

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

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The Sunday of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council

(06.05.2022)

John 17:1-13

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word., Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. (KJV)

Our conscience will tell us the condition of our heart, mind and soul in our relationship with God. Constant review and analysis of our relationship with God is necessary if we are to travel and remain on the narrow path to God's Kingdom.

The Lord Jesus Christ speaks about eternal life in the current Gospel. Eternal life is possible for believers embracing the way of Christ. Remaining true to Christ throughout life necessitates self-analysis and repentance.

The heart, mind and soul belong to Christ and are to be filled with Christ when seeking God's Kingdom and eternal life. The believer is responsible for monitoring the heart, mind and soul and rejecting the presence of sin.

The Lord is ever-present and within reach in the battle against personal sin and to facilitate repentance. The believer is not singularly able to be victorious over sin.

Victory over sin comes only with the help of the Lord Jesus Christ. Prayers to the Mother of God, the angels, saints. Prophets and martyrs strengthen and help the believer in the fight against personal sin.

Jesus' love for and interest in each person is evident in the present Gospel. The believer's love for and interest in Christ is manifested in the way daily life is lived.

Jesus will know by the way a person lives whether or not He is loved by the believer. Jesus has the ability to know the contents of the heart and mind and the condition of the soul.

The believer's motivations and deep interests are known to the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is loving and forgiving when the believer honestly and sincerely repents and seeks newness and renewal in Christ.

Trust in Christ is necessary to sincerely repent. Trust in Christ is required to firmly and irrevocably reject sin. Trust in Christ enables the believer to embrace Christ's love, forgiveness and healing.

Peace for the heart, mind and soul are within reach of the person sincerely repenting. Jesus said: "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Mt. 9:13)

To repent, believers need to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ and away from sin. The present Gospel is instructional and reassuring in the path for eternal life. Jesus described eternal life in the current Gospel.

Jesus said: "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. "(Jn 17:3) The opportunity to know the true God and Jesus Christ exists at every moment of life.

Every moment of life devoted to knowing the true God and Jesus Christ keeps sin away. Growth in Christ becomes possible and is realized when sin is kept away.

Love for Christ is demonstrated by the interest the person shows in Christ in thought, word and deed. The person's seriousness in prayer reflects love for Christ. The heart's welcoming of Christ shows love for Christ.

The mind blocking and rejecting sinful thoughts proves love for Christ. Christ's help is necessary in the battle against sin. Christ's love embraces the sinner taking the steps to repent.

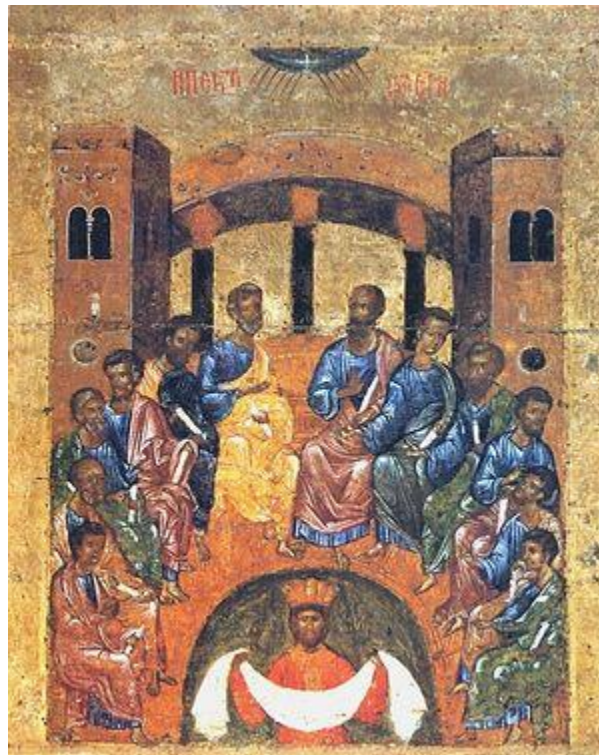
God's Holy Church is where to learn to love God and the Lord Jesus Christ. God's Holy Church is where to experience the Holy Spirit. The Holy Trinity becomes known to believers in the Church.

The value of the soul and the path to God's Kingdom are taught in God's Holy Church. The way to eternal life becomes clear in the Church. Learning for life throughout life is possible in the Church.

Today's Gospel reaches into the heart, the mind and the soul of the attentive believer. God's interest is in the whole person for every moment of life. God's love for each person extends to life eternal.

The Sunday of the Fathers of the First Council. Venerable Michael the Confessor. May 23/June 5, 2022. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic

**THE DAY OF THE HOLY TRINITY. PENTECOST:THE GOSPEL OF THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
OF THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
From the collected works of St. Nicholai (Velimirovich)**



When seed is sown, the power of warmth and light must descend upon it to make it grow.

When a tree is planted, the power of the wind must come in order to make it strong.

When a householder builds his house, he has recourse to the power of prayer, in order to sanctify it.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has sown a most select seed in the field of this world. The power of the Holy Spirit had to descend in order to warm and sanctify that seed, so that it would grow and prosper.

God the Son planted the tree of life in the overgrown field of death. The mighty wind of God the Holy Spirit had to sweep through, in order to strengthen the tree of life.

The Divine Bridegroom chose a Bride for Himself, the Church of pure souls, and the Spirit of eternal joy had to descend, so that heaven and earth might be betrothed, and the Bride adorned in white garments.

All of this happened just as it was foretold. The Holy Spirit was promised, and the Holy Spirit descended. Who could promise the descent of the Omnipotent Spirit on the earth other than He Who knew that this Spirit would obey Him and descend? And to Whom could the Omnipotent Spirit show such speedy obedience if not to the One for Whom He had perfect love?

Oh, how perfect love is always ready for perfect obedience! After all, perfect love cannot be perfectly expressed in any other way than by perfect obedience. Love is always vigilant in its desire and readiness to obey its beloved. And from perfect obedience flows, just like a stream of honey and milk, perfect joy, which is the content of the attractive power of love.

The Father has perfect love for the Son and the Spirit. The Son has perfect love for the Father and the Spirit. And the Spirit has perfect love for the Father and the Son. According to this perfect love, the Father is in the most zealous obedience to the Son and the Spirit, and the Son is in the most zealous obedience to the Father and the Spirit; and the Spirit is in the most zealous obedience to the Father and the Son. Perfect love makes the Father the perfect servant of the Son and the Spirit; and the Son, the perfect servant of the Father and the Spirit; and the Spirit, the perfect servant of the Father and the Son. Just as no love in the created world can be compared to the mutual love of the Divine Hypostasis, neither also can any obedience be compared to Their mutual obedience. *I have glorified Thee on earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do (Jn. 17:4). May Thy will be done.* Are these not the words

of the Son's perfect obedience to the Father? *Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me. And I knew that Thou hearest me always*, said the Lord Jesus Christ at the resurrection of Lazarus; and later He would exclaim: *Father, glorify Thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again* (Jn. 11:41–42; 12:28). Is this not the perfect obedience of the Father to the Son? *Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you* (Jn. 16:7). *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever... But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me* (Jn. 14:16; 15:26). And truly, on the fiftieth day after the Resurrection, the Comforter, Spirit of Truth descended upon those to whom it was promised. Is this not the perfect obedience of the Holy Spirit to the Son? And the salvific rule that the Apostle Paul commands all the faithful to keep: *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another* (Rm. 12:10)—is perfectly performed between the Hypostases of the Holy Trinity. Each one of the Hypostases strives to prefer one another in honor; so also does each wish to decrease Himself before the Other Two. And if each Hypostasis did not have that most sweet and holy striving to render His honor to the Other Two and decrease Himself in obedience, then in that endless love, which Each of them has for Each Other, the Trinitarian nature of the Divinity would drown in a kind of indifference of Hypostasis.

Thus, according to the boundless love of God the Spirit for God the Son, the Holy Spirit with boundless obedience hastened to fulfill the Son's will and descended at the predetermined time upon the apostles. God the Son firmly knew that God the Spirit would obey Him, and therefore He so firmly promised Its descent upon the apostles. *But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high* (Lk. 24:49), our Lord Jesus Christ commanded His apostles. Do not ask how the Lord knew beforehand that this *power from on high*, or the Holy Spirit, would descend upon His disciples. The Lord knew beforehand not only this, but also everything else that would happen till the end of time, and even after the end of time. However, if you contemplate deeper this event, you will see that the Lord's foreknowledge and foretelling of the descent of the Holy Spirit is foreknowledge and foretelling only in that it relates to the external event of its descent, but not as it relates to the agreement of the Holy Spirit and Its desire to fulfill the will of the Son, and so descend. For even before the Lord spoke of the descent of the Holy Spirit, He already had a zealous and voluntary agreement with the Spirit about this. More correctly, the

Holy Spirit was also speaking through Him about Its descent. For was it not said in the Gospels: *Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost* (Lk. 4:1)? And did not our Lord Jesus Christ Himself admit in Nazareth that the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled in Him: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor* (Lk. 4:18)? Clearly the Son thus abides in ceaseless communion with the Holy Spirit as also with the Father—in a communion of mutual love, obedience and joy. The anointing by the Spirit testifies to the living and true habitation of the Spirit in a specific person. Then how could the Anointed One say anything about that very Spirit that the Spirit did not already know? Or promise any kind of co-working with that very Spirit if the Spirit had not already agreed to it? And that the Holy Spirit abided in our Lord Jesus Christ and agreed with His every word, deed, and promise, is witnessed in today's Gospel reading.

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink

(Jn. 7:37). This refers to the feast of Tabernacles, which was celebrated in autumn in memory of the building of the Tabernacles in the desert during the Jewish people's time of wandering there. This feast was marked in the *seventh month* according to the Jewish calendar, which corresponds to our month of September, and was a time of great festivity (cf. Lev. 23:34; Deut. 16:13–14). It was celebrated on the seventh day, and the last day must have been marked with especial solemnity, since it was called great. *If any man thirst*, declared the Lord, *let him come unto Me, and drink*. In waterless Jerusalem it was hard to provide even ordinary, material water to that great crowd. Special water-bearers dragged water for the temple vessels from the spring of Siloam. What inspired the Lord to speak of thirst and water? Perhaps it was the people's complaint of thirst. Perhaps it was the appearance of the water-bearers, who were pulling the water from Siloam up Mount Moriah where the temple stood. And perhaps it was the circumstance that this was the last day, and therefore the Lord wanted to make use of the time, to remind the people whose hearts had hardened, of spiritual thirst, and to offer them spiritual drink. Once He told the Samaritan woman: *But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst* (Jn. 4:14). And now He is talking about that same living-giving spiritual water—now, when He calls all who thirst to *come unto Me and drink*. (Jn. 7:38–39). First the Lord determines belief in Him. He promises a reward to those who rightly believe in Him; that is, who believe *as the scripture hath said*. He does not want people to believe in Him as one of the prophets. All of the prophets prophesied of Him. And He does not want people to consider Him a second Elias or John the Baptist. Both Elias and John were but servants of God and forerunners of Him. And

He did not call Himself a servant of God, nor the forerunner of anyone, no matter who it may be. Holy Scripture speaks of Him as the Son of God, born of God the Father in eternity and of the Most Holy Virgin Mary in time. When the Apostle Peter confessed such faith in Him, saying: *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God* (Mt. 16:16), the Lord praised his faith. When the elders and scribes wanted to confuse Him with various cunning questions, He Himself confused them and silenced them by citing the Holy Scripture, where it is written that the awaited Messiah is not only the son of David, but also the Son of God (Mt. 22:41–66). He wants people to believe in Him also as the highest divine revelation, in which all the other revelations are united, from beginning to end. Outside of Him faith is in vain, hope is in vain, and love is impossible. That the right faith in Him is salvific is something of which the one who rightly believes will be convinced. How can one be convinced? *Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water*. Living water here means the Holy Spirit, as the Evangelist himself explains: *He spake here of the Spirit*. Thus, the Holy Spirit comes to abide in the one who believes in the Son of God, and spiritual, life-bearing rivers shall flow from his belly. But why from his belly? Because the body of a saint in this life is the habitation of the Holy Spirit, as the apostle says: *What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?* (1 Cor. 6:19). This is what the Apostle Paul said to the faithful, upon whom the Holy Spirit had already descended through their faith in the Son of God. In a narrower sense, the belly is understood to be the human heart, as the concentration of life both physical and spiritual. The same Apostle Paul says: *God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts* (Gal. 4:6). Thus, from the heart as from the main lamp of the Holy Spirit pour spiritual, life-bearing streams throughout the entire person, both bodily and spiritually. The consequence of this will be that the body of a person with faith will become an instrument of the human spirit, and the human spirit will become an instrument of the Holy Spirit. The whole person will be purified, illumined, confirmed, and made deathless by the streams of God the Spirit, so that all of his thoughts, all his love, and all his activities will be aimed at eternal life. The streams of his life will pour into eternity, and the streams of eternity will pour into his life.

He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified)

However, when our Lord Jesus Christ spoke this, *the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified*. That is, the Holy Spirit was not yet upon the faithful, but It was upon Jesus. The Holy Spirit had not yet begun Its activity in the world in all fullness and strength, for our Lord Jesus Christ had not yet been glorified; that is, He had not finally brought Himself as a sacrifice for the human race and had not completed His work as the Savior of man. In the economy of man's salvation, the Father has the fullness of activity, performing this work of salvation as the God-Man; and the Holy Spirit has the fullness of activity, confirming, sanctifying, and continuing the work of the Son. But this must not be understood to mean that the Son and the Spirit did not act when the Father acts; or that the Father and the Spirit did not act when the Son acts; or that the Father and the Son did not act when the Spirit acts. May any such wicked and senseless thought be far from you. For, while the Son was in the fullness of His activity on earth, the Father and the Spirit acted with Him, as was revealed at the Baptism in the Jordan, and as our Lord Jesus Christ Himself said: *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work* (Jn. 5:17). That means that the Father and the Son act together and at the same time. In precisely the same way, together and at the same time do the Holy Spirit and the Son act, as can be seen from our Lord Jesus Christ's promise to send the Comforting Spirit, even though He Himself will also be with them *always, even unto the end of the world* (Mt. 28:20). The Trinitarian Divinity is of one essence and undivided, but It expresses Its activity in relation to the created world more noticeably—now through One Divine Hypostasis, now through another. Thus, when our Lord Jesus Christ promised the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, the Holy Spirit was in Him, so that it could be said that to the extent this promise proceeded from God the Son, so did It proceed from God Himself, the Holy Spirit.

Let us look now at how this promise was fulfilled, or how the descent of God the Holy Spirit took place, as we celebrate this solemn feast today.

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place

(Acts 2:1). According to their Lord's command, the apostles remained in Jerusalem and awaited the *power from on high* that would show them what to do next. They were all together with one accord in prayer—all as one person, as one soul. The content of souls makes human souls unlike or like one another; but the content of the souls of all the apostles at that time was one and the same: their souls were filled with praise of God for what had already taken place, and with yearning for what will be.

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost

(Acts 2:2–4). What was this sound? Was it not the sound of the angelic hosts? Was it not the sound of the cherubim’s wings, which the Prophet Ezekiel had heard (Ez. 1:24)? Whatever it was, it was not from the earth but from heaven, and not from earthly winds, but from the heavenly powers. This sound announced the descent of the King of Heaven, God the Spirit, the Comforter. Spirit is not fire, nor is it a dove. But It appeared in the Jordan *in the form of a dove*, and now it appears as fire. Then, it appeared in order to portray the innocence and purity of our Lord Jesus Christ upon whom It descended; now, in order to portray fiery power, warmth, and light—a light that scorches away sins, a warmth that warms the heart, a light that enlightens the mind. The spirit is bodiless and does not incarnate into any kind of body, but when necessary It appears in the physical form that best symbolizes the meaning of the given moment. But why the Holy Spirit appears in this instance in the form of *cloven tongues* of fire, which *as if sat upon* each of the apostles becomes immediately clear from the following:

And

(they) began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:4). Here is the explanation of why God the Spirit appeared in the form of tongues, and cloven tongues at that. Its first effect was to make the apostles capable of speaking in other languages. From this it is clear that from the very beginning of the Church of Christ, the Gospel of salvation was preordained for all the peoples of the earth, as the Lord determined after His Resurrection, commanding the apostles: *go ye therefore, and teach all nations* (Mt. 29:19). For after the Jews—the chosen people of God—had rejected the Lord and crucified Him, the Victorious Lord made a new choice of all the peoples on the earth, and so the new God-chosen nation arose—not of one language, but of one spirit, *a holy people*, or the *Church of God*. How could Christ’s apostles go forth to teach all nations if they did not know the languages of those nations? Thus, the first power needed by these first missionaries of the Gospels so that they could begin their mission was the ability to understand foreign languages and speak them. They were simple folk; they knew only their own native language—Hebrew, and no other. If they were to start studying many other languages in the ordinary way, when would they learn them? And if they spent their whole lives studying they would not learn what the Holy Spirit taught them in one instant. Just take a look at how many different peoples, speaking all different languages there were

in Jerusalem then: *Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and and Asia, Phygia, and Pamphylia, In Egypt, and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians!*



The Descent of the Holy Spirit. "Gospel of Rabula", 586.

And every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled. They saw before them simple folk, with simple manners, simply attired, and each heard them speaking in his own native language about the great works of God. How could they not be amazed? How could they not marvel? Others, who did not know how to explain it all, said, *these men are full of new wine*. But it is often that way—to the drunk, sober people seem drunk, and to the insane, the sane people seem insane. Those wreathed with earth and drunk with the earth—how could they judge otherwise about people filled with the Holy Spirit, about spirit-bearers, speaking as the Spirit gave them to do? Lovers of routine do not like surprises, and when they are met with the unexpected, they either get angry or mock it. But the Holy Spirit is not like a man forcing his way into another's home. It goes to the place where the door is voluntarily opened to It, and where It is awaited as the dearest and most desire Guest. The apostles waited for It with great impatience, and It descended upon them and came to abide in them. It descended upon them with a sound—not a threatening, but joyful sound.

Oh, brothers, how the Holy Spirit rejoices with an unspeakable joy when it finds pure and open souls who thirst for It! With a joyful sound It comes and abides in them and gives them Its rich gifts. As fire, It enters them in order to scorch the last growth of sin; as light, in order to illumine them with the unwaning light of heaven; as warmth, to warm them with the Divine warmth of love, by which the immortal angelic hosts are warmed in the Kingdom of God. (Though a lamp may be filled with oil and have a wick, if it is not lit with fire it remains dark. So it is with the soul apparently adorned with all the virtues—if it is not made a participant of the light and grace of the Holy Spirit, it remains extinguished and dark, and its works are yet unsteady; for they must first be reprov'd and made manifest by the light [cf. Eph. 5:13]." —St. Ephraim the Syrian, Homily 59). It conferred the gift of tongues upon the apostles as Its first gift, most needed by them at the time. But later, again according to the needs of their apostolic service, It poured out other gifts upon them: the gift of wonderworking, the gift of prophecy, the gift of discernment, the gift of speaking, the gift of patience, the gift of inner peace, the gift of unwavering faith and hope, the gift of the love of God and man. Abundantly and joyfully did the Holy Spirit disseminate these gifts not only to the apostles, but also to their successors, and to the all the saints of Christ's Church up to the present time, according to human needs and purity. By His great work on earth did our Lord Jesus Christ bring great joy to the Father and the Holy Spirit. From the first paradisal days of Adam, the Holy Spirit did not have the joy that It had on the day of Pentecost, when God the Son created the possibility for It to act among people in full power. True, It unceasingly acted upon the human race, even when the human race was kept in the bonds of sin, from the fall of Adam to the Resurrection of Christ; nevertheless Its activity then was limited and hindered by human sin.

By a very narrow way did It walk then amidst people, pouring oil into the lamp of life only so much as to prevent it from going out altogether. It acted also through the laws of nature, through human laws, through the prophets and kings, and through artists and sages, to the extent that these were able and willing to give themselves over to Its action. Wherever a tear sprung from a thirst for God's righteousness might have fallen upon the dust of earth, it fell because of the warmth by which the Holy Spirit inspired a human heart. Wherever the sage's bright thought gleamed for the One eternal God, it gleamed because of the spark of the Holy Spirit, cast into the human soul. Wherever the artist created, chiseled or sketched some tale of life, thereby opening even to some small measure mankind's blinded eyes to a vision of Divine truth, there did the Holy Spirit make contact through Its life-giving breath with the human spirit. Wherever the noble hero sacrificed himself with faith in God

and arose to defend flouted truth and righteousness, there did the Holy Spirit pour Its strength into the human heart. But all of this happened on no sweeping scale or with any great joy. All of these were but crumbs thrown to hungry prisoners in the dungeon. When our Lord and God Jesus Christ destroyed the prison of sin and death and led before the Holy Spirit His twelve apostles like twelve bright, royal chambers, then God the Holy Spirit with a joyful sound and the fullness of Its activity came and abode in them. God the Holy Spirit, sorrowing from the time of Adam's sin, then for the first time and with a great breathe, great breadth of scale, and great joy once again began Its unlimited action of power and inspiration in people.

Or, for a better understanding use the following comparison. The sun shines in winter and in spring. However, its light and warmth cannot make something grow through the snow in winter. But in the spring, the light and warmth of this same sun makes it possible for what was sown to sprout and grow. Scientists say that the earth turns away from the sun in winter, that snowy regions are then located farther from the sun and receive the sunlight through slanted, indirect rays. In the spring, the earth turns toward the sun and snowy regions become closer to it, and the sunlight and warmth come down in more direct rays. From Adam to Christ, the human soul was like the earth during wintertime. The Holy Spirit illumined and warmed, but the because of the human soul's sinful deformity and alienation from God it was literally far from God, and nothing could grow and bear fruit. Our Lord Jesus Christ straightened the human soul and brought it closer to God, cleansed it from the ice and snow, ploughed and sowed the Divine seed in it. Then the Holy Spirit, like the spring sun, began by Its power to grow and manifest wondrous and sweet fruits in the field of the human soul. Winter can never believe in the miracles in which the spring clothes the earth. So also people who have turned away from the Holy Spirit, living with a soul covered by the ice and snow of their own self-deceptions, can never believe in what miraculous gifts the Holy Spirit clothes those who become close to It and come under the direct rays of its Divine light and warmth. Yes—and how could the Eskimo, who was born and lived his whole life amidst ice and snow, believe a traveler from southern regions when he tells him of flowers and trees, of mottled fields and green hills?

So also some people from a country far from God, iced-over and darkened by sin, did not believe the apostles when they proclaimed the good news about the living God in the heavens, about the Father, Who calls to Himself all who desire to call themselves His children; about the Son of God, Who appeared in the world as a Man, lived among

people, suffered for people, arose in power and ascended in glory; about the Holy Spirit, Who descended upon them and conferred upon them heavenly gifts; about our bright and deathless fatherland in the heavens, from which sin alone separated us; about the purity of life that is demanded of us so that we might return to this heavenly fatherland of ours and become co-servants and brothers to the angels in eternal life. Others believed this joyful news, while others did not. From the divine apostles flowed *rivers of living water* across the whole world. Others came and drank their fill of this living water, while others did not. The apostles walked among people like gods, working miracles, healing all sicknesses and every infirmity, preaching repentance and forgiveness of sins. Some received them rejoicing, while others rejected them, angrily and mockingly. Those who accepted them also experienced communion with the Holy Spirit and the action of the Holy Spirit in them. And so the holy nation grew, and God's Church spread and became established in the world. The seed grew and bore fruit. Thus was the house of truth, the cornerstone of which is our Lord Jesus Christ, sanctified by the All-Holy Spirit, spread to the four corners of the world, and its rooftop rose to the greatest heights of heaven.

As we celebrate today the feast of the Holy Spirit, which out of boundless love for God the Son and with boundless joy and obedience willed to descend upon earth and take into Its omnipotent hands the work of man's salvation, let us also remember in grateful hymns the Most Holy Virgin Mary, upon whom the Holy Spirit descended earlier than It did to the apostles. God the Spirit descended upon the apostles as upon the Church, as upon the unanimous community of saints; but upon the Mother of God It descended as to a specially chosen person. *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee* (Lk. 1:35), announced the Archangel Gabriel to the Most Holy Virgin. And by the power of the Holy Spirit, she gave birth to a most beautiful Fruit, from Whom both heaven and earth are fragrant, and by Whom are nourished all the faithful from beginning to end. O Most Holy and Most Pure Theotokos, dawn and cradle of our salvation, our image of humility and obedience, Mediator and Prayerful Intercessor before the throne of God—pray unceasingly with the holy apostles for us!

O Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of truth, come also to us and abide in us, and remain in us as strength, light, and warmth, as our life and joy! Cleanse us of all impurity, and save our souls, O Good One! Fill our hearts with joy and our lips with hymns, that we may glorify and magnify Thee with the Father and the Son—the Trinity One in Essence and Undivided, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. *Amen.*

St. Nikolai Velimirovich

The Prologue from Ochrid
St Nikolai of Zhicha
(06.21.2022)

1. THE THIRD FINDING OF THE HEAD OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

In the eighth century, during the bitter violence of iconoclasm, the head of St. John was brought to Comana, the place of exile of St. John Chrysostom. When iconoclasm ended in the year 850 A.D. during the time of Emperor Michael and the Patriarch Ignatius, the honorable head of St. John was translated to Constantinople and there was placed in the chapel of the imperial court.

2. THE HIEROMARTYR [PRIEST-MARTYR] THERAPONTUS, BISHOP OF CYPRUS

Therapontus was a monk and an ascetic on the island of Cyprus. He was found worthy of the episcopal rank, but during the time of the persecution of Christians he was found worthy of an even greater wreath, the crown of martyrdom. His body reposed in a church on Cyprus. During the reign of Emperor Nicephorus in the year 806 A.D., when the island of Cyprus was attacked by the Hagarenes, the saint appeared to the sexton of that church, told him that the infidels would attack Cyprus, and ordered him to remove his relics to Constantinople. The sexton did this immediately. While the boat with the reliquary was sailing on the sea, a great storm arose, but the sea was calm around the boat and a sweet-smelling fragrance was emitted around the whole boat in all directions. The sexton opened the reliquary and everyone witnessed that it was filled with myrrh [oil], which flowed from the saint's relics. By anointing themselves with this oil, many of the sick were healed. A church was built in Constantinople over the relics of this miracle-worker, who continued to grant healing to all those who with faith touched them. By the grace of God, the grave illnesses of possession, cancer, hemorrhaging, insanity, blindness, barrenness as well as various other maladies were cured by the relics of St. Therapontus.

3. THE HOLY MARTYRS PASICRATES, VALENTIAN, JULIUS AND OTHERS

They were all Roman soldiers. They all suffered for Christ in Macedonian Dorostol in about the year 302 A.D. When Pasicrates's brother Papian, who apostatized from

Christ because of fear, began to urge him to deny Christ and remain alive, St. Pasicrates answered him: "Depart from me; you are not my brother!" Pasicrates and Valentian were beheaded together. At the trial, St. Julius said: "I am a veteran; for twenty-six years I have faithfully served the emperor and, since I was faithful to a lesser one, how can I not be faithful to a greater One?"--that is, to the Heavenly King. After that, Nicander was brought before the prefect Maximus. Nicander's wife encouraged her husband to die for Christ. "Foolish old woman," Maximus said to her angrily: "You just want a better husband." The woman answered him: "If you think that about me, give the order and let them kill me now, before my husband!" Marcian was also slain with Nicander. Marcian's wife approached the scaffold carrying her son in her arms. Marcian kissed his son and prayed to God: "O All-powerful Lord, take care of him!" Following this, they were beheaded and were translated to the Kingdom of Christ.*)

*) Archbishop Philaret of Chernigov believes that all these martyrs were Slavs. See: *The Saints of the Southern Slavs*.

HYMN OF PRAISE **SAINT THERAPONTUS**

Blessed Therapontus suffered for Christ.
He received two heavenly wreaths:
As a hierarch of the Church, and as a courageous martyr;
His body remained like a flower unfaded,
To heal the sick, to make fragrant the world,
To comfort the unfortunate, and to bring joy to the faithful.
Thus the Lord glorified His glorifier,
A wonderful shepherd of his rational flock.
And thus the Lord made known and voiced abroad,
That a violent death does not kill a saint,
But crowns him with a wreath and proclaimed his name,
Eternally glorifying him in both churches.

O God's glorifier, holy Therapontus,
Wonderful martyr for the holy Faith--
Help us also, for the love of God,
By your prayers before the throne most high!

REFLECTION

Some misguided men think more about the end of the world than about the end of their lives, even though it is obvious that, when the end of a man's life has come, the end of the world has come for him, too. A brother standing in the presence of St. Seraphim of Sarov was turning over in his mind how he was going to ask the saint about the end of the world. St. Seraphim discerned his thought and said to him: "My joy! You think highly of the wretched Seraphim. How could I know when the end of the world will be, and that great day when the Lord will judge the living and the dead and render to each one according to his deeds? No, no, this is impossible for me to know!" And if the saints could not know, how could sinners know? Why should we know that which the Savior Himself did not find beneficial to reveal to us? It is much better to think that our death will come sooner than the end of the world, rather than that the end of the world will come before our death.

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the grace of God the Holy Spirit in the Mystery [Sacrament] of Repentance and Confession:

1. How, when grace touches the heart of the penitent, the penitent sees all the ugliness of his sins and washes them away through tears;
2. How grace enters the penitent who has confessed, as joy enters into a sorrowful one, as hope enters into a hopeless one.

HOMILY

on the nearness of the Judge

"Behold, the Judge standeth before the door" (James 5:9).

In one day, brethren, you can gain all eternity. And in one day, brethren, you can lose all eternity. You are given thousands of days on earth to determine your own personal, eternal salvation or your own personal, eternal damnation. But blessed a

hundredfold be the day in which you repent of all your unclean deeds, words and thoughts, and return to God crying out for mercy! That day will be worth more to you than a thousand other days.

What kind of day is that blessed day? It is a day of self-condemnation. When that day dawns, the man who until then judged the entire world will at once look and see himself as the greatest stain on God's world. He will become ashamed before God, ashamed before every man, and ashamed before every created thing of God in the world. Shame will begin to burn him like fire. Then he will recognize and confess: Truly, I am the greatest blot in God's world! Truly, all men are better than I! Truly, all things are more pure than I! I am blacker than burned wood, and until now I thought I was white! I am uglier than the frogs, and until now I thought I was as beautiful as an angel! Lord, Lord, Lord, have mercy on me a sinner and wash from me the mud of sin, so that I can, as much as possible, begin to resemble Thy creation!

Brother, do not wait, do not wait for that blessed day of repentance to come by itself. Seize firmly, brother, the first day that comes to meet you and say: "You are the blessed day on which I will purchase life eternal!" Do not wait, my brother, do not wait, for *Behold, the Judge standeth before the door!* That Judge is the Living Lord Who created you and has seen and numbered all of your transgressions up to now. In a day or two, He may call you to the judgment, where you will not have even a word of justification. Seize the day! Seize the day of repentance! Seize the day before death has seized you! *Behold, the Judge standeth before the door!*

O Lord, awesome and just, prolong the days of the sinner until he repents.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Services this Week

- ❖ ***Tuesday 06.07. '22- 3rd Finding of the Honourable Head of St John the Baptist - 09:00 AM Divine Liturgy***
- ❖ ***Fryday 06.10. '22 PARACLESIS - THE OFFICE OF SUPPLICATION TO SAINT NECTARIOS -05:00 PM Confession***
- ❖ ***Saturday 06.11 '22 – Memorial Saturday – Pg. 18***
- ❖ ***Pentecost (Trinity Sunday) – June 12th – 09:00 AM Divine Liturgy***

Donations May 29, 2022

Offering - \$672.00 Candles - \$33.00 Donations - \$50.00

Slava Donations

Father Rodney Torbic - \$25

Gloria Cernic - \$25

Lazo Gjurich - \$20

Large Candles

In Memory of Julie Lambrinos from Kumovi Dan & Dyne Tomak

In Memory of Parents, Mike & Mildred Tumbas from Robert & Milica Knepp

In Memory of Ranka Marinkovich from Richard Kondas

In Memory of Ed Gartrell from Steve Purich

In Memory of Linda (Locher) Leckrone from Dorothy Podolak

Change in church time

Beginning Today, Sunday, June 5, 2022. Divine Liturgy will begin at 9:00 AM and continue to Sunday, September 4, 2022.

MEMORIAL SERVICES 2022

Memorial services at the Church cemeteries will be held as follows:

BENSHOF HILL CEMETERY - Saturday, June 11, 2022 – 9:30 AM (Begin at Top)

GRANDVIEW CEMETERY - Saturday, June 11, 2022 – Beginning at 2:00 PM

OLD ST. NICHOLAS CEMETERY - Saturday, June 18, 2022 – 9:30 AM

ST. PETKA CEMETERY - Saturday, June 18, 2022– 10:30 AM – (Begin at Top)

Thank you to all those who made monetary & floral donations for the flowers for the outdoor planters. Also, thanks to Dyne Tomak, Jencine Campagna, Amelia Ribaric & Donna Zimmerman for helping to plant the flowers!