions for transformation in Christ and for seeking eternal life. The Kingdom of God is celebrated in the Divine Liturgy and Holy Mysteries of the Church.

The Divine services offer enriching experiences that reach to the depths of the heart, mind and soul. A person entering into the services with an open heart, mind and soul comes to know the Living, Loving and Forgiving God.

When sinfulness is brought to the Church in an act of repentance, the sins are cleansed by the Forgiving and Loving Christ. Repentant believers become “new” in God’s Holy Church.

Believers partaking of the Precious Body and Blood of Christ solidifies their unity with Christ. The Precious Body and Blood of Christ move through the receiving believer and unity with Christ takes place.

Each Divine Liturgy is a new experience. Each Divine Liturgy is a continuation of the Divine Banquet inaugurated by Christ with His Holy Apostles.

The Divine Liturgy is experienced with depth of heart, mind and soul.

The Divine Liturgy enriches not only the active participants. The effects of the Divine Liturgy reach into the community. Believers changed in the Divine Liturgy have an impact on the people met in daily life.

Communities benefit from each celebration of the Divine Liturgy in a parish church. Communities are enriched and improved by the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

The Divine Liturgy is a defense against sin and corruption permeating the world. Hope, life and purity arise from the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

Today's Gospel for the Eighteenth Sunday offers new life, hope and purity.

The Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost. Holy Hieromartyr Dioysius the Areopagite. October 3/16, 2022. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.

Father Rodney Torbic

The Prologue from Ochrid St Nicholai of Zhicha

1. THE HOLY MARTYRS SERGIUS AND BACCHUS

These holy and wonderful martyrs and heroes of the Christian Faith were at first noblemen at the court of Emperor Maximian. The emperor himself esteemed them greatly because of their courage, wisdom and fidelity. But when the emperor heard that his two noblemen were Christians, his love for them turned into rage. Once, when there was a great sacrificial offering to idols, the emperor demanded that Sergius and Bacchus offer sacrifices with him, but they openly refused to obey the emperor in this. Beside himself with rage, the emperor commanded that their military garments, rings and emblems be stripped from them and that they be dressed in women's clothing. He then placed iron hoops around their necks and paraded them through the streets of the city of Rome, to be mocked by everyone. Afterward, he sent them to Antiochus, his deputy in Asia, for torture. Antiochus had risen to his position with Sergius and Bacchus's help, as they had at one time recommended him to the emperor. When Antiochus implored them to deny Christ and save themselves from dishonorable suffering and death, these saints replied: "Both honor and dishonor, both life and death--all are the same to him who seeks the Heavenly Kingdom." Antiochus cast Sergius into prison and ordered that Bacchus be tortured first. His minions took turns beating the holy Bacchus until his whole body was broken. Bacchus's holy soul departed his broken and bloodied body, and in the hands of angels was borne to the Lord. St. Bacchus suffered in the town of Barbalissos. Then St. Sergius was led out and shod in iron shoes with inward-protruding nails. He was driven, on foot, to the town of Rozapha, in Syria, and was beheaded there with the sword. His soul went to Paradise where, together with his friend Bacchus, he received a crown of immortal glory from Christ, his King and Lord. These two wondrous knights of the Christian Faith suffered in about the year 303 A.D.

2. THE HOLY MARTYR POLYCHRONIUS

Polychronius was born in the district of Gamphanitus, of peasant parents. As a young man, he worked as a day-laborer in the vineyard of a certain Constantinopolitan. But even as a day-laborer Polychronius devoted himself to the ascetic life of prayer and fasting day and night. Seeing his life, angelic in its purity and abstinence, the vintner was amazed, and gave him much more money than he earned. St. Polychronius took the money and built a church. At the time of the Nicaean Council (325 A.D.), Polychronius was a church reader. He showed such zeal in the defense of Orthodoxy against the Arians that he was ordained a priest. Later, these evil heretics sought revenge, and attacked St. Polychronius inside the church itself, and chopped him into

pieces. Thus, this great defender of the truth and purity of Orthodoxy suffered and received a wreath of glory from his Most-glorious Lord.*)

*) In the Greek Synaxarion, the Ninety-nine Ascetics of Crete are also commemorated on this day. It is said that the hundredth one never joined them, which is interpreted that the hundredth one was Christ the Lord Himself, their head. The most renowned among them was St. John, a man of great prayer and a miracle-worker. He prayed on his knees so much that he was finally unable to stand on his feet, but walked on his knees. Seeing him walking thus, a certain shepherd thought that he was some kind of beast and shot him with an arrow. In a great miracle, all ninety-nine ascetics breathed their last that same day. The time of their asceticism is not known.

HYMN OF PRAISE

THE HOLY MARTYRS SERGIUS AND BACCHUS

The royal men, Sergius and Bacchus
Served the King, but not the earthly one--
Rather, Jesus, the Immortal King.
The earthly king mocked the saints
And removed the belts from their waists,
But the Lord girded them with strength.
The emperor removed their noblemen's togas,
But the Savior clothed them more beautifully
In an incorrupt garment of immortality;
The emperor removed their rings from their right hands,
But the Lord gave them far more glorious ones,
In betrothing their souls to Himself.
The emperor banished them from his court,
But God welcomed them into the heavenly courts.
The earth tortured these knights of Christ,
The earth tortured them, but heaven gave them repose.
Decay rejects purity,
Evil rejects goodness,
But Saints Bacchus and Sergius
Returned all earthliness to the earth,
And gave their holy souls over to God!
Though exiled from the earthly kingdom,
They illumine the earth even now;
By their suffering, they conquered malice;
By their death for the Cross, they are glorified.
As victors over the powers of darkness,

They show us the path to victory.

REFLECTION

A vision of St. Andrew the Fool-for-Christ: Once, St. Andrew was sitting with his disciple Epiphanius, talking about the salvation of the soul. Just then, a demon approached Epiphanius and began setting traps to distract his thoughts, but did not dare to approach Andrew. Andrew cried out: "Depart from here, impure adversary!" The devil drew back and replied maliciously: "You are my adversary, such as no other in all of Constantinople!" Andrew did not drive him away immediately, but permitted him to speak. And the devil began: "I feel that the time is coming when my work will be finished. At that time, men will be worse than I, as children will be even more wicked than adults. Then I will rest and will not teach men anything anymore, since they themselves will carry out my will in everything." Andrew asked him: "In what sins do your kind rejoice the most?" The devil replied: "The service of idols, slander, malice against one's neighbor, the sodomite sin, drunkenness and avarice--in this we rejoice the most." Andrew further asked him: "And how do you tolerate it when someone who first served you rejects you and your works?" The devil replied: "You know that better than I do; we find it difficult to tolerate, but we are comforted by this: we will probably bring them back to us--for many who have rejected us and turned to God have come back to us again." After the evil spirit had said this and much more, St. Andrew breathed on him and he disappeared.

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the righteousness of King Josiah, and God's reward to him (II Chronicles 34):

1. How King Josiah rooted out the idols, and did all that which is good in the sight of the Lord;
2. How God's blessing was poured out upon him and his people during his long reign.

HOMILY

on children and their praise of the Lord

Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast ordained strength, because of Thine enemies (Psalm 8:2).

At the glorious Entry of the Lord Jesus into Jerusalem, and even in the Temple itself, the children cried out: *Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!* (Matthew 21:9). It seems that nothing irritated the Jewish elders so much as this praising of Jesus by young children. *Hearest thou what these say?* (Matthew 21:16), they asked Him maliciously. And Jesus answered them meekly: *Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?* (Matthew 21:16). Thus, it is as clear as day that these prophetic words of David pertain to the wonder that occurred at the Entry of the Lord Jesus Christ into Jerusalem: this wondrous praising of the Lord by little children. It is obvious that, as this event was prophesied, so it was literally fulfilled. It is also obvious from this that the Lord Himself was then referring to that prophecy of King David: *Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise.* There can be no doubt that it was a great wonder, inspired by the Spirit of God and carried out by the power and will of God. While the princes, scribes, elders and priests were not able to recognize Christ the Lord, the little children both

recognized and proclaimed Him! In truth, this is a miracle, unique throughout the Old and New Testaments; and no less of a miracle than the resurrection of the dead. In fact, during the first miracle [Christ's Entry into Jerusalem] and during the second [Christ's Resurrection], the same power of God was acting--the same Spirit and the same providence of God. And the prophet wanted especially to emphasize this power and majestic glory of God by the event with the little children, which event he places parallel with the wonders of the starry universe, created by the same power of God. *When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained* (Psalm 8:3).

Besides this, among those little children should be numbered the apostles themselves--and many saints, ascetics, martyrs for Christ, and virgins--thousands, thousands and thousands of those who, with innocence and open hearts, recognized Christ as the Son of God and their Savior, who embraced Him with wholehearted love and endured difficult suffering for Him. Why, exactly, did the Lord ordain praise for Himself from their mouths, and not from the mouths of nobles, philosophers and rhetoricians? He accepted their praise because of their meekness, and rejected the others because of their pride; for the proud are the greatest enemies of God. That is why Christ miraculously loosed the tongues of children, simple fisherman and peasants--to proclaim the truth contrary to their enemies, that is, the proud and empty princes and scribes of the Jews.

O Lord Most-powerful, Almighty God; loose our tongues also, that with strong faith and childlike joy we too may proclaim Thine endless glory.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Services this Week

- ❖ *Wednesday – 10.19. '22 – Holy Apostol Thomas – 09:30 AM - Divine Liturgy*
- ❖ *Thursday – 10.20. '22. – Holy Martyrs Sergius and Bacchus in Syria – 09:30 AM Divine Liturgy*
- ❖ *Friday – 10.21. '22 – PARACLESIS - THE OFFICE OF SUPPLICATION TO SAINT NECTARIOS -05:00 PM – Confession*
- ❖ *19th Sunday after Pentecost– October 23th – 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy*

Donations October 9, 2022

Offering - \$1,513.00 Candles - \$39.00 Dues - \$100.00

Building Fund

In Memory of Beverly Stipanovich

Sylvester Gjurich - \$25,00, Lazo & Debbie Gjurich - \$25.00

Tony & Linda Fredihoff - \$20.00

Large Candles

In Memory of Julie Lambrinos from Dan & Dyne Tomak

In Memory of Steve & Stella Baich from Kathy & Gerry Szmyd

In Memory of Connie Bartis from Rick Kondas

In Memory of Father, Mike Tumbas from Milica Knepp

In Memory of Linda Zedlar Griffiths from Milica Knepp

In Memory of Christine and Charles from Olga Bulich

FISH FRY

THIS FRIDAY OCTOBER 21, 2022

Please see Donna Zimmerman or Suzette if you can help!

NUT and APRICOT ROLLS

FOR SALE - \$10

Anyone interested in running for and/or remaining on the St Nicholas Church Council for 2023 must submit their name and intent in writing to a member of the nominating committee

(Carole McAllister, Joseph Golden and Helene Gleason) You may also leave this information in the Candle Room to the attention of the Committee.

CEVAPI LUNCHEON!!!

TODAY - Sunday October 16th

Following Divine Liturgy

VISIT OUR WEBSITE!!!!

<https://stnicholasjohnstown.org>

Thanks Brady (Malichi) Doyle for the Great update!