

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

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The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

(07.17.2022)

Matthew 8:28-9:1

And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told everything, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts. And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city. (KJV)

In the current Gospel, two individuals possessed by the devil blocked the passage way for travelers. Often the devil or those possessed by the devil block certain roadways in life.

Blocked roadways may inhibit those being blocked from a desired job, a promotion or access to healthcare or other needed services. The situation in the Gospel changed dramatically for the better when the Jesus Christ took action.

The passage way was opened when the Lord Jesus Christ sent the devils into the herd of swine and they perished in the sea. The Gospel creates hope for individuals seeking to move forward beyond inhibiting barriers in life.

The Lord Jesus Christ opens the pathways for Christian development. The possibility for joy in life becomes possible through Jesus Christ. Taking the Gospel message seriously changes daily life.

Love for Jesus Christ increases the desire to know more about Christ and living in Christ. Christ's victory over devil-possessed individuals in the current Gospel serves as reassurance to believers.

Living in Christ involves putting faith in action. To move forward in life, believers are required to confront road blocks that appear unexpectedly. All challenges in Christ are best addressed through turning to Christ.

Jesus Christ does not disappoint those turning to Him in faith. Jesus Christ opens passage ways for growth. The present Gospel serves as lesson to strengthen personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Doubts will arise in life. Trepidation may arise from time to time. Reassurance and certainty exist with the Lord Jesus Christ. Staying focused on Christ and united with Christ enables believers to go forth in confidence.

In today's world many individuals face personal demons needing to be addressed and conquered for peace to occur. Peace is found in Christ. Personal demons are conquered in and through Christ.

The Church offers many prayers to address personal demons. The Church offers teachings on the value of prayer, fasting and almsgiving to address the demons in life.

The Divine services of the Church nourish, enrich and guide the believer from Holy Baptism until departure from this life. The journey from baptism until departure from this life will entail facing many demons.

When a person gives in to the terror of demons, growth in life is impeded. Growth in life stops when demons prevail. Deterioration in life occurs when the demons are in control.

When life is controlled by Jesus Christ, obstacles to growth are overcome. The hunger in the soul is thoroughly addressed when Christ is primary in life. The Gospel provides a life's lesson to be incorporated in daily life.

Jesus Christ is readily available when demons appear and threaten to block personal growth. Praying directly to Jesus Christ and seeking intercession from the Mother of God and the saints makes improvement completely possible.

The Holy Apostle Paul made clear the nearness of the Lord. He said: "He be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:27-28.) The Apostle's words are reassuring of the nearness of the Lord.

The best way to verify God's presence is to reach out to the Lord in faith. Verification of the Lord's presence occurs in the Divine services of the Church. God is revealed in daily life, each day of life, when believers are attentive.

Hope and confidence in the Lord are bolstered when believers take the Gospel seriously and apply the Gospel to daily life. The Gospel is always relevant. God is always relevant and timely.

Life and the Church are to be inseparable. Each breath in life is unification with the Lord God. Each heartbeat is unification with the Lord. Each image viewed by the eyes verifies the presence of the Lord.

Thank God for the presence of the Lord to open the block roadways of life. Thank God for the inherit power to overcome the demons of life. Thank God for the peace derived from God's overthrow of demons in life.

Take time today to look for the presence of God in each moment of life. Take time to give thanks to God for the love for each person. Take time to pray life will be lived in ways pleasing to God.

The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost. St. Andrew, Archbishop of Crete. Hieromartyr Sava of Upper Karlovac. July 4/July 17, 2022. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.
Father Rodney Torbic

WITHOUT WHICH THE WORLD CANNOT EXIST A Talk On the Divine Liturgy



With God's help, brothers and sisters, we will begin to gradually read and analyze the text of the Divine Liturgy. Why did I choose the Liturgy as the topic of our talk? Because the Church calls all of us to daily participation in the great Sacrament that is celebrated during the Divine Liturgy, to penetrate into the deep meaning of this very sacred rite. Undoubtedly, we have to have a good understanding of everything we

hear and see in the Divine services we participate in; we should know how the Divine Liturgy is celebrated.

The Fathers of the Church say that the world will exist as long as the Divine Liturgy is being served. And as the Liturgy is the greatest event in the life of the whole world, so our participation in the Divine Liturgy can be called the greatest event of our life. When I say “participation,” I don’t mean just standing in church, listening, watching, observing what’s happening at the service. No, I’m talking about our real participation in the central event of the Liturgy—communing of the Holy Body and Blood of Christ.

It’s inconceivable to consider someone a Christian who doesn’t commune of the Holy Body and Blood. There is even a rule that if a Christian doesn’t go to Liturgy for three Sundays, he should be cut off from the body of the Church, and only after he repents is he accepted back into the bosom of the Church. Why did the Church make such a rule? Why is it so important to commune? By communing, we become one with Christ. From our forefathers we have inherited all the infirmity of fallen human nature. Note that we have inherited not the guilt of the sin committed by Adam so many thousands of years ago, but the infirmity of the nature distorted by sin—the consequences of the Fall of our forefathers: passionateness, the mixture with sin, the darkening of the mind, the loss of the unceasing remembrance of God. Now we must become children of the New Adam—Christ. This is achieved through our Baptism and our continued participation in the Sacrament of the Divine Eucharist. However, to participate in the Eucharist, we have to prepare in a certain way. We cannot take Communion if there are any obstacles to it, such as unconfessed sins or malicious and hostile behavior towards others.

In order to commune of the Holy Mysteries, we must be present at Liturgy (at least at Liturgy, not to mention the other services). And we must be present not as spectators or just listeners, but as participants in the service; as participants in the event of the appearance of Christ. We become partakers of grace, which fills the church during the Liturgy. If we could see with the eyes of our souls how much grace fills the church during the celebration of the Liturgy, we would run to church; nothing would prevent us from the attending the services.

So, let us now start reading the text of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.

The Liturgy begins with the deacon's exclamation: "**Bless, Master.**" On behalf of all the assembled people, the deacon prompts the priest to begin serving the Divine Liturgy.

The priest begins with the exclamation: "**Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.**" In other words, may the Kingdom of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit be glorified now and always and unto endless ages.

The Divine Liturgy is celebrated outside of time and space, leading us into a different reality. It leads us directly to God the Father. Therefore, we begin this service by blessing and glorifying the Kingdom of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit—the Kingdom of the Holy Trinity.

What can man say to God? What can he offer Him? Nothing. Of all that we have, nothing is our own. And God does not need anything of ours. What can you bring to God? A candle? A lampada? Prospora? Incense? God needs none of this. Everything we do is not really for God, but for ourselves. When we build a church, paint it with frescoes, paint icons, celebrate the Liturgy, we do this not for God, but for ourselves, because it's not God but we ourselves who need to have churches for prayer, to venerate the holy icons.

There is, however, one single thing we can bring to God, although He doesn't need it either. What is it? The disposition of our soul to glorify Him, to thank Him, to bless His name for all ages, according to the Psalmist: *I will bless Thy name for ever and ever* (Ps. 144:1). There is nothing greater for man than to bless the name of God. Being free, man has, unfortunately, the tragic opportunity to not only not bless the name of God, but to blaspheme His name. Everything depends on the human will, on what man chooses for himself.

God created us out of His infinite love, desiring for us to enjoy His love. And how can we enjoy His love? By glorifying His holy name. This is a great privilege that God has given us. It's not for nothing that the Divine Liturgy is also called the Divine Eucharist, meaning, in translation from the Greek, "thanksgiving." We can say we have the correct attitude towards God when we not only pray to Him for His mercy upon us, seeing ourselves in the depths of evil, but when we also glorify and thank our Creator. The unceasing praise of the name of God is what truly frees us from the power of sin, gradually leading us to perfection, serving as an expression of our spiritual maturity.

Praising God is especially important for people today, when mankind is suffering from the scourge of despondency and neuropathy. We're all very nervous, screaming over nothing: "Don't touch me!" "Leave me alone!" I want you to know that even scholars today have proven the following spiritual truth. If a man learns to constantly repeat: "Glory to Thee, O God! Glory to Thee, O God!", the life of such a man radically changes, even if he has a thousand different problems, troubles, and misfortunes. The phrase, "Glory to Thee, O God!" works on the soul like a healing balm, transforming the bitterness and vinegar that fills our soul into an unspeakable sweetness. The vinegar is transformed into sweet wine. And vice versa: grumbling, discontent, despondency, and melancholy, when we begin to say: "Oh, how terrible everything is for me. I can't do it anymore. I don't have the strength anymore. It's better to die than to live this way...", leads to the fact that, even if there is a little sweet wine in our soul, it will very soon turn into vinegar. Therefore, it's of great importance for man to be able to praise God.

The Church typikon prescribes for the Divine Liturgy to be served standing up—during the Liturgy, both the priest and the congregation stand upright. We don't prostrate to the ground, as in other religions, but stand up straight and gaze upon God the Father face-to-face, like children. God wants us to be His children, not His slaves; therefore we pray standing during the Liturgy, bending our knees only at certain exceptional points in the service.

We glorify God, and He responds to our praise with His grace.

I repeat that we Christians have the greatest privilege to bless the name of God, to bless the Kingdom of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Such praise takes us out of the element of this world and leads us to another reality—the reality of God.

"Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Why does it speak of the Kingdom, and why is God called King? Because in antiquity, when a king ruled in a city, he ruled over everything that was in it. Everything in the city belonged to him, and all the inhabitants were his subjects. So when Christ reigns in our souls, then everything we have—mind, heart, body, our entire being—belongs to Him. Everything is sanctified when God reigns in the soul of man. There is nothing and there should be nothing in my life that would be outside the gates of the Kingdom of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We must carefully ensure that everything in our lives, from beginning to end, is illuminated by

the light of this Kingdom. Our conscience should bear witness that Christ reigns over us, that we are in His Kingdom.

I remember one incident from our monastic life. Our ever-memorable elder, [Fr. Joseph of Vatopedi](#), told us that in his time as a novice under St. Joseph the Hesychast, every evening, when the brothers dispersed to their cells to do their evening rule, he would ask himself: “What I thought, said, and did today—was it sealed with the blessing of God? Do I bear the blessing of my Elder? Have I concealed anything from the Elder, even if involuntarily?” And if his conscience testified that he had concealed nothing from the Elder, that he had done everything with the Elder’s blessing, then he could calmly begin to pray. But if his conscience reproached him for some act of self-will, then he would immediately go and tell the Elder everything, so nothing would prevent grace from coming to him during his prayer rule. I must say that in general, all the Fathers of the Church were extremely attentive and strict with regards to purity of conscience.

I’ll tell you two stories from the life of one great contemporary ascetic, who was still little-known then because he didn’t receive any visitors. Only a few monks knew him, including our brotherhood, because he was a spiritual brother of our Elder. I’m talking about [St. Ephraim of Katounakia](#), that great spiritual giant, known for his especially strict preservation of conscience. He really was incredibly strict with his conscience. He didn’t accept even the slightest compromise with it; he didn’t allow himself to deviate from the law of conscience in the slightest; he observed it in both spirit and in letter. And for this he was granted abundant grace from God.

One day Fr. Ephraim came from Katounakia to New Skete where we lived. He spoke with our Elder, and before leaving, he wanted to write something down. Our Elder gave him a pen. It was an ordinary ballpoint pen—not some fancy Parker pen, but an ordinary Bic. At that time, ballpoint pens were just coming into widespread use. Fr. Ephraim wrote his note, and giving the pen back, said: “Fr. Joseph, what a wonderful pen you have!” And our Elder immediately replied: “Take it, Father. I have another one. And when I go into the world on business, I can buy another one.” (I should add that Fr. Ephraim never went into the world.) Fr. Ephraim took the pen, said goodbye to us, and went back to his place in Katounakia. It was already getting dark when he left. It was a considerable distance from New Skete to Katounakia, and the road was uphill. The path was not some pleasant walk along the shore, but ascents and descents along mountain trails. With good weather and a quick pace, the road took at least an hour and a half or two hours.

Night fell. We were doing our evening rule according to our custom, on the prayer rope. Somewhere around midnight there was a knock at the door of our kallyva. Who could be wandering around at that hour? We opened the door, and there on the threshold stood Fr. Ephraim. He came in and said, turning to our Elder:

“Fr. Joseph, take this pen back. I don’t want to have it.”

“What happened?”

“Please, take it back. I took it without a blessing. And since I acted according to self-will, now I can’t serve the Liturgy. I sense that there’s an obstacle to serving.”

He convinced Fr. Joseph to take the pen back. See, Fr. Ephraim came to see us, then left for Katounakia, then returned to us, and then went back to Katounakia. Think about how much time he spent on the road. Practically all night. Someone else in his position could have said: “Well, whatever. I’ll return the pen tomorrow. It’s no big deal if I have it in the kallyva for a night. I’m not going to use it.”

However, Fr. Ephraim couldn’t do that—he felt that his connection with Divine grace in his soul had been interrupted because he allowed himself to do something that was, in his opinion, self-indulgence, self-will. He explained to Fr. Joseph that he hadn’t gotten a blessing from his Elder to take the pen. However, at that time, his Elder, Fr. Nicephoros, was already sick with Alzheimer’s. Fr. Ephraim was a perfect novice, which made him a great saint of our time.

Another time, Fr. Ephraim went down to the pier from Karoulia to send a letter. When a boat pulled up to the dock, Fr. Ephraim jumped in. The boatman was talking with another monk just then and didn’t notice him. Fr. Ephraim gave the letter to one of the passengers, but before he could get out of the boat, the boatman had already pushed off from the dock. “Blessed one, let me get out,” asked Fr. Ephraim. The boatman was a layman, a simple man, blunt, and prone to flashes of anger. He got angry at Fr. Ephraim that he had to turn back to the shore, and started shouting and swearing at him. When Fr. Ephraim returned to his cell in Katounakia, his conscience started to reproach him for having upset the boatman. “I grieved him and tempted him. How can I serve the Liturgy now?” he thought. And in the middle of the night, he headed from Katounakia to St. Anne’s Skete, where the boatman lived. The road in this place is a dangerous descent, scary to even think about. Then on the way back, he had to climb up, too. Nevertheless, Fr. Ephraim reached the boatman’s place and prostrated to him:

“Forgive me. I upset you this morning.”

With these examples, I want to show that God’s people always want one thing—that God would be King over everything they do in their life, over their very being. They don’t tolerate anything in their life being outside the gates of the Kingdom of God. And we, living in the world, must be especially attentive to this. Sometimes I get the impression that for many of us, the soul seems to be divided into several separate rooms by internal partitions. One room is for our piety, our Church life. Another room is for our secular life. We behave completely differently in this room, as if putting on a different mask. The third room is for our job. Sometimes you see someone in church—he’s soft, calm, pleasant to talk to. Then you see him at work—unapproachable, gloomy, somber. You want to say to him: “Just smile! What happened to you? You were completely different at church.” A person is different at home, with his family. He’s different behind the wheel. A car is also a kind of room in his soul. How many times I have heard in confession: “Father, when I’m driving, I often curse and swear at other drivers.” It’s impossible to wish for the grace of God to reign in your soul if it’s divided into parts, into many rooms. Above all, you need to acquire inner integrity, inner unity. Your mouth, your mind, and your actions—everything within you must be overshadowed by the grace of God.

A man who has received the grace of God doesn’t change with a change in situation or environment. Everything about him—his thoughts, words, and actions, both secret and manifest, both those committed in private and in public—remain the same, without change. The Fathers of the Church insisted that we must not be fickle and changeable, no matter who is in front of us, no matter where we find ourselves. Whether you’re before a crowd of millions or in private, you should remain the same, behaving the same. When you’re alone, feel like the whole world is watching you. And when the whole world is watching you, feel like you’re alone. Everywhere and anywhere, sense the presence of God, and nothing else but Him.

In the face of the powerful of this world, of those on whom your material wellbeing depends, or those whom you fear, don’t be a sycophant; don’t change your behavior. But behave the same way with everyone, correctly—be humble. I’m not talking about an inferiority complex, but about the noble humility of the children of God.

Such behavior personally makes a big impression on me. I have seen this humility in contemporary ascetic saints, whom various high-ranking officials came to meet: prime ministers, presidents, people whose names are known all over the world. When

dealing with such visitors, there wasn't a shadow of change in the behavior of the ascetics, nor a shadow of obsequiousness or flattery. They received every visitor with spiritual nobility, and spoke with them, regardless of who they were. They knew nothing of people-pleasing. For this very reason, God reigned in their souls, in their whole being. You could see how they were filled with grace. I remember when I observed these holy people, I saw that even their clothes exuded grace. They wore the simplest, oldest, shabbiest clothes. But these clothes, and the cells of the ascetics, and their belongings all radiated great grace.

It was the same with the ancient saints. It is said about St. Basil the Great, for example, that he had a slight limp. The same is said about his fellow countrymen, the Cappadocians: They all limped. Thus, they imitated the saint! What great influence he had on them! St. Basil limped because of a problem with his feet, but the Cappadocians limped in imitation of him, because the grace hidden in his soul made such an impression upon them that they imitated even the external behavior of the saint.

And the modern holy ascetics have made such a great impression on their visitors that you could see how people began to imitate them in something external. The reason for this impression was the great grace that poured out not only from the holy ascetics, but from everything around them: from their clothes, or rather, the tatters they wore; from their cells; from the stumps they used instead of chairs; and everything else. This is a witness that a man has Christ as King in his life, ruling over his entire being—his mind, heart, words, and deeds. One time someone drank a glass of water from [Elder Paisios](#) and later said that he had never drunk such delicious water anywhere. Or, for example, pilgrims often praise monastery food, how delicious it is. And how is it made? Without oil, just water. Grace is what makes everything so wonderful.

Sometimes I have to go to various events at rich homes or luxurious hotels. You see how fabulously luxurious everything is there and you think: "All of this luxury can't even be compared with the dingy cell of Elder Paisios." What kind of cell did he have? A small room with a dirt floor. He made the bed himself out of some planks; it was more like a coffin than a bed. He also made the chair himself. And for writing, instead of a desk, he used a piece of a board he would put on his lap. He also had an old clock to keep track of the time, and some paper icons on the wall. Everything was blackened by smoke from the stove and the candles that he had burning all the time.

On one of our trips to Russia, we visited the Hermitage Museum and saw Empress Catherine’s chambers. My God, what luxury this woman didn’t surround herself with! I can’t even imagine how she could have lived in the midst of all this. Indeed, I said: “If I were shut up in such a room for a night, I’d go out of my mind!”

When the grace of God is absent, then everything is dead, everything is tiresome. Take the most beautiful palace—if God is not there, then it’s not a palace, but a cemetery. Life in such a palace will kill you. Put God into a simple shack—of which there used to be many, made of one common room where they cooked, ate, and slept—put an icon there, put a lampada, start praying, and this shack will become Paradise—a Paradise so beautiful that you’ll exclaim: “Oh, that all men could know the joy and blessing that there is in this shack!” When God is present, everything becomes blessed, because God reigns over everything.

“Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”—the Kingdom of the Holy Trinity, in Whose name we are baptized—**“both now and ever and unto the ages of ages.”** We hear the last phrase often during the Divine services, including the Divine Liturgy. Why do we repeat this phrase so often? Because everything served during the Divine Liturgy has no end, but is eternal. It’s not something ordinary and earthly being celebrated in the Liturgy, but something eternal and imperishable. When I open my mouth and bless the name of God, this blessing of God is eternal and unending. The word that comes out of my mouth does not die, is not limited by anything.

A friend of mine, a hieromonk, shared one of his spiritual experiences with me. He told me about what happened to him after God granted him the great gift of the priesthood and he started serving his first Liturgy. He was standing before the altar in a small Athonite church (in the sketes on Mt. Athos the churches are usually very small, and the altars in them are also small and usually located in the altar lapse) and gave the initial exclamation: “Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, both now and ever and unto the ages of ages.” As soon as he pronounced this exclamation, at that very moment, by the grace of God, he was vouchsafed to see in the spirit how the roof of the church was opened and how the words he uttered reached unto the ages of ages.

He experienced a sense of eternity in this moment. Imagine that suddenly before you opened a window to eternity, which has no end, but which you can nevertheless contemplate—not as we usually see objects around us—just up to a certain point, and then everything is hidden from our eyes, because the power of vision is limited. My

friend felt a sacred fear: How great it is to pronounce words that extend into the ages of ages.

The word is imperishable, immortal, infinite. The blessing of the name of God contains great grace. Let us, however, consider this: It's not only the blessing of the name of God that extends into all the ages, but all our other words (idle talk, profanity, jokes) also extend into the ages of ages. How attentive we must be to our words!

Soon after hearing this story from my friend, I read about how one scientist proved that the words people say do not disappear. It's possible, he said, to invent a machine that will catch every word ever spoken, so we could hear the words spoken by Christ Himself two thousand years ago. I don't think it would be strange if such a device was actually invented and we heard the voice of Christ. But either way, it doesn't really matter to us. The meaning is elsewhere: Because our glorification of the name of God extends into infinity, we ourselves become infinite, and this makes us realize how important it is for us to have the opportunity to bless God and enter into another reality—the reality of the Divine Liturgy. As I have already said, the Divine Liturgy is the most important work of the Church, which exists to celebrate the Liturgy. The Church's primary work is the Liturgy. Everything else is secondary and is done only to bring us to the Divine Liturgy, to the service of God. As for everything else, if it comes to pass—good, and if not—the world won't be lost without it. However, the world cannot exist without the Divine Liturgy.

Metropolitan Athanasios of Limassol

The Prologue from Ochrid
St Nikolai of Zhicha
(07.21.2022)

1. THE HOLY GREAT MARTYR SAINT PROCOPIUS

Procopius was born in Jerusalem of a Christian father and a pagan mother. At first his name was Neanias. Following the death of his father, his mother raised her son completely in the spirit of Roman idolatry. When Neanias had grown up, Emperor

Diocletian saw him, took a liking to him, and brought him to his palace for military service. When this nefarious emperor began to persecute Christians, he ordered Neanias to go to Alexandria with a garrison of soldiers in order to exterminate the Christians. But on the way, something happened to Neanias like that which once happened to Saul [Paul]. In the third hour of the night there was a strong earthquake and, at that moment, the Lord appeared, and a voice was heard: "Neanias, where are you going, and against whom are you rising up?" In great fear, Neanias asked: "Who are You, Lord? I am unable to recognize You." Then there appeared in the air an exceedingly luminous cross, as of crystal, and from the cross came a voice saying: "I am Jesus, the crucified Son of God." And the Lord further said to him: "By this sign that you have seen, conquer your enemies, and My peace will be with you." Commander Neanias's life was completely changed. He issued an order to make a cross such as he had seen, and instead of going against the Christians, he and his soldiers used their force against the Agarians, who were attacking Jerusalem. He entered Jerusalem as a victor, and revealed his Christian faith to his mother. Brought before the court, Neanias removed his commander's belt and sword, and threw them before the judge, thereby showing that he was a soldier only of Christ the King. After being tortured extensively, he was cast into prison. There the Lord Christ appeared to him again, baptized him, and gave him the name Procopius. One day twelve women appeared before his prison window and said to him: "We too are servants of Christ." Accused for this, they were thrown into the same prison. St. Procopius taught them the Faith of Christ, and prepared them to receive their "martyr's crowns." (This is why St. Procopius, along with the God-crowned Emperor Constantine and Empress Helena, is mentioned in the order of crowning during the wedding ceremony.) Subsequently, the twelve women were brutally tortured. Witnessing their suffering and bravery, the mother of Procopius also came to believe in Christ, and all thirteen were slain. When St. Procopius was led to the scaffold, he raised his hands toward the east and prayed to God for all the poor, the needy, the orphans and the widows, and especially for the Holy Church, that it would grow and spread, and that Orthodoxy would shine to the end of time. And from heaven it was made known to him that his prayers were heard, after which he joyfully laid his head under the sword and went to his Lord in eternal joy. St. Procopius honorably suffered at Caesarea in Palestine, and was crowned with a wreath of immortal glory, on July 8, 303 A.D.

2. SAINT PROCOPIUS, FOOL FOR CHRIST

Procopius was a miracle-worker from Ustiug who died in the year 1303 A.D. He was of Varangian (Norse) descent and a merchant by profession. Coming to Novgorod on business, he was awed by the beauty of Orthodoxy and embraced the Orthodox Faith. Desiring to be a perfect Christian, he distributed his estate to the poor and began to practice all the other virtues. He pretended insanity, so that men would not praise him, and he was able to see into the hearts of men as well as their destinies, and to predict natural events, which afterward would indeed occur. By his tearful prayers before the icon of the Birth-giver of God, Procopius averted a terrible hailstorm from the town of Ustiug, and thus brought the sinful town to repentance. His body was found dead on the street, completely covered with snow. A church was built over his miracle-working relics.

3. THE VENERABLE THEOPHILUS THE MYRRH-GUSHER [MIROTOCIVI]

Theophilus was born in Macedonia in the village of Ziki. He was a very educated man and a great ascetic. By order of Patriarch Niphon of Constantinople, he traveled to Alexandria to make inquires as to whether it was true that Patriarch Joachim had moved a mountain by his prayers and had drunk poison without harmful effects, being forced to do this by the Jews and Muslims. Convinced of the truthfulness of these miracles, Theophilus returned to the Holy Mountain (Athos), where he lived in asceticism, first in Vatopedi, then in Iveron, and finally in the cell of St. Basil near Karyes. They offered the archbishopric of Thessalonica to this holy man, but he refused. Through profound silence, divine meditation and heartfelt prayer, he succeeded in purifying his mind of all passionate thoughts, and thus he became a pure vessel of the Holy Spirit in which Christ dwelt. In speaking of his imminent falling asleep in the Lord, he instructed his disciple Isaac not to bury him when he was dead, but to tie a rope around his legs, drag him, and toss him into the river. With great fear the disciple carried this out. By God's providence, the relics of St. Theophilus were revealed, and when they brought them to his cell, a miraculous myrrh began to flow from them. He entered into rest on July 8, 1548.

HYMN OF PRAISE

SAINT PROCOPIUS

When it is the will of the Omniscient God,

Persecutors become His servants;
God-haters, wonderful apostles;
And pagans, zealots for the Faith.
By God's will, Saul became Paul,
And Neanias--Saint Procopius!
Procopius, against Christ, went to war,
Yet a Christian to his mother came!
Tortures he once prepared, yet now received them.
Like lightning, truth he recognized,
And before the Son of God bowed down,
And from the earthly king turning,
Of the King on High, a servant became.
The King of Heaven on him a gift bestowed--
The gift of strength, the afflicted to help.
And as it was then, so is it now:
Procopius is friend to the downcast.
For today as of old, he helps.

REFLECTION

St. Anthony teaches: "Be fearful that you do not become famous because of some work that you do. If they begin to praise you because of your work, do not rejoice or take delight in it, but keep your works secret as much as you can, and do not allow anyone to speak about them." How much more peace and joy would there be among men on earth, if a part of mankind would take these holy words to heart!

Even though St. Theophilus lived as a simple monk secluded on Holy Mt. Athos, he was famous in all the patriarchates of the east, as much for his learning as for his virtuous, ascetical life. It once happened that Theoleptus, the Patriarch of Constantinople, visited Thessalonica. At that time the arch-episcopal throne of Thessalonica was vacant. The Christians of Thessalonica unanimously implored the patriarch to appoint Theophilus as their archbishop. The patriarch, a compatriot and friend of Theophilus, wrote a personal letter to him, in which he invited him to accept the arch-episcopal throne. Fearing the glory of men, yet not easily being able to refuse the patriarch, the humble Theophilus immediately received the "great angelic habit" [The Great Schema], and informed the patriarch of this, adding: "If God so wills, we will see each other in the Kingdom of Heaven." Such were the spiritual giants, whom the Church calls saints--shunning vanity and the glory of men.

CONTEMPLATION

To contemplate the miraculous changing of bitter water into sweet water (Exodus 15):

1. How the thirsty Israelites came upon bitter water in Marah and were unable to drink it, and the people began to murmur against Moses;
2. How God commanded Moses to cast a tree (wood) into the water, and the water became sweet;
3. How this tree foreshadowed the Cross of Christ, by which the bitterness of our life is transformed into sweetness;
4. How my entire being is bitter water, until I bring Christ Crucified into myself.

HOMILY About the Living Stone

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men but chosen of God and precious, You also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2: 4-5).

Brethren, what does the stone signify, if not stability? Brethren, what does the stone teach us, if not stability? The living stone signifies immortality. The apostle calls Christ the Lord the Living Stone, because He is immortal and the Giver of immortality. The apostle calls Christians living stones, as partakers of the immortality of Christ.

Brethren, what do unbelievers think, concerning man's fate at the end of time? They think that the same thing happens to man as to a stone: a man dies, becomes senseless, and is transformed into dust. Yet a stone is already dead and senseless, and under certain conditions it is transformed into dust. So both the unbelievers and the believers compare man with a stone. The unbelievers, because of the deadness and the insensibility of the stone; and the believers, because of the durability and the stability of the stone. For the former [unbelievers], the stone is a symbol of death, but for the latter [unbelievers], the stone is a symbol of immortality.

In truth, without Christ, mankind has always been and will always be like dead stones. But Christ is like a living stone. Only adhere to Him, and you will become as living stones. In building a house, the builder chooses only those stones that are chiseled into shape and prepared to fit easily with the other stones in the wall. The builder rejects the unchiseled, the unprepared, the unpolished and the fragile stones. Building the home, or a temple, of His Immortal Kingdom, Christ chooses men as the builder chooses stones, with one characteristic--life, spiritual life. The Lord rejects spiritually dead men as bad building blocks, and accepts only those who are alive, who resemble Him and who fit into place with the other living stones. These other living stones are the angels, prophets, apostles and saints. Brethren, let us endeavor to be a holy material for the holy house of the Kingdom of Christ--which He is building day and night, and which He will finish completely in the fullness of time.

O Lord Jesus, Builder of the Kingdom of Heaven, enliven us with Your Holy Spirit, and build us also, as living stones, into the house of Your eternal glory. **To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.**

Services this Week

❖ *6th Sunday after Pentecost– July 24th – 09:00 AM Divine Liturgy*

Donations July 10, 2022

Offering - \$2,086.00 Candles - \$44.00 Dues - \$100.00

Donations

In Honor of George & Kathleen McDowell's Anniversary
from Dianna Dunnington - \$100.00

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

July 20, 21, 22 & 23, 2022



Stackhouse Park

We will be providing food at intermission!

Please see Suzette Gardenhour to offer your assistance!!!!

JOIN US FOR



Saturday, August 13th, 2022

11:00 AM to 6:00 PM

Orchestra Drustvo under the tent!!!

WORK DETAILS COMING SOON!!!!

The kitchen was recently cleaned. There are a few items on a table in the church hall which are free to a good home, including noodle makers, silverware, cups...Please help yourself!

KOLO NEWS

We will be making Nutrolls on Tuesday, July 19th at 9:00 AM

&

Sarma on Tuesday, July 26th at 9:00 AM