

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

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Rev. Presbyter Dragan Vukovic

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The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost (10.01.2023.)

Matthew 15:21-28

Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me. But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. **(KJV)**

Sunday after the Exaltation of the Precious Life-giving Cross

Mark 8:34-9:1

When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. And He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power. **(KJV)**

The Gospel is proclaimed today in God's Holy Church. The Gospel has been proclaimed down through the centuries to nourish and guide believers. Believers' lives become more Christ-like as a result of having heard the Gospel.

Attentive believers hear the Gospel when they gather to worship in parish churches and monasteries. From the time of Holy Baptism until departure from this life, believers benefit from hearing the Gospel.

Today's Gospel reading from St. Matthew demonstrates the value of strong faith to deal with issues caused by the devil. The mother in the Gospel turned to Jesus for the curing ills her daughter was facing.

The mother persistently appealed to Jesus to cure her daughter of vexations caused by the devil. Jesus responded to the mother's resolute faith. Jesus healed the daughter.

Relationships in the home, at work or in the community can be improved when believers are resolute in faith. Believers with resolute faith do well to address issues created by the devil.

Contemporary believers' resolute appeals to the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy are definitive and sound. The mother's resolute faith in the current Gospel gives hope to contemporary believers to appeal to Jesus for mercy.

Today's reading from St. Mark's Gospel verifies the value of following Christ. The soul is valued more than the whole world. Following Jesus Christ in dealing with personal crosses in life leads to renewal of the life in Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ's example of ascending The Cross empowers believers to deal with life's personal crosses. Being immersed in Jesus Christ is the best way to face life's difficult challenges.

Believers are expected to grow in Christ from the time of Holy Baptism until departure from this life. God's Holy Church provides the environment for the growth to occur.

The Gospel and the Holy Mysteries of the Church lead and nourish the believer throughout the life cycle. The Divine services of the Church provide constant support for believers journeying to the Heavenly Kingdom and eternal life.

Saints and martyrs of the Church are inspirational examples for believers of each generation. New martyrs and saints appear in every generation to verify the value of living in Christ.

The crosses of personal life may seem overwhelming at times. Life's outlook will seem dark at unexpected moments. No day was darker in the world than the day Jesus died on The Cross.

The darkness of the day Jesus' died on The Cross was followed shortly thereafter by His Resurrection. Jesus proved He was the Conqueror of death.

Jesus teaches believers the way to deal with the personal crosses of life.

Jesus gives believers the strength and wisdom for dealing with life's crosses. Growth in Christ results from responsibly dealing with life's crosses. Christ transforms believers when they unite with Him in prayer and in faith.

The Holy Mysteries of the Church unite believers with Christ. Confession, Communion and Holy Unction bring healing and joy to believers. Constant repentance ensures the believer and Christ remain inseparable.

The Lord Jesus Christ is within reach of each believer at all times of life. The Lord Jesus Christ is present at every moment of life. The Holy Apostle Paul reassured believers with his words recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. (Acts. 17:28)

The Holy Apostle Paul said those seeking the Lord will find He is not far. Apostle Paul's words about the Lord were specific. He said: "For in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts. 17:28)

Rejoice in the Lord's presence today and every day. Be grateful to the Lord for the proclamation of the Gospel and the Divine services and Holy Mysteries of the Church. Seek always to repent, be thankful and seek to grow in Christ

The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost. The Sunday after the Feast of the Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross. Venerable Martyr Eumenius, Bishop of Gortyna, Holy Martyr Ariadne September 18/October 1, 2023. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic

ON THE VENERATION OF THE CROSS



*The word "Cross" is foolishness to those that perish, but to us who are saved it is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:23). For he that is spiritual judges all things, but the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit. For it is foolishness to those who do not receive in faith and who do not consider God's goodness and omnipotence, but search out divine things with human and natural reasonings. For all the things that are of God are above nature and reason and conception. For should any one consider how and for what purpose God brought all things out of nothing and into being, and aim at arriving at that by natural reasonings, he fails to comprehend it. For knowledge of this kind belongs to spirits and demons. But if any one, under the guidance of faith, should consider the divine goodness and omnipotence and truth and wisdom and justice, he will find all things smooth and even, and the way straight. *But without faith it is impossible to be saved* (Hebrews 11:6). For it is by faith that all things, both human and spiritual, are sustained. For without faith neither does the farmer cut his furrow, nor does the merchant commit his life to*

the raging waves of the sea on a small piece of wood, nor are marriages contracted nor any other step in life taken. By faith we consider that all things were brought out of nothing into being by God's power. And we direct all things, both divine and human, by faith. Further, faith is assent free from all meddlesome inquisitiveness.

Every action, therefore, and performance of [miracles](#) by Christ are most great and divine and marvelous: but the most marvelous of all is His precious Cross. For no other thing has subdued death, expiated the sin of the first parent, despoiled Hades, bestowed the resurrection, granted the power to us of contemning the present and even death itself, prepared the return to our former blessedness, opened the gates of Paradise, given our nature a seat at the right hand of God, and made us the children and heirs of God, save the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. For by the Cross all things have been made right. So many of us, the apostle says, as were baptized into Christ, were baptized into His death Romans 6:3, and as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. Galatians 3:27 Further, *Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God* (1 Corinthians 1:24). Lo! The death of Christ, that is, the Cross, clothed us with the enhypostatic wisdom and power of God. And the power of God is the Word of the Cross, either because God's might, that is, the victory over death, has been revealed to us by it, or because, just as the four extremities of the Cross are held fast and bound together by the bolt in the middle, so also by God's power the height and the depth, the length and the breadth, that is, every creature visible and invisible, is maintained.

This was given to us as a sign on our forehead, just as the circumcision was given to Israel: for by it we believers are separated and distinguished from unbelievers. This is the shield and weapon against, and trophy over, the devil. This is the seal *that the destroyer may not touch you* (Exodus 12:23), as says the Scripture. This is the resurrection of those lying in death, the support of the standing, the staff of the weak, the rod of the flock, the safe conduct of the earnest, the perfection of those that press forwards, the salvation of soul and body, the aversion of all things evil, the patron of all things good, the taking away of sin, the plant of resurrection, the tree of eternal life. So, then, this same truly precious and august tree, on which Christ has offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sakes, is to be worshipped as sanctified by contact with His holy body and blood; likewise the nails, the spear, the clothes, His sacred tabernacles which are the manger, the cave, Golgotha, which brings salvation, the tomb which gives life, Sion, the chief stronghold of the churches and the like, are to be worshipped. In the words of David, the father of God, *We shall go into His tabernacles, we shall worship at the place where His feet stood*. And that it is the Cross that is meant is made clear by what follows, *Arise, O Lord, into Your Rest*. For the resurrection comes after the Cross. For if of those things which we love, house and couch and garment, are to be longed after, how much the rather should we long after that which belonged to God, our Savior, by means of which we are in truth saved.

Moreover we worship even the image of the precious and life-giving Cross, although made of another tree, not honoring the tree (God forbid) but the image as a symbol of Christ. For He said to His disciples, admonishing them, *Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven* Matthew 24:30, meaning the Cross. And so also the angel of the resurrection said to the woman, *You seek Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified* (Mark 16:6). And the Apostle said, *We preach Christ crucified* (1 Corinthians 1:23). For there are many Christs and many Jesuses, but

One crucified. He does not say speared but crucified. It behooves us, then, to worship the sign of Christ. For wherever the sign may be, there also will He be. But it does not behoove us to worship the material of which the image of the Cross is composed, even though it be gold or precious stones, after it is destroyed, if that should happen. Everything, therefore, that is dedicated to God we worship, conferring the adoration on Him.

The tree of life which was planted by God in Paradise pre-figured this precious Cross. For since death was by a tree, it was fitting that life and resurrection should be bestowed by a tree. Jacob, when He worshipped the top of Joseph's staff, was the first to image the Cross, and when he blessed his sons with crossed hands (Hebrews 11:21) he made most clearly the sign of the cross. Likewise also did Moses' rod, when it smote the sea in the figure of the cross and saved Israel, while it overwhelmed Pharaoh in the depths; likewise also the hands stretched out crosswise and routing Amalek; and the bitter water made sweet by a tree, and the rock rent and pouring forth streams of water (Numbers 20), and the rod that meant for Aaron the dignity of the high priesthood (Exodus 4): and the serpent lifted in triumph on a tree as though it were dead, the tree bringing salvation to those who in faith saw their enemy dead, just as Christ was nailed to the tree in the flesh of sin which yet knew no sin. The mighty Moses cried, *You will see your life hanging on the tree before your eyes*, and Isaiah likewise, *I have spread out my hands all the day unto a faithless and rebellious people* (Isaiah 65:2). But may we who worship this obtain a part in Christ the crucified. Amen.

From *An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Book IV, Chapter 11: Concerning the Cross and here further concerning Faith.

St. John of Damascus

Services this Week

- ❖ **Tuesday 10.03.2023. - Holy Greatmartyr Eustatius (Placidus) - 09:30 AM Divine Liturgy**
- ❖ **Friday – 10.07.2023. – The Conception of Glorious Prophet and Baptist John – 09:30 AM Divine Liturgy**
- ❖ **18th Sunday after Pentecost - 10.08.2023. - Ven. Mother Euprosyne; Ven. Father Sergius of Radonezh – 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy**

Donations September 24, 2023

Offering - \$ 683.00 Candles - \$97.00

(Date Correction from previous Bulletin)

Donations September 10, 2023

Offering - \$ 90.00

Donations September 17, 2023

Offering - \$1,451.00 Candles - \$88.00

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

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.

**Please join us next Sunday, October 8th, following
Divine Liturgy for an Appreciation Luncheon for
all of our St. Nicholas parishioners who work
tirelessly for all of our fundraisers. Whether it is
physical work or your love and support through it
all, everyone is invited.**

UPCOMING EVENTS

FISH FRY

Friday, October 20, 2023

BASKET PARTY

Sunday, October 29, 2023
