

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905

Rev. Presbyter Dragan Vukovic (814) 244-4063

stnicholasjtown@gmail.com

The Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Matthew 22:35-46

Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked Him a question, tempting Him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer Him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions. (KJV)

The Sunday after the Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross

Mk.8:34-9:1

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

(KJV)

Believers gather today in God's Holy Church to worship and glorify God.

Believers come to church in search of salvation and personal peace. Healing of soul and body are of interest to believers in attendance.

Personal relationships in the home, at work or in the community will be on the minds and in the hearts of believers. God's Holy Church is where to come in search of peace and salvation.

The Gospel for the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost describes the relationships expected with God and with neighbor. God is to be loved with all the heart, mind and soul.

A believer's neighbor is to be loved as the believer love's him or herself.

The Church is where to figure out how to bring into daily reality complete love of God and love of neighbor.

Every person commits sins in the relationship with God. Every person commits sins against his or her neighbor, family member or friend. Learning to drive sin from the self is a life-long undertaking.

Being nourished by God's teachings, the Holy Scriptures and the wisdom proclaimed in the experience of the Church helps believers to improve the relationship with God, neighbors, family members and friends.

Actively attending the Divine services of the Church leads to transformation of believers. Being serious about the Holy Mysteries of the Church leads to growth in Christ and actions pleasing to Christ.

Honesty with the self through personal examination will lead to repentance and personal change. Strong faith and trust in God's goodness and mercy makes a difference in personal life.

Inwardly, the believer must be firmly committed to loving God and desiring to please God for change and growth to occur. The world is full of temptations, perils and attractions that will devastate the soul and relationships.

Guarding the heart, mind and soul is essential at all times for purity in life to be achieved. Being a God-pleasing Christian takes work throughout life. Enjoying the fullness of the life in Christ requires initiative and on-going effort.

Believers need to reject thoughts of sin and temptations. Perilous attractions need to be avoided. Forgiveness in personal relationships has a place at all times and in all circumstances.

Love is the paramount guide in the relationship with God, neighbor, family member and friend. Love takes work. Love involves being humble and considerate.

To grow in Christ, believers need to look to Christ for direction and guidance, nourishment and hope. Only with the help of Christ does personal life become pleasing to Christ.

Help from Christ is required to combat sin. Christ's help is needed for healthy relationships with family members, friends and neighbors. A heart, mind and soul firmly dedicated to God will yield love of God.

Believers are expected to grow and mature in Christ with the passage of time. The Church commonly baptizes infants. As a person matures in age, the person is to mature in relationships with God, neighbor, family member and friend.

Life's journey from birth to death involves the relationships with God and with the humans as part of daily life. The Holy Gospel guides believers in forming and developing these relationships.

Gratitude has a place with God and in daily personal relationships. Grateful believers take time to thank God and the people in daily life. Greed, hatefulness and selfishness have no place in the Christian life.

The Gospel lessons for today are challenging. The Cross of Christ and Resurrection of Christ give hope and direction for believers. Always remain hopeful in Christ and in personal relationships. Communicate love and hope.

The Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost. The Sunday after the Exaltation of the Cross. Holy Great Martyr Eustatius. September 20/October 3, 2021.

Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic

The Prologue from Ochrid

St. Bishop Nikolai of Zhicha, New York and all Orthodoxy

1. SAINT JOHN THE THEOLOGIAN, APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST

John was the son of Zebedee the fisherman and Salome the daughter of Joseph, the betrothed of the Holy Theotokos. Called by the Lord Jesus, John immediately left his father and his fishermen's nets and, with his brother James, followed Christ. From then on, he was not separated from his Lord until the end. With Peter and James, he was present at the raising of Jairus's daughter and the Transfiguration of the Lord. At the Last Supper, he inclined his head on Jesus' breast. When all the other apostles had abandoned the crucified Lord, John and the Holy Mother of God remained beneath the Cross. In obedience to the Lord, he was as a son to the Holy Virgin Mary, and carefully served and watched over her until her Dormition. After her Dormition, John took his disciple Prochorus to preach the Gospel in Asia Minor. He lived and labored mostly in Ephesus. By his inspired preaching and miracles he converted many to Christianity and shook paganism to its foundation. The embittered pagans bound him and sent him to Rome, to face Emperor Dometian. Dometian had him tortured and flogged, but neither the bitterest poison he was given to drink, nor the boiling oil into which he was thrown, did him any harm. This terrified the emperor and, thinking him immortal, Dometian sent him into exile to the island of Patmos. There St. John converted many to Christianity by words and miracles, and confirmed well the Church of God. He also wrote his Gospel and Revelation on Patmos. In the time of Emperor Nero, who granted freedom to all prisoners, John returned to Ephesus, where he lived for some time, confirming the work he had begun earlier. He was over one hundred years old when he went to the Lord. When his disciples later opened his grave, they did not find his body. On May 8 of every year, a fine dust, fragrant and healing, rose from his grave. After a long, laborious and fruitful life on earth, this beloved disciple of Christ, a true pillar of the Church, took up his habitation in the joy of His Lord.

2. THE VENERABLE NILUS OF CALABRIA

Nilus was a great ascetic among the Greeks of Calabria. The founder of several monasteries, he was a miracle-worker and a defender of the purity of the Orthodox Faith. He undertook a long journey to save a man from grave punishment. He had an ardent love for his neighbor, and entered into rest in the year 1005 A.D. Nilus left many worthy disciples, among whom was the distinguished St. Bartholomew, the writer of several canons, who reposed in 1044 A.D.

SAINT JOHN THE THEOLOGIAN, APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST

St. John the Evangelist,
Son of Zebedee the fisherman,
Was young when the love
Of Jesus greatly warmed him.

The most faithful friend of the Lord,
With a pure, virginal soul,
With a soul pure and loving,
Visionary and heroic.

He proclaimed wondrous mysteries
And removed the seal from eternity.
He saw the destiny of the world,
from the beginning to the end.

He preached love,
And in love he walked;
To the throne of the Most-high God
He was raised up in love.

And with love he was exalted
Like a snow-capped mountain:
The Son of Thunder, an awesome prophet,
But meek and tender in heart.

O John, seer of wonders,
O thundering saint--
Bear our small petitions
To your Friend, the Savior!

Bring us close to Him,
The powerful God, the sweet God;
And though we are not worthy of His bosom,
At least bring us close--to His feet!

REFLECTION

Thus writes the Apostle James: *Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins* (James 5:20). The apostles of Christ did not simply speak thus, but confirmed it by their work. St. Clement of Alexandria relates that, somewhere in Asia Minor, St. John the Apostle had baptized a pagan youth and entrusted him to the care of the local bishop, while he went on further to preach the Gospel. In John's absence, this young man became corrupt, and began to drink and steal, and finally joined a band of thieves in the forest, who attacked men and robbed them. After a while John returned, and heard from the bishop what had happened to this young man. Then Apostle John, not wasting a moment, found a horse and a guide and rushed to the forest where the robbers were to be found. Searching through the forest the saint found them, and confronted their leader. When the young man recognized John, he began to flee. Though aged, John chased him and,

despite his old age, caught him. The young man fell at the feet of the apostle and, in shame, could not look him in the eye. John embraced and kissed him, as a shepherd does upon finding his lost sheep. The saint brought him back to town and confirmed him anew in the Faith and in virtuous life. Thereafter pleasing God, this young man entered into rest in due time.

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the divided heart of King Amaziah toward God, and God's punishment (II Chronicles 25):

1. How Amaziah at first did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and God granted him victory over the Edomites;
2. How Amaziah brought the Edomite idols (which had not helped the Edomites) to Jerusalem, and worshiped them;
3. How God permitted the Israelites to defeat him, and a rebellion was raised against him and killed him.

HOMILY

On prayer inspired by love

Sanctify them by Thy truth. Thy word is truth (John 17:17).

When a mother is led to death, she worries more about the children whom she leaves behind than about herself. Such is the bond of great love. The Lord Jesus Christ had an even greater love for His disciples than that of a mother for her children. Going to His death, the Lord prayed to His heavenly Father for His disciples. He prayed, not because He lacked power to help them, but prayed to the Father to show the unity of His being with, and love for, His Father. But why did He then ascribe Truth to the Father, when before that He referred to *the Spirit of Truth* (John 14:17), saying to the disciples: *The Spirit of Truth ... will guide you into all truth* (John 16:13)? To demonstrate the equality of the Father and the Holy Spirit. Did He not first say of Himself: *I am the Truth* (John 14:6)? And, afterward, did He not call the Holy Spirit the Comforter, *the Spirit of Truth*? And He now ascribes truth to the Father as well: *Sanctify them by Thy truth!* He who would see any contradiction in this does not comprehend God as Unity and Trinity--Unity of Essence and Trinity of Persons. In that He ascribes truth as something essential to each Person of the Divine Trinity, the Lord demonstrates the equality of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. For if one Person of the Divine Trinity would possess less truth, He would be lesser, in Essence, than the other two Persons. With a lessening of truth, there is also a lessening of power, love and wisdom. Therefore, the Lord referred to Himself, the Father, and the Holy Spirit as Truth, so that men would know and believe in Their complete, essential unity. Therefore let none of the faithful be deluded by any lie asserting an inequality of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. Everyone should endeavor to wipe his heart clean of sin, as one cleans a mirror: only then can we truly perceive the great truth of the equality of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

O Triune and Divine Truth, enlighten us with Thyself, and save us.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Services this Week

**The Conception of Glorious Prophet and Baptist John (Wednesday, October 06th) –
09:00 AM Divine Liturgy**

**Rest of the Ap. and Evangelist John the Theologian – Memorial Saturday(Saturday, -
Oktober 09th) – Divine Liturgy 09:00 AM**

16th Sunday after Pentecost (Sunday, Oktober 10th) – 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy

Donations Sunday September 26, 2021

Offering - \$842.00 Candles - \$30.00 Parastos - \$40.00

Donations

From Kathryn Ozog for the wonderful Serbian food she purchased at the
Slavic Festival - \$50

Building Fund

In Memory of Edward Gartrell from Dan Lovrich - \$10

Large Candles

In Memory of Julie Lambrinos from Kumovi Dan & Dyne Tomak

In Memory of Charles Bulich from Olga Bulich

In Memory of Christine Bulich from Olga Bulich

In Memory of Charlie Bulich from Olga Bulich

In Memory of Violet Sewak from Olga Bulich

In Memory of Ranka Marinkovich from Dan & Dyne Tomak

SAVE THE DATE – SATURDAY, OCTOBER 16th

Family Night with the Sunday School

Everyone is welcome – details to follow

Next Fish Fry – Friday, October 22, 2021
