

**Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church**  
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**The Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost**  
**(09.08.2024.)**

**Mt.18:23-35**

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses **(KJV)**

The present Gospel is a lasting lesson in forgiveness. Our personal relationships in and outside the home are to be governed by the forgiveness taught in the present Gospel.

Every person is indebted to the Lord God. Every person fails to fully repay the Lord for all that has been given to each of us. The gifts and talents of life are not always used in ways pleasing to God.

Believers seek forgiveness from God often. If a believer seeks forgiveness from God and expects forgiveness, then the believer is to be equally forgiving in personal relationships.

Parents have the responsibility to forgive sons and daughters. Sons and daughters are responsible for forgiving their parents. In the workplace, employers improve employee morale and work conditions by being forgiving.

Employees forgiving their employers strengthen the mutual relationships. The present Gospel is intended to impact believers. Believers hearing today's Gospel message are to apply it to daily relationships.

Relationships affect where believers will experience eternity. (Mt.25:31-46) Jesus Christ's love has a place in daily relationships. Love for one another is valued in the Christian life.

Love is expressed through forgiveness. Forgiveness is a way to strengthen relationships. Forgiveness develops relationships and makes them healthier, stronger and more enduring.

God's Holy Church offers learning for all the days of life. Each Gospel reading provides learning for the healthy life in Jesus Christ. Believers grow in Christ by being attentive to the Gospel.

Jesus' known words and teachings are proclaimed in the Gospel. Jesus' words and teachings implanted in the heart strengthen the believer. Believers are nourished directly when attentive to the Gospel.

Addressing the hunger in the soul motivates believers to seek nourishment. Authentic nourishment comes from Jesus Christ. The Church provides the authentic nourishment needed for all of life.

The Church addresses the believer's needs from the time of Baptism until departure from earthly life. The Church is the pathway to eternal life in Christ.

Believers learn of God's Kingdom in the Church and the path to the Kingdom.

The Church offers a foretaste to the Kingdom. Each Divine Liturgy is a foretaste of God's Kingdom. Believers actively participating in the Divine Liturgy experience nourishment from and unity with Jesus Christ.

The Holy Scriptures are a source of nourishment for all of life. Wise individuals take time to study the Holy Scriptures. Studying the Scriptures is an investment in the Kingdom of God.

Investing in the Kingdom of God is the most secure and beneficial investment. Investments in the Kingdom of God are protected from corruption or theft. (Mt.6:19)-20)

Wise individuals invest the time and treasures of life in the Kingdom of God.

Life comes from God. Life's talents and treasures come from God. Showing gratitude to God is the believer's responsibility. Investing the gift of life and treasures of life in God's Kingdom is responsible behavior.

The person forgiven by the king in the current Gospel had the responsibility to be grateful for the forgiveness he received. Each person has reason to be grateful to God for life, talents and gifts in life. God is patient and forgiving with each person

Today is the day to think carefully about life, and the talents and gifts from God.

Now is the time to be grateful for God's forgiveness. Demonstrating love and forgiveness towards others is a way to show gratitude to God.

Practicing forgiveness and patience with others validates God’s teachings in the Gospel. God forgives believers more than is realized. The journey to God’s Kingdom continues with each small step of following the lessons in the Gospel. Jesus said: “Blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.” (Lk.11:28)

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**The Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost. Holy Martyrs Adrian and his wife Natalia.  
August 26/September 8, 2024. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.**

**Father Rodney Torbic**

## **The Prologue from Ochrid** **Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic**

### **1. THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH YEAR, OR THE BEGINNING OF THE INDICTION**

The First Ecumenical Council [Nicaea, 325] decreed that the Church year should begin on September 1. The month of September was, for the Hebrews, the beginning of the civil year (Exodus 23:16), the month of gathering the harvest and of the offering of thanks to God. It was on this feast that the Lord Jesus entered the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-21), opened the book of the Prophet Isaiah and read the words: *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn* (Isaiah 61:1-2). The month of September is also important in the history of Christianity, because Emperor Constantine the Great was victorious over Maxentius, the enemy of the Christian Faith, in September. Following this victory, Constantine granted freedom of confession to the Christian Faith throughout the Roman Empire. For a long time, the civil year in the Christian world followed the Church year, with its beginning on September 1. The civil year was later changed, and its beginning transferred to January 1. This occurred first in Western Europe, and later in Russia, under Peter the Great.

### **2. THE VENERABLE SIMEON THE STYLITE**

He was born in Syria of peasant parents. At the age of eighteen, he left home and was tonsured a monk. He undertook the most difficult ascetic practices, and sometimes undertook a strict fast for forty days. He eventually took upon himself a form of asceticism that was previously unknown. He stood day and night on a pillar, in unceasing prayer. At first, his pillar was six

cubits high; he later raised it to twelve cubits, then to twenty-two cubits, then to thirty-six cubits, and finally to forty cubits high. \*) On two occasions his mother Martha came to see him, but he refused to receive her, saying from atop the pillar: "Do not disturb me now, my mother. If we become worthy, then we'll see each other in the next world." St. Simeon endured countless assaults from demons, but he conquered them all by prayer to God. The saint worked many great miracles, healing by word and prayer many who were afflicted. People from all over gathered around his pillar--the rich and the poor, kings and slaves. Simeon helped everyone: healing some of infirmities, comforting those in need, instructing others, and reproaching some who held heretical beliefs. Thus, he turned Empress Eudocia from the Eutychian heresy and brought her back to Orthodoxy. He lived the ascetic life during the reigns of the Emperors Theodosius the Younger, Marcian and Leo the Great. Simeon, the first great stylite in Christianity and a great miracle-worker, lived to be 103 years old. He reposed in the Lord on September 1, 459. His relics were translated to Antioch, to the church dedicated to his name.

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\*) A cubit equals the length of an adult forearm, from the tip of the middle finger to the elbow, or approximately twenty inches. --Trans.

### **3. SAINT JOSHUA, THE SON OF NUN**

Joshua was the leader of the Hebrew people after the death of Moses. Of several hundred thousand Jews who came out of Egypt, only he and Caleb entered the Promised Land. Joshua lived to be 110 years old, and died approximately 1440 years before the Nativity of Christ. (Read of his faithfulness to God, his works and his miracles in the Book of Joshua.)

## **HYMN OF PRAISE**

### **SAINT SIMEON THE STYLITE**

Simeon the Stylite, the first of the pillar-dwellers,  
An illuminated elder, with the radiance of an immortal,  
Bound himself to the pillar as a willing sacrifice;  
He was fully alive to heaven, and dead to the earth.  
  
Fasting and prayer and all-night vigils--  
By this hard path he sought salvation.  
Early one morning, his mother came by:

"O Son, come down and let your mother see you!"

Thus she spoke, but Simeon was silent.

The mother repeated her plea again and again....

Simeon at last replied to his mother:

"I am in the service of the Heavenly King.

This life is a struggle and a preparation.

There is no time for empty conversation here.

But go, Mother, and choose the pure path--

Take care for your soul and live according to Christ!

After the present struggle is the next world;

If Christ finds us worthy,

You will see your son there, Mother,

And your son will delight in his mother's face."

## REFLECTION

We should use all that is necessary in this world for the cultivation of our souls, for when death separates us from this world we will take nothing to the other world except our souls, in whatever state they have been formed here. When he was eighteen, St. Simeon the Stylite was so concerned about the salvation of his soul that one day he fell face down on the earth and prayed to God that He would show him the path of salvation. And lying thus in prayer for a long time, he had a vision that he was digging a trench for a foundation and, exhausted from digging, stopped to catch his breath. A voice spoke to him, saying: "Dig deeper!" Then he began, with greater labor and effort, to dig yet deeper. Again he stopped to catch his breath. But again he heard the voice: "Dig deeper!" He again began to dig, with even greater labor and effort. At this the voice spoke to him again: "Stop, it is sufficient! Now build what you wish to build; for without labor, you will succeed in nothing." Those who labor little, and build the life of their soul on sensual shallowness, build on sand, which cannot uphold anything, even in this transitory world--and even more so in eternity.

## CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the lawlessness of David (II Samuel 11):

1. How David committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, while Uriah was away at war;
2. How David arranged the death of Uriah;
3. How God became angered with David.

## HOMILY

### on the Word, the Son of God

In the beginning was the Word (John 1:1).

The Logos--the rational, intelligent Word--existed in the beginning. This pertains to the Divine Nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. Brethren, by saying, *In the beginning*, do we think that the Word of God has a beginning? Or that there was a certain date in time when the Son of God was born of God the Father? In no way! For the birth of the Son of God can have neither a date nor a beginning, since time is a condition of this transient world, and it does not affect the eternal God, and therefore does not affect anything at all that is of God. Can the sun remain the sun, if the sunlight is separated from it? Will a man remain a man, if his mind is taken away? Would honey still be honey, if its sweetness is separated from it? It cannot. Even less can one conceive of God as separate from His Logos, from His rational Word, from His Intelligence, from His Wisdom--the eternal Father separate from His co-eternal Son.

No, brethren, the words are not about the beginning of the Son of God from God the Father, but rather about the beginning of the history of the created world and the salvation of mankind. This beginning is in the Word of God, in the Son of God. He began both the creation of the world and the salvation of the world. Whoever would speak of the creation of the visible or invisible worlds, or of the salvation of mankind, must begin with the Beginning. And that Beginning is the Word of God, the Wisdom of God, the Son of God. For example, if someone were telling a story about boating on a lake, he might begin it like this: "In the beginning there was a lake, and on it sailed a white boat...." No reasonable person would interpret the words, "In the beginning there was a lake..." to mean that the lake came into existence on the same day that the boat sailed on it. Thus, no rational man could take the words of the Evangelist, *In the beginning was the Word...*, as though the Word of God came forth from God at the same moment that the world was created! Just as the lake existed for thousands of years before the boat sailed on it, so the Word of God existed for a whole eternity before the beginning of creation.

O Son of God, co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, enlighten us and save us.

**To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.**

# Services this Week

- **Wednesday (09.11.2024.)**
  - Beheading of St. John the Baptist
  - *Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM*
- **12<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost (09.15.2024.)**
  - St Mamas; Ven. John the Faster of Constantinople; Synaxis of the Serbian Saints
  - *Divine Liturgy starts at 10:00 AM*

# 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**