

# Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

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## The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost (09.03.2023.)

(Mt.21:33-42)

Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? **(KJV)**

God's Holy Church celebrates the Divine Liturgy today throughout the world. The Divine Liturgy is an opportunity for believers to experience, be united with and to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today's Divine Liturgy is occurring during the period in the Liturgical Year when the Church is commemorating the Dormition, the Falling Asleep of the Mother of God.

Though the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, experienced an earthly death, the Church recognizes and affirms she continues to be with believers interceding before the Lord God for those reaching out to her in prayer.

The Divine Liturgy is a continuous opportunity throughout earthly life for individuals to grow in Jesus Christ. The Divine Liturgy enables believers to remain united with Jesus Christ and be renewed in Christ.

Prayers to the Mother of God by believers facilitate Christian growth. Prayers to the Mother of God are constantly effective. The miracles of the Mother of God for the benefit of earthly believers are well accounted for in the Church's history.

Today's Gospel lesson is a lesson in accountability for attentive believers. The householder held those working in the vineyard accountable for their work. The workers rejected the householder's efforts to share in the fruits of their work.

All persons live in the vineyard of the Lord and have been entrusted with a life of various blessings which are to be applied and multiplied in daily life. Believers will be accountable for using blessings received in ways pleasing to the Lord.

All believers will experience the Great and Final Judgment when each person will answer for the use of the blessings of his or her life. No one will escape the Great and Final Judgment.

Husbands and wives will answer to the Lord if their marriage was lived in harmony with each other and to the glory of God. Parents will be judged on whether their sons and daughters were raised in an atmosphere of love.

Parents will find the answers to the hardest questions in the Gospel. The Lord will determine if employers have been responsible and caring in the treatment of their workers. Workers will answer if they have been earnest and honorable.

The Gospel is always relevant to daily life. Life's lessons are present to be learned from the Gospel and have a primary place in shaping daily life. Lessons from the Gospel will lead a believer to life eternal.

Teachers in the classroom will find wisdom in the Gospel. Nurses in medical facilities will find strength and guidance in the Gospel. God's Holy Church is the Eternal University granting life-long learning experiences.

The hunger in the soul drives believers to cherish and always value the Gospel's nourishment. The Lord does not disappoint those turning to Him in faith. The Lord is ever-present and within reach through prayer.

The Lord offers hope in all life's circumstances. Even in the most tragic of circumstances the lessons of the Resurrected Christ can be found. The Divine Liturgy is a true and constant celebration of Jesus Christ's Resurrection.

Seekers of renewal in life and in Christ will find and experience nourishment in each Divine Liturgy. God cares for each person. Each person is valued in the Lord. Each person in the Lord's vineyard has something to give to the Lord in gratitude.

Blessings given to each person in the Lord's vineyard are to be returned to the Lord. The Lord entrusts each person with blessings to be used honorably. The Lord's return will reveal if each person has used his or her blessing with honor.

Persons returning the wealth of life's blessings unto the Lord will experience eternal life. Being irresponsible with the Lord's blessings leads to peril for the soul and will affect the Final Judgment.

Daily relationships in the home, the workplace and the community determine the Great and Final Judgment that will take place. Relationships between husband and wives are always under consideration by the Lord.

Fathers and mothers, family members and friends are accountable to the Lord for daily relationships. Employers and employees, teachers and students are accountable to the Lord in their relationships.

God's Holy Church is where to learn life's lessons. God's Church is where to learn the lessons for eternal life. The opportunity for learning never ends while the mind is functioning and is united with the Lord Jesus Christ.

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**Afterfeast of the Dormition. The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost. Holy Apostle Thaddeus. Holy Martyr Bassa. Hieromartyr Raphael of Sisatovac. August 21. September 3, 2023. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic**

## **PRESERVING VIRGINITY AND THE BODILY SENSES**

### **The Beauty of Virginity, Part 2**

*Keep thy heart with all diligence;  
for out of it are the issues of life  
(Prov. 4:23).*

*Blessed are the blameless in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord... For they that work iniquity have not walked in His ways (Ps. 118:1, 3). There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Rom. 8:1)—they do not fulfill carnal lusts, but keep in their hearts the words of the Lord, which are spirit and life (cf. Jn. 6:63). Those who live according to the spirit contemplate spiritual things and thereby mortify carnal desires—they become vigilant in spirit, fearless, fully trusting in the Lord. Blessed is the man that hath not slipped with his mouth, and is not pricked with the multitude of sins. Blessed is he whose conscience hath not condemned him, and who is not fallen from his hope (Sir. 14:1-2). Woe be to fearful hearts ... and the sinner that goeth two ways! Woe unto him that is fainthearted (Sir. 2:12-13).*

“If anyone keeps his body from fornication,” says [St. Macarius the Great](#), “but commits fornication mentally (by the desire of his heart), he receives no benefit (from his external virginity).” And St. Euthymius the Great, pointing to such a one, says: “He is a fornicator, and the devil possesses him.” According to St. John Chrysostom, “It is not celibacy alone that makes a virgin, but purity of heart, separation from women, and abiding in divine contemplation.”

The [lust](#) of the flesh is very seductive: It easily snares the unwary and makes the soul a prisoner of the devil. According to the word of the Lord, *whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart* (Mt. 5:28). That means you can defile yourself without touching anyone, through the eyes, through the imagination and the desires of the heart. A man is already defiled once thoughts of fornication enter the heart (cf. Mt. 15:19–20). Therefore, Scripture says, more than anything, *Keep thy heart with all diligence* (Prov. 4:23).

### **Preserving the bodily senses**

The desires of the heart are often aroused in us by external impressions. Therefore, we must protect our bodily senses, that is, sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell. Speaking of them, Scripture says: *For death is come up into our windows, and is entered into our palaces* (Jer. 9:21). Through

these doorways, the temptations of the world penetrate into the heart, even if it is full of good desires, and they desolate it, as it is said: *Evil company corrupts good morals* (1 Cor. 15:33). Of all the external senses, sight serves as the most convenient conduit for temptations, and therefore it must be especially preserved for the purity of virginity. The lust of the eyes, observing tempting things, easily and quickly unites them with the lust of the flesh and the *hidden man of the heart* (1 Pt. 3:4), regardless of time or place, and fornicates with anyone it wants. Willingly looking at and admiring the beauty of faces, the fornicator always and everywhere carries and nourishes impure lust within himself, like an untamable beast. What could be worse than such a condition? It's the same as a strong fever, when the patient cannot quench his thirst no matter how much he drinks.

Thus, Scripture says, *For many have been deceived by the beauty of a woman; for herewith love is kindled as a fire* (Sir. 9:9). And what pleasure can there be from the lust of the eyes? There is essentially no pleasure here, but only a shadow, a fraud and a deception; for where there is confusion of thoughts and anxiety of the heart, what kind of pleasure can there be? It's not the one who indulges in the lust of the eyes who enjoys peace of mind, but he who does not. And no matter how much this lustful man tries to bring himself pleasure, he won't be able to and he won't be able to make it last. The consolation of the chaste man is not like this; but his whole life, we can say, passes in pleasure, because his conscience is at peace and nothing disturbs his soul—It always calm and happily looks to Heaven, inspired by the desire for eternal blessings.

But what's the harm, you might ask, if I look but I'm not carried away by passion? You might not see the trouble for yourself the first time, and even when you look once, twice, three times, you might be able to overcome the passion, but if you start doing it often, then you'll certainly be defeated. For you are not higher than the [Prophet David](#), who we know was exposed to danger by the sight of feminine beauty (cf. 2 Kg./2 Sam. 11:1-27). But even if this doesn't happen to you right away, still, once a shameful desire is ignited within you, then even though the thing you saw is no longer there, you will imagine it and be drawn into committing shameful acts.

Therefore, St. John Chrysostom says: "Whoever is accustomed to gazing upon bodily beauty, to catching charming glances, to not averting his gaze from comely faces, and to feeding his soul with such spectacles is already a fornicator." Although speaking with women seems pleasant in the beginning, temptation later comes to the soul through them. As long as a man doesn't get close to them, it seems their gaze is serene and their conversation humble; or, as it says in Proverbs: *For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword* (Prov. 5:3-4). When you draw near to a fire and burn yourself, you quickly jump back; but having enfeebled your soul with feminine flattery, you won't soon turn away from it. As a magnet attracts metal, so a woman's love attracts the soul to desire her and be with her.

The beautiful contours of the face, the sparkle of the eyes, the blush of the cheeks, the scarlet color of the lips—all of this pleases the reckless soul; but have you thought, O man, what all this that attracts the eye is composed of? "The composition of bodily beauty," says St. John Chrysostom, "is nothing more than blood and bile—the juice of the food you've eaten: the eyes, the cheeks, and everything else are filled with it. If you think about what's inside a slender nose

and rosy cheeks, then you'll say that all the beauty of the flesh is the same as an ornate coffin filled inside with putridness."

So, why love the beauty of the flesh, which consists simply of moisture, and betray your priceless soul into slavery to it? Is it not better, when meeting with those who are taken from the earth and will return to the earth, to turn away from this gaze and seeing not to see; to look without a thought and all the sooner stop the dangerous vision? For what is the beauty of the flesh? It is a flower that blooms in the morning and is dried up by evening (cf. Ps. 89:6).

As *the love of money*, according to the word of truth, *is the root of all evil* (1 Tim. 6:10), so carnal love is nothing other than the service of corruption and fetor. That's why the demons love flesh, especially idle, pampered, wanton flesh. But isn't there the pleasure of looking at the beauty of the flesh, you might ask. It's a great pleasure! And does it last? A month, two, a year if you're lucky, and then? Familiarity causes it to lose all its charm. But what happens due to one's addiction to external charm remains forever: displeasure, boredom, bitterness, the blinding of the mind... Don't we see how many there are who lived with beautiful wives but ended their lives in misery?

Even in the greatest beauty, the exterior alone is deceptive, while the essence is nothing but a heavy yoke for the heart, which brings with it emptiness and great poverty—great deprivation of spiritual goods. One man, lamenting the calamity that comes from the beauty of the flesh, cried out: *For my loins are filled with mockings, and there is no healing in my flesh. I am afflicted and humbled exceedingly, I have roared from the groaning of my heart* (Ps. 37:8-9). But what is especially disastrous is what St. Symeon the New Theologian spoke about: "Every addiction destroys the kindled warmth of the heart," or, as St. Maximus the Confessor states: "He whose mind is attached to any thing (or person) does not love God."

Can you imagine the evil that comes from this, when we know for sure that the Kingdom of Heaven is prepared only for those who love God?—*neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers ... shall inherit the Kingdom of God* (1 Cor. 6:9-10). And don't we remember that we will have to give an account for our words and thoughts just as much as for our deeds? For the Lord says: *Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart* (Mt. 5:28). What forgiveness can there be for those who do not fear the words of the Lord? What will they say in their own defense?—nothing; but with a great cry, with gnashing of teeth, they will be cast into the fires of hell, the place of eternal and inescapable torment, as it is written: *Let sinners be turned away unto hades, yea, all the nations that are forgetful of God* (Ps. 9:17).

To keep your eyes from beholding tempting things, you need to look downward more, remembering the words spoken at God's behest to St. Ephraim the Syrian: "You who were taken from the earth, look at the earth." You must also preserve one's hearing from hearing immodest speech, worldly songs, and music that delight and enfeeble the spiritual senses, for all this draws the soul to impure love and lust of the flesh. You must take great care in acquaintance and communication with the female sex; as a warrior among enemies receives a great number of wounds, so he who freely communicates with women causes many wounds for his soul. Therefore, even in the Old Testament it was said: *Sit not at all with another man's wife, nor sit*

*down with her in thine arms, and spend not thy money with her at the wine; lest thine heart incline unto her, and so through thy desire thou fall into destruction* (Sir. 9:10).

The sense of taste is very dangerous for the purity of the flesh; therefore, we must renounce the enjoyment of food and drink. Who hasn't noticed what disastrous consequences comes from eating sweet things? It's not without reason that the Apostle calls the widow who eats intemperately *dead while she liveth* (1 Tim. 5:6). That is why those who strictly guarded their virginity rarely ate sweet food, but took mainly bread and water.

Although the sense of touch is less often subjected to temptation, it is extremely dangerous for the purity of virginity. Therefore, beware not only touching the opposite sex, but keep your hand from touching your own members, from which passion is aroused.

Of all the bodily senses, the sense of smell presents fewer temptations for chastity; however, it's necessary to refuse fragrant ointments that lead the soul to effeminacy and dispose it towards sensuality.

In addition to all of this, we must also flee impure dreams or imaginations—they subject a man to spiritual corruption much more than when fulfilling his mutual duty in marriage. Therefore, the Apostle Paul says: *It is better to marry than to burn* (1 Cor. 7:9).

Those who lead a virginal life will inevitably have to struggle with the lust of the flesh; it threatens the man who is inexperienced in the struggle with a fall and even the possible death of the soul. *For to be carnally minded is death*, says the Apostle Paul (Rom. 8:6); moreover, carnal sins are mortal sins. Therefore, *no whoremonger, nor unclean person ... hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God* (Eph. 5:5), unless he repents and turns away from his sin in mind and heart.

### Part 3

*St. Stephan of Fileika*  
*Translation by Jesse Dominick*

## Services this Week

- ❖ **Monday- 09.04.2023. – Holy Martyr Agathonicus; Holy Hieromartyr Gorazd of Prague - Divine Liturgy 09:30 AM**
- ❖ **Friday – 09.08.2023. – Holy Martyrs Adrian and his wife Natalia - Divine Liturgy 09:30 AM**
- ❖ **14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost– 09.10.2023. – Ven. Moses the Black, of Ethiopia; Ven. Sara of Pskov; Synaxis of the Serbian Saints - 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy**

# UPCOMING EVENTS



*Work schedule  
sign-ups begin  
NOW!!*

Slavic Festival – September 15–16, 2023

## KOLO SLAVA

Sunday, September 24, 2023

## BASKET PARTY

Sunday, October 29, 2023



**Donations August 27, 2023**

Offering - \$ 908.00

Candles - \$89.00

**Large Candles**

In Memory of Panie Patty Martinovich from Dan & Dyne Tomak

In Memory of Steve & Stella Baich from Kathy Szmyd

In Memory of Connie Bartis from Kathy Szmyd

In Memory of Irene Martinovich from Dorothy Podolak

In Memory of Lazo & Bosa Vuckovich from Helene Gleason

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Please visit our St. Nicholas Web Page <https://stnicholasjohnstown.org>  
We have now added a "DONATE" button to make it easier for you to send your donations. Please take a look.

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**Beginning next Sunday September 10<sup>th</sup>,  
Divine Liturgy will begin at 10:00 AM**

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**SLAVIC FESTIVAL WORKERS!!!!**

**Please sign up in the lobby !**

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**Prayers for the beginning of the School Year  
will be today during Divine Liturgy.**