

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church
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The Tenth Sunday after Pentecost **(09.01.2024.)**

Matthew 17:14-23

And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting. And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry. **(KJV)**

The Lord Jesus Christ proclaims the value of strong faith, prayer and fasting in the current Gospel. Christians navigate through the challenges of life. Too often the fundamentals of the Christian life do not get due attention.

Christians may weaken their personal faith in the Lord God. This diminishing may be due to lack of fervent prayer and failure to nourish the heart, mind and soul. Believers may weaken their practice of fasting as they proceed through life.

Being attentive to the content of the Divine services is necessary for nourishment. Failing to consciously practice fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays and during the fast periods reduces the strength of faith.

The Holy Scriptures provide nourishment for all of life. The Holy Scriptures are available in many different formats in today's world. Believers availing themselves of the Scriptures feed the soul.

The Church is continuing to celebrate the Dormition of the Mother of God. The Mother of God is ever-present to believers as an intercessor before the Lord. The Mother of God is within reach of each believer reaching out in prayer.

The power of the Mother of God is well-documented through the centuries. Believers do well to pray regularly to the Mother of God and to keep her in mind.

Daily life is a challenge and the Mother of God eases the burden on believers.

The Church is enriched with the lives of the saints and the martyrs. Wise believers heed the presence of the saints and the martyrs and seek their intercession.

Dealing with deranged individuals can be a challenge. The father in the current Gospel was wise in turning to Jesus for help with his son. The father's love for his son was evident as he sought healing.

Jesus healed the son. Jesus used the son's healing to teach the lesson of the value of strong faith, prayer and fasting. Throughout life, believers benefit when assessing the strength of personal faith and the practice of prayer and fasting.

The journey from the Baptism font to the departure from this life can be very long. Believers are challenged to actively seek nourishment of the heart, mind and soul. Believers are expected to pursue growth in Christ.

The life in Christ is a life of maturity in Christ. The Holy Apostle Paul said: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child but when I became a man, I put away childish things." (I Cor. 13:11)

Growth in Christ requires active participation. The father in the current Gospel took initiative to seek Christ for healing. Believers are to take initiative to grow in Christ.

The Church offers unlimited opportunities to nourish the heart, mind and soul. The Church is ever-present and within reach of believers taking initiative to seek Jesus Christ.

With Holy Baptism comes the responsibility to live according to the standards and teachings of Jesus Christ. With the honor of being a Christian comes the responsibility to put into practice Jesus Christ's teachings.

The Apostles learned the value of prayer and fasting in the current Gospel. The Apostles had the value of strong faith verified by Jesus. Today's Gospel has been taught and proclaimed through the centuries.

In the journey from the Baptismal font to the departure from this life, it is easy to have faith weakened and to ease up on the effort put forth to follow Christ. Vigilance and constant reassessment are needed.

The Church offers structured fasting periods through the year for believers to reassess their efforts to follow Christ. Joy arises when the fasting periods are well-used and full unity with Christ is restored and strengthened.

Thank God for today's Gospel. Thank God for the Church proclaiming the Gospel throughout the year for all willing to hear. Thank God for attentive believers incorporating the Gospel in their lives at each Divine Liturgy.

Today is a day for renewal of faith. Today is the opportunity to recommit to following Jesus Christ with fullness of heart, mind and sou. Now is the opportunity to value strong faith, prayer and fasting.

The challenges of daily life are reduced to manageable size when Christ is followed completely. Joy in life abounds when strong faith is joined with serious prayer and fasting.

The Tenth Sunday after Pentecost. Afterfeast of the Dormition. Holy Martyr Andrew Stratelates. August 19/September 1, 2024. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic.

The Prologue from Ochrid

Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic

1. THE HOLY MARTYRS AGATHONICUS, ZOTICUS AND OTHERS WITH THEM

St. Agathonicus was a citizen of Nicomedia and a Christian by faith. With great zeal he converted the Hellenes from idolatry and instructed them in the true Faith. At Emperor Maximian's orders, the regional governor cruelly persecuted the Christians. The deputy captured St. Zoticus in a place called Carpe. He crucified Zoticus's disciples and brought Zoticus himself to Nicomedia--where he also captured and bound St. Agathonicus, Princeps, Theoprepus (Bogoljepa), Acindynus, Severianus, Zeno and many others. Securely bound, they were all taken to Byzantium. As they traveled, Saints Zoticus, Theoprepus and Acindynus died of their many wounds and exhaustion. Severianus was slain near Chalcedon. Agathonicus and the others were taken to Silybria, in Thrace. There, after being torture in the emperor's presence, they were beheaded, and entered into eternal life and the joy of their Lord.

2. THE HOLY FEMALE MARTYR EULALIA

The virgn Eulalia, born of Christian parents in the town of Barcelona, lived during a time of terrible persecution against Christains in Spain. Completely dedicated to Christ as her Bridegroom, completely immersed in Holy Scripture, Eulalia ceaselessly disciplined herself in voluntary ascesis of the body and spirit. When the torturer Dacian--a merciless killer of Christians throughout Spain--came to Barcelona, Eulalia secretly left from her parents at night, came before the torturer, and, in the presence of many people, rebuked him for slaughtering innocent people. She also ridiculed the lifeless idols and openly confessed her faith in Christ the Living Lord. The enraged Dacian ordered that Eulalia be disrobed and beaten with rods. The holy virgin showed that she did not feel pain from being tortured for her Christ. The torturer then bound her to a wooden cross and ordered that her body be burned with torches. Then the torturer asked her: "Where is your Christ, now, to save you?" Eulalia answered: "He is here with me, but you are unable to see Him because of your impurity." Under savage torture,

Eulalia gave her soul to God. When she reposed, the people saw a white dove ascend from her mouth. Snow instantly fell from the sky and covered the naked body of the martyr like a white garment. On the third day, St. Felix came and sadly wept before Eulalia's still-hanging body, and a smile formed on her lifeless lips. Her parents and other Christians honorably buried the body of this holy virgin. Eulalia suffered and died for her Lord, and entered into eternal joy, at the beginning of the fourth century.

3. THE HOLY FEMALE MARTYR ANTHUSA AND OTHERS WITH HER

Anthusa was the daughter of wealthy but pagan parents from Seleucia in Syria. Learning of Christ, Anthusa believed in Him with all her heart and secretly went to Bishop Athanasius, who baptized her. Angels of God appeared to her at her baptism. Soon afterward, Anthusa set out for the wilderness to live a life of asceticism, for she was afraid to return to her parents. She labored ascetically in the wilderness for twenty-three years. She gave up her soul while in prayer, kneeling on a stone under which, according to her last testament, she wished to be buried. Bishop Athanasius and two of Anthusa's servants, Charismus and Neophytus, were slain some time later because of their faith in Christ. These events occurred in the time of Emperor Valerian, in about 257 A.D. They all reposed honorably and were crowned with heavenly wreaths of victory.

HYMN OF PRAISE

THE HOLY FEMALE MARTYR EULALIA

God's white dove,
And martyr of Christ--
Eulalia desired torture,
To purify her spirit by torment.
What is the body? Weak potter's clay;
And when the soul bursts out of it,
Dust returns to its dust,
While the soul flies to the angelic world.
Eulalia bore Christ
And without sighing, endured tortures,
And in the midst of torment she prayed to God
That the torture she might withstand.

And the dove did withstand,
And the martyr did conquer.
Her body, wounded,
With white snow was covered;
Her soul flew off like a dove,
Bound for her Creator.
On her lifeless face,
With white snow, covered,
Was the smile of a victor,
And the smile of an avenger!
With a smile she was illumined,
And, a new life, proclaimed.
By the prayers of Eulalia,
May God have mercy on us!

REFLECTION

When a man once truly repents, he needs to avoid thinking about the sins he committed, so that he will not sin again. St. Anthony counsels: "Be careful that your mind be not defiled with the remembrance of former sins--that the remembrance of those sins not be renewed in you." He also says: "Do not establish your previously committed sins in your soul by thinking about them, so that they not be repeated in you. Be assured that they were forgiven you from the time that you gave yourself to God and to repentance. In that, do not doubt." It is said of St. Ammon that he attained such perfection that, in his abundance of godliness, he no longer recognized that evil even existed. When they asked him what is that "narrow and difficult path" (Matthew 7:14), he replied: "It is the restraining of one's thoughts, and severing of one's desires, in order to fulfill the will of God." Whoever restrains sinful thoughts does not think of his own sin or the sins of others, or of anything corruptible or earthly. The mind of such a man is continually in heaven, where there is no evil. Thus, sin gradually ceases to be in him--not even in his thoughts.

CONTEMPLATION

To contemplate the wondrous help David received from God (1 Samuel 19 [also known as 1 Kings 19]):

1. How David played the harp before Saul;
2. How an evil spirit possessed Saul, and Saul hurled a spear at David, intending to kill him;
3. How Saul, even though he was very close to his target, did not hit David.

HOMILY

About the prophecy of the miracles of Christ

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart and the tongue of the dumb sing" (Isaiah 35: 5-6).

Come, brethren, let us be amazed at the power of our Living God, Who opened the eyes of mortal men to see what will come to pass, even in the far future. And even more, to see these future events in the minutest details, as though Isaiah himself were an apostle of Christ, and walked with the Lord, witnessing miracle after miracle: how Christ gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, healing to the lame, and voice and speech to the deaf and dumb. When John the Baptist, in prison, sent his disciples to ask Christ: *Are You He who is to come or do we look for another?* (Matthew 11:3), the Lord Christ answered them in the words of His prophet Isaiah: *Go and show John again those things which you do hear and see: The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up* (Matthew 11: 4-5).

See how wonderfully the Lord planned our salvation! That which was prophesied about Him through His Prophet Isaiah, is what He fulfilled. Once the Prophet Isaiah spoke words inspired by the Holy Spirit, and later Christ spoke the words of His prophet. The prophet quoted Him, and now He [Jesus Christ] quotes the prophet. This was to show that, whether Christ speaks His own words or He speaks the words of the prophet, He always speaks only His own words. It was also to show that even then it was He who spoke (and not the prophet), and that it is now He who speaks (and not anyone else). It was also to justify His prophet as His faithful servant, so that no one would be able to say that the prophet spoke falsely. Thus the prophets served to the glory of Christ the Lord; and Christ the Lord glorified His prophets, His true servants. O Lord Jesus Christ, glorified by Your servants, and the Glorifier of Your servants, help us also, so that by word, deed and thought, we may be able to serve the majestic glory of Your Name. **To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.**

Services this Week

- **Wednesday (09.04.2024.)**
 - Holy Martyr Agathonicus; *Holy Hieromartyr Gorazd of Prague*
 - *Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM*
- **11th Sunday after Pentecost (09.08.2024.)**
 - Holy Martyrs Adrian and his wife Natlia
 - *Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM*

Donations August 25, 2024

Offering - \$1,075.00 Candles - \$85.00

Donations

IMO Robert & Lillian Fleck from Gary & Debra Carpenter - \$100

IMO Shawn Novotny from Peter & Barbara Anzalone - \$50

Donation to the Men's Club from Rick Kondas - \$100

Altar Boy Robes

In Memory of Shawn Novotny from Uncle Tom, Teti Carole,
Christopher & Ashley McAllister for \$100.00

A very special thank you to Jeanette "Chee-Chee" Czubak for her generous donation to replace the roof and the heating/air condition system in the parish home. This was in memory of her grandparents, Rados and Stanka Matijevic Dudukovich and Mihailo and Stanka Popovich Sikirica, and her parents, Michael "Ben" Sikirica and Dorothy "Danica" Dudukovich Sikirica. Pozelimo joj mnogaja ljeta!!

Large Candles

(5) For Health of Olga Lucas from Sharon & Jim Urban

IMO Cecilia Gresh Shuman from Olga Bulich

**Thanks for another successful "Taste of Serbia"!!
It takes a village...and we have the BEST!
(Open your 2025 calendar and add Saturday, August 9, 2025)
Congratualtions to Gloria Cernic for winning the 50/50!!**

UPCOMING EVENTS



Johnstown Slavic Festival – September 20-21st

SIGN-UP TO WORK NEXT SUNDAY!!!!!!

KOLO SLAVA CELEBRATION – Sunday, September 29th

FISH FRY – Friday, October 4th

BASKET PARTY
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2024
DETAILS COMING SOON

St. Petka Slava Celebration – Sunday, October 27th