

**Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church**  
*971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905*  
Rev. Presbyter Dragan Vukovic  
**(814) 244-4063**

**The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost**  
**(10.20.2024.)**

**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)**

The Canaanite woman was persistent with the Lord Jesus Christ seeking help with her daughter. The woman's daughter was vexed with the devil. The mother was relentless in beseeching Jesus for help.

Parents with children vexed by the devil benefit from this Gospel reading. Turning to Jesus Christ in strong and persistent faith makes a difference. The Lord Jesus Christ always makes a difference with parents having strong faith.

Having a son or daughter vexed with the devil is a terrible burden for a parent to bear. Jesus Christ helps parents address the challenges of stressful issues with their children.

Sons and daughters are a blessing from God. God is always present to help guide parents throughout life. Prayer keeps parents united with the Lord.

Prayer helps believers in determining the best path for raising their children.

God's Holy Church proclaims this Gospel to remind parents to look to Jesus Christ in meeting their parental responsibilities. Sons and daughters are exposed to the devil in many different forms in daily life.

Parents need not feel alone and anxious when problems arise with their children. Staying united with Jesus Christ in heart, mind and soul gives parents the strength to address problems when they arise.

Jesus is always present and within immediate reach. Jesus is attentive. Jesus knows the contents of the heart, mind and soul of each person. Jesus is the remedy when problems arise.

Parents do well to invest in reading the Holy Scriptures to strengthen and improve their parenting. God's Holy Church has centuries of timeless wisdom for the benefit of attentive parents.

The Church is always timely. The Church is always relevant. The Lord Jesus Christ is ever-present. Being a parent can be frightening or intimidating at times during the life cycle.

The Church offers strength and support for parents. The Gospel shines light on the problems parents face. Nourishment exists in the Church for parents. Parents have opportunities to bond with other parents in the parish community.

The Canaanite woman had strong faith. The woman's faith served her well. When she did not get immediate results, her faith remained strong and persistent. Life's problems can be extremely difficult.

The devil will arise throughout life. The devil creates problems to destroy the soul. Parents need to be strong in faith. Nourishment to build and keep faith strong is in God's Holy Church.

Parents choosing to raise children outside the Church deny themselves and their children the lasting and immeasurable benefits of the life in Christ. Parents in the Church learn from the Canaanite woman.

Parents in the Church hear the lessons of the Gospel at each Divine Liturgy. When a mother or father does something that is not good as a parent, they can repent and begin anew in the Church.

The Church has lasting lessons through the centuries of people making errors in judgement, correcting them and traveling towards God's Kingdom. Parents learn to grow in life and in Christ by being faithful in the Church.

The Church offers the wisdom that transcends time. The Church has the wisdom and the path for eternal life. Parents investing in the Church are investing in the Kingdom of God.

Experiencing life in the Church is a foretaste of the Kingdom. The Canaanite woman experienced a foretaste of the Kingdom when her daughter was healed.

Parents turning to Jesus Christ experience the joy of healing.

Healing takes many forms. Jesus determines the healing appropriate for each person. Trust is necessary when turning to Jesus for help. Patience is required to fully understand outcomes.

Thank God for today's Gospel. Thank God for those in the Church through the centuries preserving and proclaiming the Gospel. Thank God for the freedom to hear the Gospel.

May our faith increase due to today's Gospel. The Canaanite woman demonstrated the value of strong faith. Centuries of believers have benefitted from her example.

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**The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost. Holy Martyrs Sergius and Bacchus.  
October 20/27, 2024. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic**

## A LESSON ON PRAYER

### Homily on Matthew 14:22–34



Artist: Greg Olsen. Photo: gregolsen.com

*And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.*

The same word is used twice, in order to more strongly emphasize the solitude that the Lord purposefully sought and which He found after sending the multitudes away. A mountain, solitude, darkness. These are the conditions under which a person most easily feels the nearness of the Spirit of God; these are the conditions for the sweetest [prayer](#). All that our Lord Jesus Christ did, He did for our edification and salvation. For He came to earth in order to teach us not only with words, but by deeds, events, and by His every gesture and movement. He ascends the mountain, for on the mountain is the most profound quiet. He remains alone, for solitude means distance from this world. He prays in the darkness of night, for nocturnal darkness is a veil for the eyes, which most often hinder the mind and contemplation by darting from one thing to another. Christ's prayer on the mountain also has its hidden, inner meaning. Sending away the multitudes, ascending the mountain, remaining alone in the darkness—what does it all mean? Sending away the multitudes means setting aside all imaginations of the world and all memories that trouble us and bind us to themselves, and having freed ourselves from the world, to raise our minds to prayer to God. What does it mean to ascend the mountain? It means raising the mind, heart, and soul to the Lord, near to God, in God's presence. Whoever is drawn to the world with its endless interests, just as people while in a crowd cannot rise to the heights, where one remains one on one with His Creator. What does mean to be alone? It means an exposed soul, a soul just as it is. After departing from the world, a person may feel terrible [loneliness](#). People who through disappointment with the world are led to this terrible loneliness usually take their own lives, if they are not able to rise to those heights where man finds God. What does darkness mean? It means the total absence of whatever there is of this world's light. For the one who prays in solitude, this whole world is immersed in impenetrable darkness, in which for him the dawn of Heavenly light proceeding from God gradually gathers strength and illumines a new world that is infinitely better, more radiant than this world. Thus, these are essentially the four steps of prayer, and this is their inner meaning. In this event of Christ's, these steps are represented in the images of sending away the multitudes, ascending the mountain, solitude, and darkness.

But this solitary prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ is even more edifying for us if we take into consideration what happened before it, and what is to happen afterwards. Before this prayer, the Lord worked the unprecedented miracle of multiplying the bread, and after it He walked on the waves of the sea as if it were dry land, to the very center of the sea. Although He worked this miracle by His own divine power—which He had before the creation of the world and which was always with Him even when He abided in time and in the flesh—He nevertheless prayed both in the temple with the people, and alone in the desert. It is hard for any of us to enter into the mysterious, personal motivations of these prayers of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, these prayers the Only-Begotten Son of the Pre-eternal Father continued also on earth, and witnessed to His immutable unity with His Father and the Holy Spirit. But besides this, the lesson that the Lord gives us through the example of His prayer is perfectly clear. Prayer must be preceded by good deeds, for then prayer helps. First we must witness our faith by good deeds, and only then confess them with words. Further, prayer brings benefit only when we intend to do a good deed and call out to God for help. Any prayer that contains a request for God’s aid in an evil deed is not only aimless, but also blasphemous. Doing evil and praying is the same as sowing tares and demanding that God grow wheat.

Before beginning any good deed, we must have recourse to God in prayer, ask for His grace, help and assistance, so that the work before us might be completed worthily and conscientiously. At the end of every good deed we should rise for prayer and give thanks to God that He vouchsafed us to complete this work. In a word, everything good that we possess or have done, or experienced and seen, or heard and read—everything, without exception, should be ascribed entirely to God and not to ourselves, our own strength, mind, or righteousness. For we are nothing before the Lord. And if after such great miracles our Lord Jesus Christ shows meekness, humility, and obedience before His Father and the Holy Spirit, though being equal to Them according to eternity and nature, then how much more so must we show meekness, humility, and obedience towards our Creator, Who created us from nothing, and without Whose help we cannot exist even for a minute—never mind do anything good?

*St. Nikolai (Velimirovic)*

*Translation by Nun Cornelia (Rees)*

## Services this Week

- **18<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost (10.27.2024.)**
  - **Venerable Mother Paraskevi – St Petka**
  - ***Divine Liturgy starts at 10:00 AM.***

**Donations October 13, 2024**

**Offering – \$1,043.00      Candles – \$43.00**

**Large Candles**

(5) For Health of Olga Lucas from Sharon & Jim Urban  
IMO Cecilia Gresh Shuman from Olga Bulich

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**UPCOMING EVENTS**  
**TODAY!!!!**

Fellowship in the Hall following divine liturgy

**ST. PETKA SLAVA CELEBRATION**  
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2024  
BLESSING OF THE SLAVSKI KOLAC  
LUNCHEON TO FOLLOW – NO CHARGE!

**FISH FRIES**  
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2024  
&  
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2024  
3:00 TO 6:30 PM