

# Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

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## The Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost (10.08.2023.)

### Luke 5:1-11

And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon Him to hear the word of God, He stood by the lake of Gennesaret, And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And He entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And He sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now when He had left speaking, He said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto Him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him **(KJV)**

The present Gospel is proclaimed in God's Holy Church every year for the benefit of the whole world. The Gospel confirms and verifies the value of listening to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Holy Gospel is resolutely and fervently proclaimed in the Church through the centuries. The Gospel proclaims the preserved and known teachings and life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Attentive listeners take the Gospel to heart. Their lives are enriched and transformed. The present Gospel is an example of the Apostle Peter listening to Jesus' words and having his life transformed.

Peter and those with him had fished all night without success. When Peter and James and John who were with Peter listened to Jesus, an overwhelming abundance of fish were caught.

Peter, James and John immediately recognized the value of heeding Jesus' words. Listening to Jesus reached into the depths of Peter, James and John's very beings. Peter, James and John changed their lives completely to follow Jesus.

Attentive listeners to the present Gospel learn the lesson to begin each undertaking in life by first turning to the Lord Jesus Christ for instruction and direction.

Jesus Christ is ever-present for believers to turn to in prayer for each undertaking in life. Jesus' teachings are readily available to believers in the Church. Jesus' teachings are present in the Holy Scriptures.

Explanations of Jesus' teachings are in the writings and teachings of the Holy Fathers and Mothers of the Church. The lives of the saints and martyrs describe the way to apply Jesus' teachings in daily life.

Wise and attentive believers make efforts daily to bring life into complete conformity with Jesus' teachings and expectations. When falling short and sinning, serious believers repent and try again.

The present Gospel reveals Jesus is willing to accept sinners choosing to heed His teachings and to follow Him. Peter identified himself as a sinner to Jesus in the present Gospel. Jesus did not reject Peter.

Jesus was clear in St. Mark's Gospel when He said: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Mark 2:17) We are all sinners. Today's Gospel is for each of us.

When Peter, James and John saw the value of listening to Jesus, they fully embraced Jesus in their lives. They gave up their livelihood and families to follow Jesus Christ. The change was profound and complete.

Peter, James and John lives were renewed in Jesus Christ. They put their old ways behind them. They became fishers of men. Jesus Christ makes a profound and life-changing impact on each person choosing to fully heed His words.

The Gospel proclaimed in the Church is always timely and relevant. Jesus' words merit being followed today and every day. The Epistle to the Hebrews states: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever." (Hebrews 13:8)

Remaining a sinner and putting life and the soul in peril are not a necessity. Repentance and change are always possible. A full and abundant life in Jesus Christ is accessible to every person.

The life in Christ involves embracing Christ's teachings and following them. Jesus Christ is ever-present to guide, lead and strengthen the person in the journey. Jesus Christ nourishes the believer through the Gospel and His Body and Blood.

Christ enables the believer to begin anew through Holy Confession. Christ heals the broken in body and spirit through Holy Communion and Holy Unction. Jesus Christ protects the broken-hearted and the hurting from the world's cruelty.

The opportunity for a full and abundant life in Christ is possible for every person taking the Gospel to heart. Conscious decision-making to follow Christ is necessary for change to occur.

The fact that Peter was a sinner did not deter Jesus from making Peter a fisher of men. Jesus Christ has transformed the lives of sinners for centuries. Peter's willingness to listen to and follow Jesus was the deciding difference in his life.

Attentive listeners have their lives transformed when they heed Christ's words. Jesus said: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (Jn.10:10) Today is the day to listen to Christ and follow Him.

The Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost. Venerable Euphrosyne. Venerable Father Sergius of Radonezh. September 25/October 8, 2023. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic

## HOMILY ON THE CONCEPTION OF THE HONORABLE AND GLORIOUS PROPHET, FORERUNNER, AND BAPTIST OF THE LORD, JOHN

At the same time that the conception of our Savior was nigh, there was the glorious and miraculous [conception of St. John the Forerunner](#). Many mothers conceive children, but there are few whose conceptions are glorified and celebrated by the Holy Church. We know of only three mothers whose conceptions in their wombs became the object of wonder to the whole world. These are [Righteous Anna](#), [St. Elizabeth](#), and the Most Pure Virgin Mary. Righteous Anna conceived the Theotokos, Elizabeth conceived the Forerunner, and the Virgin Mary conceived Christ our Savior. All of these conceptions were announced by angels and occurred through the grace of God, but they all came to pass through conversations between the heralds and the conceivers, for God Himself also required the participation of the conceivers' will. That is why the herald, Holy Archangel Gabriel, when he entered the altar to the priest Zacharias who was serving before the face of God, said:

“Be not afraid, Zacharias, your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will give birth to your son, and you will give him the name John. And many will rejoice in his birth.”

Zacharias replied, “What you are saying to me is joyous news, but it is unexpected and strange, for it is unnatural to give birth to children in old age. I am old, and my wife is also advanced in years. How can we conceive and give birth to a son?”

The angel answered:

“From your very first words, Zacharias, I see that you have little faith; you do not believe that my words will come true. It is true that what I am telling you is not natural for you, but this is the will of God, for whom nothing is impossible: *God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham* (Mt. 3:9). Don't you know that God could create Adam from earth and Eve from Adam's bone, and give to the aged Sara her son Isaac? Therefore the Almighty God is granting the birth of a son to your wife in her old age; for your prayer has been heard.”

“I”, said Zacharias, now offer my prayer for the coming of the awaited Messiah, Whom God has promised through the lips of His holy prophets; I pray that God would quickly send Him to earth to save the seed of Abraham from slavery to alien tribes; I pray to Him also that He would forgive my sins and the sins of all our people. But to have a son is something for which I no longer pray, for I have already reached old age, and my wife is advanced in years.”

The angel said to him:

“I am Gabriel, who stands before God; at God’s revelation I know that you no longer pray to be given a son, but rather for those things you have told me. Nevertheless, before, when you and your wife were not yet old, you fervently prayed to the Lord that He would send you a son. Not the slightest movement of the human heart can be hidden from the All-Merciful Lord; He hears those who pray to Him, and fulfills the desires of those who fear Him. Having heard your former prayer, He grants you a son who has a name that means grace; for the Lord knows according to His blessing when to fulfill the requests of his saints—and now a son shall be born to you, and he will be great in the sight of the Lord.”

To which Zacharias answered:

“I now see, O bringer of good tidings, that you are an angel of God, for your conversation testifies to this, your countenance clearly shows this, and the power of your words confirm this. At first, when you suddenly stood before me and began to speak, I was terrified as once was Prophet Daniel when he saw the angel: *I saw this great vision, he said, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength* (Dan. 10:8). Likewise the mother of Sampson said, *A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God* (Judges 13:6). Therefore was I afraid and do not dare to protest your angelic words; however, I ask you, why will the son to be born to me be called great? Could he be higher and greater than the prophet Jeremiah, to whom the Lord’s words were addressed: *Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations* (Jer. 1:5)?

The angel said:

“Your son shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and he will not only be equal in spiritual stature to the prophet Jeremiah—he will surpass him. If the latter received illumination before his birth, then this one will be more filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother’s womb; Jeremiah was only foreordained to prophecy concerning the Messiah, but this one will be worthy to place his hand upon Him and to baptize Him. And he will surpass not only Jeremiah but also the other great saints by the grandeur of divine grace; for even in our angelic hierarchy, which ever beholds the face of the Lord of Sabaoth, God does not reveal the mystery of His good will to all equally, but through the higher ranks reveals them to the lower. Many stars appear before the rising of the sun, but there is only one daystar that goes before the sun itself. Many prophets have preached the coming of the Messiah, but the boy born of you will not only preach in word, but will also point out to people the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world. This is why your son will be great, and greatest among those born of women. As the fulfilment of joyful tidings is more pleasant than the tidings themselves, so will the prophet born to you have greater honor in comparison with other prophets. Before him prophesied all the prophets and the law itself, but this one shall be the completion of all the prophecies, the end of the Old Testament, and Forerunner of the new grace.”

Zacharias replied:

“Good and joyful are your tidings, O angel of the Lord! If every wise son gladdens his father, then all the more would a most wise son gladden me, an elder, even more than all the prophets! But how can I rejoice when I doubt your words? There can be no joy in doubtful things, only in sure things. And so I pray you, angel of God, tell me how I can be fully persuaded of what you are telling me?”

Then Gabriel answered:

“You continue to doubt and do not believe my words, Zacharias. Could I really tell a lie—I who am God’s messenger? After all, *God is true in all His words and holy in all His works* (Ps. 144:13), and *with God nothing shall be impossible* (Lk. 1:37). You are the priest and teacher of Israel, and truly you must know that the time has come which I counted by weeks when I was sent to Babylon to the prophet Daniel. Haven’t you read his prophesies? Look them over and know that the Savior of Israel draws nigh, and before his face will precede an angel in the flesh—your son, who will prepare the way of the Messiah; who will go before Him in the spirit and strength of Elias. But because you did not believe my words, you will be mute and will not speak a word until the day this is fulfilled.”

And at that moment dumbness locked Zacharias’s lips, but the bonds of Elizabeth’s barrenness were loosed, while the angel departed to the throne of the Almighty. Glory to the Lord unto the ages. Amen.

*The Lives of the Saints*  
*St. Dimitry of Rostov*

## Services this Week

- ❖ **Monday 10.09.2023.** - **Rest of the Ap. and Evangelist John the Theologian - 09:30 AM Divine Liturgy**
- ❖ **Thursday 10.12.2023.** - **Venerable Father Gyracus the Hermit, of Palestine - 09:30 AM Divine Liturgy**
- ❖ **Saturday – 10.14.2023.** - **The Protection of the Most Holy Theotokos – 09:30 AM Divine Liturgy**
- ❖ **19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost - 10.15.2023.- Holy Hieromartyr Gyprian of Antioch; Blessed Andrew Fool-for-Christ – 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy**

**Donations October 1, 2023**

Offering - \$ 1,170.00      Candles - \$80.00  
Donations - \$100.00

**Building Fund**

In Memory of Tom Luy from Wife Ann (Raich) Luy - \$1,000.00

**Donations**

In Memory of Stella Baich from Karen & Nicholas Szmyd - \$100  
In Memory of Milos & Milka Tumbas from Dianna Dunnington -  
\$200 for Altar Robes

We are again taking donations for Large Candles, please visit  
the candle room.

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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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**Please join us today, Sunday, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 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.  
(No take-outs - Please join us in fellowship!)**

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**KOLO NEWS**

**The Kolo Basket Party is on Sunday, October 29<sup>th</sup>. We need  
donations of baskets with a retail value between \$20 and \$30  
as well as Baskets with a value over \$30. Use your imagination  
and take advantage of the sales in the stores! This is our  
biggest fundraiser! We are asking for everyone's help!**

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**FISH FRY**

Friday, October 20, 2023

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**BASKET PARTY**

Sunday, October 29, 2023

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**FISH FRY**

Friday, December 8, 2023

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**Annual Congregational Meeting**

Sunday, December 10, 2023

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**St. Nicholas Slava Celebration!!!**

Sunday, December 17, 2023