

# Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

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## The Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost (09.10.2023.)

### Matthew 22:1-14

And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.

**(KJV)**

Each Divine Liturgy is a wedding feast for believers to be united with the Lord God and with each other. The invitation to attend to the feast goes out to all believers,

Participating in the Divine feast is completely voluntary, Many, many individuals choose not to participate for various reasons. The world is filled with individuals that could benefit from partaking of Christ's Precious Body and Blood.

In each community, large numbers of people live alone. Some are single individuals. Others are separated, divorced or are widowed. Some live in marriage but feel lonely in their circumstances.

Accepting the invitation to participate in the Divine Liturgy and partake of the Precious Body and Blood of Christ is away to become part of and remain part of an eternal community.

In the present world it is said that people often do not know their neighbors. Some husbands and wives live separate lives with little common interaction in the home. Family dinners are not a regular tradition in all homes.

God's Holy Church is where unity in community is alive and experienced. Parishes are an example of a community of love exemplified with all partaking from the same Chalice of Christ's Body and Blood.

Unity in the parish strengthens the parishioners. Parishioners need not feel alone when they unite with others in worship and in partaking of Christ's Body and Blood.

Believers draw strength from the unity and bond in Christ in the parish. The Gospel nourishes and strengthens attentive listeners. The present Gospel describes the invitation that goes forth when each Divine Liturgy is celebrated.

Humans are communal beings. Unity with others in Jesus Christ is the ultimate unity. Jesus Christ brings believers together as each participates in Communion in God's Holy Church.

Depression, despair and despondency are combated by being active in following Jesus Christ. Loneliness is defeated by uniting with Christ in prayer and in partaking of Christ's Precious Body and Blood.

The Lord God does not disappoint those persons choosing to say "yes" to God's constant invitations. Believers benefit when uniting with Jesus Christ and living in God-pleasing ways.

Taking up one's personal cross is a part of being united with Christ. Jesus Christ set the example of experiencing the Cross. Being responsible in handling the personal crosses of life leads to a fulfilling life in Christ.

Jesus' Cross led to the joy of the Resurrection. Dealing with personal crosses in life results in new life and renewal of life in Christ. The Holy Gospel offers instruction and lessons for the paths to follow for unity and renewal in Christ.

Married couples are challenged to grow in Christ through their marriage. The marriage ceremony is only a beginning together. The road to eternal life requires husbands and wives to exert effort to continue to grow together in Christ.

The Holy Scriptures offer and illuminate the lessons of love and sacrifice that husbands and wives, mothers and fathers are to heed and embrace. Married and family life are a constant challenge in every generation.

God's Holy Church offers the nourishment and guidance for parishioners to follow and travel the path to the Heavenly Kingdom. Life changes as individuals age. Repentance and changes are required in the way life is to be lived.

Living in Christ and growing in Christ are constant expectations from the time the believer exits the Baptismal font. Journeying to the Heavenly Kingdom is achieved through traveling paths defined and illumined in God's Holy Church.

The present Gospel is proclaimed in the Church each year to remind believers of the importance of saying "yes" to the invitation to join in the Divine Feast. Attentive believers heed the Lord's invitation and benefit.

Thank God for the constant love and willingness to invite believers to draw near and to be Divinely nourished. Thank God for the Lord God voluntarily choosing to be Crucified and Resurrecting from the dead offering hope for life eternal.

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**The Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost. Venerable Moses the Black of Ethiopia. Venerable Sava of Pskov. Synaxis of the Serbian Saints. August 28/September 10, 2023. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic**

## HOPING IN GOD'S HELP AMIDST THE BATTLE OF SPIRIT AND FLESH

### The Beauty of Virginity, Part 3

*[St. Stephan of Fileika](#)*

### The battle of spirit and flesh

Now let us try to find a way to deliver ourselves from the captivity of sin, to overcome the evil lust hiding within us. Who hasn't noticed within himself the struggle of the spirit with the flesh, the enmity between good and evil? And who doesn't sigh under the yoke that the Lord has imposed on all the sons of Adam? The Apostle Paul says: *But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* (Rom. 7:23–24)—from the law of the flesh, which injures and causes death to the soul?

The soul is struck and confounded by the lawless gratification of excessive carnal desires, negligence, and complete cooling towards virtue. From this comes the continual forgetfulness of God, which is the death of the soul, its languor and sorrow—first temporary, then eternal. Whoever wants to avoid this death should learn as much as possible about the law of the Lord and call on His help. The revelation of the Lord is a spiritual light that enlightens the mind and brings the soul out of the shadow of death (cf. Mt. 4:16); and the remembrance of the Lord is the life of the soul, or, what's the same, unceasing joy in the Lord.

### Hope in God's help and the destruction of pride

Nothing makes the soul so weak and negligent in the work of salvation as self-love and self-will—the forebears and feeders of [carnal passions](#); therefore, you must reject them and force

yourself to do good. Labor and humility are necessary for those who want to be free from the captivity of sin. And David cried out: *Behold my lowliness and my toil, and forgive all my sins* (Ps. 24:18). Sin reigns in proud hearts, but grace abides in the humble (cf. Jas. 4:6, 1 Pt. 5:5)—and the kingdom of evil is destroyed.

God restores a contrite heart in hope and raises one who is conscious of the poverty and wretchedness of his soul from the festering passions; therefore, you mustn't despair when you see yourself in spiritual misery, dying from sinful wounds. Or as St. Philaret, the Metropolitan of Moscow says, "Use the feeling of weakness not unto despair, but to reject hope in yourself and hope in God by prayerfully entreating His help." For the Lord always shows His saving power in our impotence and weakness: *My strength, He says, is made perfect in weakness* (2 Cor. 12:9).

"From my youth many passions have fought against me, but do Thou help me and save me, O my Savior" (Matins, Antiphon 4th Tone), the holy Church sings on behalf of the saved, those who have been liberated from enslavement to sin by the power of God. For carnal passions do not cease to battle the soul for a long time, until a man is completely convinced that it's not by his own wisdom and diligence but by God's help and intercession that he is liberated from the captivity of sin. If a man is not temporarily abandoned and scorned by God Himself, as if completely enslaved to the law of sin that operates in his members (cf. Rom. 7:23), such that he can find help neither by his works nor from God, then he won't come to know himself, he won't be broken in heart, and won't consider himself the last, the worst of all. In this is manifested God's providence for the saved, to humble them and then elevate them to the height of passionlessness, of the blessed life.

This is why the passions of the flesh war against us, so that we might know our infirmity, like David, who said: *Deliver me, for a poor man am I and a pauper* (Ps. 108:21); so that we might place our salvation in God alone: *For He shall save his people from their sins* (Mt. 1:21). Therefore, it's impossible to have freedom from carnal desires and to be pure of passionate thoughts as long as a man hopes in himself. But whoever maintains humility, contrition, and hope in the mercy of God is granted a portion among the saved and is counted among the righteous; and the Lord will say to him, as to the Apostle Paul: *My grace is sufficient for thee* (2 Cor. 12:9). "I am the Lord Thy God Who has mercy on thee and heals all thine afflictions."

Don't marvel as though it's something strange if you see yourself powerless in the battle with sinful lusts, and don't think that this happens to you alone: Many of the saints have endured the same. Listen to how St. Gregory the Theologian laments his misfortunes:

Oh, my soul, how sinful and worthy of punishment you are! Oh, mortals, how vain and insignificant is our pride! And a light wind already shakes us. Everything in man is impermanent—both the good and the evil: Both are close to each other. The evil man doesn't know what his end will be, and the good man can't assure he will always be virtuous. As a youth, innocence guided me and chastity subdued my senses and kindled fervent love for the wisdom of God in my heart. But now, despite the knowledge I have gained, despite my mature age, I can barely drag my feet like a drunkard: The enemy secretly creeps into my heart and steals my good intentions. Sometimes my spirit soars to God, and sometimes it plunges into the abyss of the world that has inflicted so many

wounds upon my soul. But though sin dominates me, although the enemy drowns me in the waters of lawlessness, although I see my condition, I know who I am and where I would like to ascend to. I see the depth of my fall and the whole abyss into which I may still plunge.

Another saint, [Venerable Isaac the Syrian](#) says:

When we surrender ourselves to an inexperienced mind and we begin to do unseemly things again, then we will not be negligent about correcting our lives, for the righteous also have a tendency to sin; but remaining in sin is a consequence of the deadening of the soul. God replaces the fulfillment of His commandments with [repentance](#), and imputes to us sorrow for sins instead of virtues—such is the goodness of God! But whoever, hoping in repentance, gives himself over to sin, and turns God’s grace into indulgence in sin thereby sinning grievously, does not reach the state in which he could be cleansed from sins, and thus he dies an unrepentant sinner.

Thus, let us not neglect our salvation; let us not despair of correction, in either case adding sin to sin. *The Lord hath commanded no man to do wickedly, neither hath he given any man licence to sin* (Sir. 15:20). *And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* (1 Pt. 4:18). *A wise man will fear in every thing, and in the day of sinning he will beware of offence* (Sir. 18:27). *He will turn to the Lord with all his heart and will pray before Him day and night until iniquity passes away* (Ps. 56:3); *he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him* (Ezek. 33:15-16).

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

## Services this Week

❖ **13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost** – 09.03.2023. – 10:00 AM  
*Divine Liturgy – Prayer for the beginning of the new school year*

**Donations September 3, 2023**

Offering - \$ 931.00

Candles - \$44.00

Dues - \$50.00

**Large Candles**

In Memory of Panie Patty Martinovich from Dan & Dyne Tomak

In Memory of Steve & Stella Baich from Kathy Smyzd

In Memory of Connie Bartis from Kathy Smyd

In Memory of Irene Martinovich from Dorothy Podolak

In Memory of Lazo & Bosa Vuckovich from Helene Gleason

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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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**SLAVIC FESTIVAL WORKERS!!!**

Please sign up in the lobby today!!

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**UPCOMING EVENTS**



**SLAVIC FESTIVAL – September 15-16, 2023**

**KOLO SLAVA – Sunday, September 24, 2023**

**BASKET PARTY – October 29, 2023**