

**Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church**  
*971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905*  
Rev. Presbyter Dragan Vukovic  
**(814) 244-4063**

**The Third Sunday after Pentecost**  
**(07.14.2024.)**

**Matthew 6:22-33**

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. **(KJV)**

Today's Gospel provides the firmest foundation and direction for daily life. Believers are to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. All thoughts and daily efforts are to be consistent with this goal.

Thoughts and efforts are to be measured against the goals of seeking God's Kingdom and His righteousness. Thoughts or efforts inconsistent with these goals are to be rejected.

God gives believers hearts, minds and souls requiring care and nourishment. The goals chosen and pursued in life determine if the heart, mind and soul are nourished and given care.

The Gospel assures believers the needs of life will be met when God's Kingdom and righteousness are life's foremost interest. The Gospel uses the birds of the air and the lilies of the field as examples of God's care and wonders.

Placing faith in God is essential for believers. The present Gospel emphasizes the importance of personal faith in God. The Church affirms and proclaims the importance of faith. Church history witnesses to the enduring lessons of faith.

The Gospel nourishes personal faith. The known words of Jesus Christ exist in the Gospel and have life-changing power. The words of Jesus Christ nourish and strengthen attentive believers.

The Gospel penetrates believers' hearts, minds and souls. Believers gathering in worship in the Church strengthen each other's faith. Partaking of Christ's Body and Blood empowers believers for life's journey to the Kingdom.

The length of life's journey is uncertain for each person. The Psalmist indicates that earthly life expectancy generally is 70 to 80 years (Ps. 89/90:10) Some people live much longer. Some depart this life well before the age of 70.

The present Gospel puts life in perspective for believers. The believer's eye is to focus on the Lord God. Care of the soul is of utmost importance. Where the believer will spend eternity is determined by life's goals and efforts.

Believers choose the way to live daily. Following the Lord God is a complete and free choice. God helps believers through the uncertain and difficult periods of life when faith remains firm.

When faith is challenged by unexpected events in life, the present Gospel serves as a beacon of light and hope. The Light of Christ is always present. Hope in Jesus Christ always is the wisest choice.

Personal faith will be challenged and tested when difficult situations arise in life strongly affecting the heart, mind and soul. God is always present and within immediate reach.

Believers looking carefully with believing eyes and attentive ears will see and experience God's reassuring presence. The present Gospel provides the certainty of God's loving care.

When the unexpected occurs, the present Gospel is firmly present. to remind believers to look for and listen to the loving, caring God. God is the Light in the darkest moments of life.

God is Love and Joy even in moments of great suffering. Saints and martyrs witnessed to Jesus Christ in joy when being tortured. Christ's love fills and heals hurting hearts, minds and souls.

When the heart, mind and soul experience deep hurt, direct prayer to God opens the path to healing, hope and renewal. The Kingdom of God stands formidably against all the obstacles in life.

In life's darkest hours, the Kingdom of God is the Light summoning believers \to press-on in life. Troubled waters in life are smoothed by the Healing Jesus Christ.

Hunger in the soul is completely nourished only by the Lord Jesus Christ. Today's Gospel is proclaimed each year for believers. Believers learn and relearn each year to place full and complete trust in the living, loving God.

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**The Third Sunday after Pentecost. The Holy Wonderworker Unmercenarys Gosmas and Damian, Martyrs. June 30/July 14, 2024. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic**

# On the Essence of Icons by St. Photios



St. Photios, Patriarch of Constantinople, preached a sermon on the day the icon of the Theotokos was dedicated in Hagia Sophia, 29 March 867. In the notes introducing the English translation of the sermon, we find this comment:

*“In the eyes of Photius, painting is the most direct form of instruction, for a picture that is in agreement with religious truth contains the eidos, or essence, of the prototype, which is in turn apprehended by the faculty of sight and indelibly imprinted upon the mind. A painter is guided by divine inspiration, so that his work is not merely mimetic, but contains an actual share of the prototype. One would look in vain for a better expression of Byzantine art theory.”* (Cyril Mango, THE HOMILIES OF PHOTIUS PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE, pp 282-283)

For the Byzantine Christians, the icon was even more powerful/truthful than the written texts because the icon shares in the prototype. It is hard for us to imagine a time when the presuppositions and perspective of the people are different than our own. There was a time when people heard the phrase, “the word of God”, it was not the Bible that came to mind, instead they would have thought, Jesus Christ.

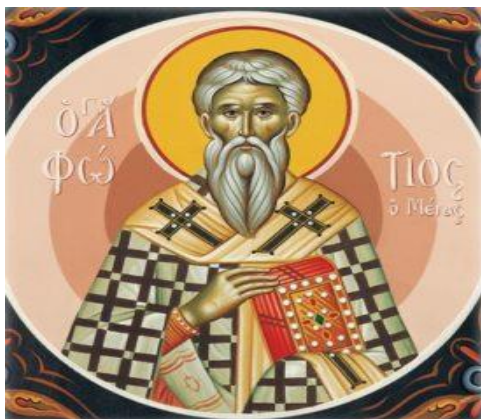


Living in the literary culture of the 21st Century, and being shaped by the literary tradition of recent centuries, it is hard to imagine that at one time Christians, like Photius, thought the pictured icon to be “truer” than the written text – a more certain witness to the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Our modern penchant for scholarship has increased this idolization of the text, which, when combined with cultural literalism, proves to be deadly, as St. Paul says. Just read 2 Corinthians 3 in the light of Photius’ idea that the painted text shares in the prototype. Christian don’t have to rely only on a printed text, we have icons – we are icons of God, created in God’s image!

*“You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on your hearts, to be known and read by all men; and you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. . . . God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life.” – 2 Corinthians 3*

St. Paul says the Christian, the disciple is the true scripture because God’s Holy Spirit has written on our hearts. In the beginning, humans were created in God’s image and likeness – we were created in the image and likeness of the Word of God. Now God’s spirit writes on our heart, making us visible images of the Word.

*“Now if the dispensation of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such splendor that the Israelites could not look at Moses’ face because of its brightness, fading as this was, will not the dispensation of the Spirit be attended with greater splendor? . . . Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not see the end of the fading splendor. But their minds were hardened; for to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds; but when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”*



When we turn to the Lord . . . which we can really do when we turn to look at an icon, we see the splendor of God. Most miraculous of all is that we can look upon Christ in an icon and we do not have to put on a veil, as Moses did to protect the Israelites from the glory of God shining forth in his face. And, we are changed by looking at the icon of Christ into His likeness. This is how the icon serves a better purpose than the scriptures themselves.

## Services this Week

- **4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
(07.21.2024.)**
  - **Holy Greatmartyr Procopius  
Gaesarea**
  - *Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30  
AM*

**Donations July 7, 2024**

**Offering - \$ 1,234.00 Candles - \$51.00**

**Donations**

**In Honor of George and Kathleen McDowell's Anniversary  
\$100 from Dianna Dunnington**

**Large Candles**

**For Health of Olga Lucas from Sharon & Jim Urban  
(2) IMO Devich & Lovrich Families from Tom & Carole McAllister  
IMO Christine Bulich, Louis & Mary Daley from Olga Bulich  
IMO Charles Bulich from Olga Bulich  
IMO of Bartis & Pavich Families from Joe Bartis**

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**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Band of Brothers -17 - 20<sup>th</sup>  
(Please see Suzette if you are interested in working)**

*JOIN US FOR*



**SATURDAY, AUGUST 10<sup>TH</sup> 2024**

**NOON TO 6:00 PM**

**ORCHESTRA SRPSKI SINOVI**



**Johnstown Slavic Festival - September 20-21<sup>st</sup>**