

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

**The Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost**  
**(10.27.2024.)**

**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)

**Holy Fathers of the Seventh Council**  
**John 17:1-13**

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. (KJV)

## Venerable Mother Paraskevi-St Petka Matthew 25:1-13

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. (KJV)

### A Triple Celebration Today!

Believers are abundantly blessed today in God's Holy Church. Three Gospel readings are prescribed. Believers hear the readings for the Eighteenth Sunday, the Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the 7<sup>th</sup> Council and for St. Paraskevi-St. Petka.

The Gospel readings nourish believers and are an integral part of the triple celebration taking place. Each Sunday is a mini-celebration of Jesus Christ's Resurrection.

Today the Church is very mindful of the Holy Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. St. Paraskevi-St. Petka is dear to the hearts of believers and her feast day is today.

Believers benefit by opening their hearts, minds and souls to the triple celebration taking place. Thank God for being ever-present. Thank God for the freedom to come to the Church.

Nourishment for the heart, mind and soul exists in God's Church today and all times. Authentic nourishment is within reach of each person approaching the Lord Jesus Christ in faith.

Peace and joy result for believers embracing the Lord Jesus Christ in the Church today. Abundant life and eternal life await all seeking to faithfully follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's Church stands against the wiles of the devil. God's Church is a haven against the evils of the world. God's Church brings the peace of Christ to the heart, mind and soul.

Believers turning to Jesus Christ experience the peace that passes all understanding. (Phil. 4:7) Believers seeking Christ come to know of His immeasurable love for each person. (Jn. 3:16)

The Gospels for today offer the lessons of listening to Christ, the hope of eternal life and the importance of being ready for Christ's Second Coming. The Church is where believers continue to learn about Jesus Christ and fully experience Christ.

Believers are subjected to stress in today's world. Perils to the soul exist throughout earthly life. The hunger in the soul requires constant nourishment.

Jesus Christ provides the authentic nourishment accompanied by peace and love.

It is always timely in life to cling to Christ. It is never too late in life to turn to Christ. Danger exists to the soul in falling away from Christ. Yearning constantly exists for the nourishment from Jesus Christ.

Thank God for always being present. Thank God for immeasurable love. Thank God for the opportunity to always repent and the guidance to begin anew in Christ.

Peace, joy and love abound in the life in Jesus Christ.

---

**The Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost. The Holy Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. St. Paraskevi-St. Petka. October 14/27, 2024. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic**

# THE EUCHARIST IN THE ORTHODOX TRADITION

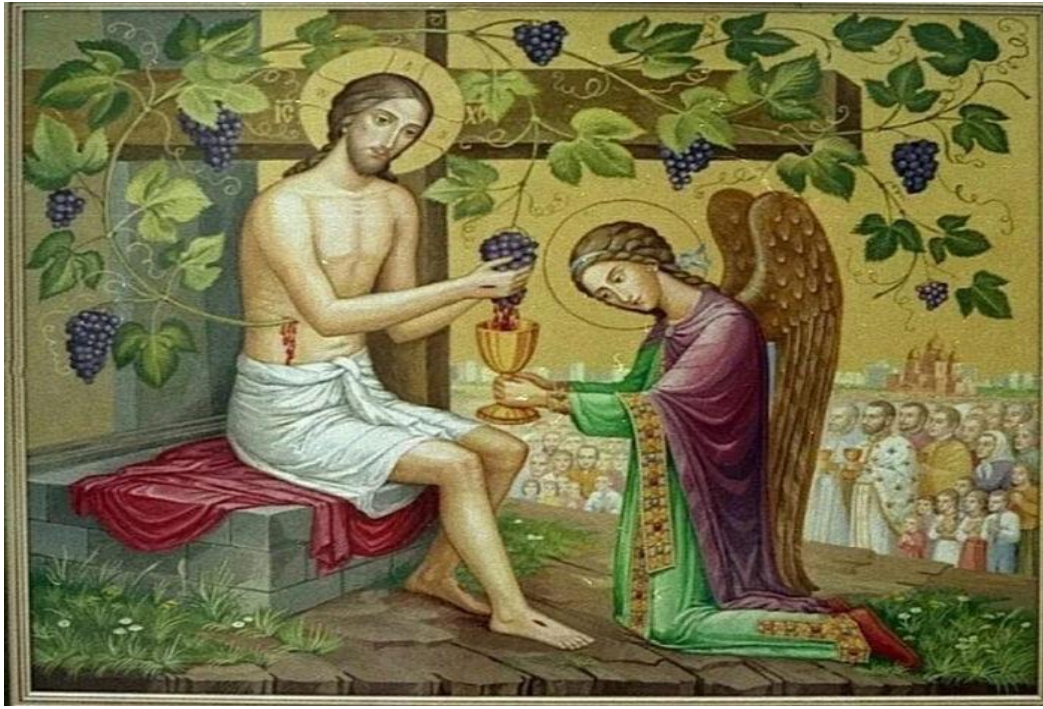
According to my observations, many Christians have some problem with their own Church. Many people think that the Church is a kind of spiritual institution and is limited to those serving at the altar: bishops, priests and deacons who are obliged to celebrate Church services and pray for other Christians. Those who think so believe that it is enough to be baptized and go to church on the major feasts such as Pascha, Christmas and Theophany, or occasionally drop in at church to light a candle.

Other Christians are so busy with their daily chores, worries and problems that they do not even find time to think about God, the Church and their spiritual life. They show up in church only on the occasion of a Baptism, a wedding or a funeral, more to observe the tradition. Others turn to the Church in moments of temptation, illness, or setbacks in life to seek a priest's help. And others think in a sectarian way, believing that they do not need the Church because God is in their hearts, and individual prayer at home or anywhere else is enough. Unfortunately, very few Christians live a genuine Church life and understand that Christ heads the Church, and God *hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, Which is His Body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all* (Eph. 1:22-23). The Church is the living, mystical Body of Christ.

Let's consider more closely what a church is. Firstly, it is a place of worship where the faithful gather for [prayer](#). In the Jewish tradition, the places of worship were the tabernacle, the Temple in Jerusalem and synagogues. In the Christian tradition, these are churches now scattered all over the world. Places of worship are holy because they are dedicated to God, and actions performed there are not only human, but also Divine. The Savior called the Temple in Jerusalem, where He would go to pray and preach to people, *My Father's house* (Jn. 2:16). That is, a church is a house of God, which is filled with the glory of the Lord—that is, His presence: *And, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house* (Ezek. 43:5).

Church prayer has a special power, because it is not only the prayer of an individual person, but of a whole community, of the whole Church. From a mystical point of view, the Church is a continuation of the redemptive sacrifice and mission of Christ, Who always abides with the faithful: *And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world* (Mt. 28:20). The Holy Spirit works in the Church sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation, Eucharist, Ordination, Confession, Marriage and Unction, as well as in other services and prayers. In the Church we commune with Christ both spiritually and in the form of Eucharistic bread and wine, which, through the prayer of the Church—that is, a community of the faithful—become the Body and Blood of Christ. In this way, we gradually become more and more united with Him and with each other.

A true Christian can say with the Apostle Paul: *Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me* (Gal. 2:20); *But we have the mind of Christ* (1 Cor. 2:16); *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus* (Phil. 2:5). The Church is a living body in which all those who promised at Baptism to renounce satan and unite with Christ participate. Through Baptism we become members of the Church, in which we grow spiritually through prayer, feasible asceticism and participation in the Church sacraments, *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ* (Eph. 4:13). Just as a branch torn from its trunk withers and cannot bear fruit, so a Christian who does not abide in God cannot grow spiritually: *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing* (Jn. 15:5).



What is the [Eucharist](#)? It is the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, which the Lord Himself established at the Last Supper before His Passion. Indeed, at Vespers on [Holy and Great Thursday](#) we hear that the Lord *took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My Body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me* (Lk. 22:19). The Eucharist is the principal sacrament of the Church, which creates it. The Church—that is, a community of the faithful—celebrates the Eucharist, and the Eucharist transforms believers into the Church, into the Body of Christ. By partaking of the Holy Gifts, the faithful become one with Christ and with each other. The early Christians understood this very well and therefore *they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers* (Acts 2:42); *And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul* (Acts 4: 32). Thus, there is an identical internal connection between the Church and the Eucharist.

The Orthodox Church believes that Christ is really present in the Eucharistic bread and wine. Bread and wine become the Body and Blood of the Lord through the Descent of the Holy Spirit by the prayer of the faithful presided over by a bishop (or a priest). This is a mystery that our mind cannot fathom, but which we accept through faith. Attempts to explain the Church sacraments intellectually and rationalistically have always led to heresies and divisions among believers. We must not doubt what Christ has told us, namely that the bread and wine consecrated at the Divine Liturgy are transformed into His Body and Blood. If someone doubts the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, it means that he doubts both God's Incarnation and the preaching of the Gospel, which will spread through the Church until the end of time.

Since ancient times two Liturgies have been celebrated in the Orthodox Church: those of St. John Chrysostom and of St. Basil the Great (both from the fourth century), and they are very similar. Both consist of two parts: the Liturgy of the Catechumens (that is, the Liturgy of those who are preparing to be Baptized, but in which the baptized also take part), and the Liturgy of the Faithful. The second part is the Eucharistic Canon, or the Anaphora, with the Epiclesis (the invocation of the Holy Spirit to bless the bread and wine), and the Communion of the Holy Gifts by the faithful. The Liturgy of the Catechumens includes readings from the Holy Scriptures (the Epistles and the Gospel), along with prayers in the form of litanies for the faithful and catechumens alike. The Liturgy is preceded by the proskomedia, which the priest performs in concentration before the beginning of the service itself. This service is very rich and full of symbolism, and the atmosphere at church is mystical. All this attunes believers to inner concentration and contemplation of the mystery of our Savior's life. In the Liturgy His whole life is actualized—from His Nativity to Ascension.

There is a profound mystery in the Orthodox Church. Every prayer of a believer, even liturgical prayer, must descend from the head into the heart, encompassing his whole heart, because it is the center of a human being. At the same time, the heart is the home of baptismal grace—God abides precisely in the human heart. That is why it is so important when our mind constantly descends into the heart, and then we will find peace. When the mind and the heart are scattered, it leads to mental stress and anxiety, depression and a state of dissatisfaction. That is why concentrated individual and liturgical prayer is so vital.

The Divine Liturgy has the nature of a meal and a sacrifice. To participate in it requires special preparation, so that the faithful can partake of the Holy Mysteries of Christ. In the Parable of the Wedding Feast (Matthew 22:1–14) Christ draws our attention to a man who comes there without wedding garments and is driven out. The Divine Liturgy symbolically represents the marriage of our soul with the sacrificial Lamb, before Whom we must appear in wedding attire. Such a robe of the soul is its purity. We attain this through prayer and feasible ascetic life, through good works, through concrete acts of love for others and through confessing our sins to our spiritual father.

Nowadays, Orthodox Christians receive Communion quite often, and some at every Divine Liturgy (as is customary, for example, in the Greek, Russian, Antiochian and other Local Churches, and in the Romanian Church, unfortunately, to a lesser extent). In the Romanian Church, confession is not necessarily connected with Communion, but it is connected with sins committed. Thus, in confession we repent of our sins, and especially grave ones, such as renunciation of Christ, murder, adultery, fornication, cohabitation, hatred or oppression of our neighbors. All this separates us from Christ and His Church. Confession is the sacrament of reconciliation with the Church, from which we fell away through sin. This sacrament brings us back to the status of full-fledged members of the Church. Those who commit grave sins can receive Communion again only after confession and the fulfillment of the penance given to them by the priest. In confession we promise God that with His help we will not repeat the sins we have committed anymore.

Thus, our “wedding clothes” or “shining baptismal robes”, stained with sin, are cleansed through confession. Remembering our sins, we make even more efforts on the path of prayer and asceticism, which purify our souls and unite us with God. Prayer should become the breath of a believer. We will be able to feel and perceive God as reality, as the deepest foundation of our being provided that we pray much and unceasingly, as the holy Apostle Paul advises us. Therefore, the Holy Fathers of the Church have compiled a number of prayers for all life situations, as well as before and after Communion of the Holy Mysteries of Christ. Note what prayerful beauty the Anaphora has!

In addition to prayer and abstinence—that is, fasting—the struggle against sin to free ourselves from passions is important in the Orthodox Church. The Christian life is essentially an ascetic one: *Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life* (Mt. 7:14). It is accompanied by many temptations and sorrows that we cannot overcome except through patience and perseverance in fasting and prayer, through moderation in everything and abstinence from everything that can harm the soul in its longing for God. Therefore, for instance, the Orthodox Church has preserved the tradition of marital abstinence during Lent. We also fast before receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, which is called Eucharistic fast. On the surface of it, this restricts human freedom, but in fact it is through restrictions that we attain real freedom. Salvation, like all good skills and virtues that should adorn a Christian’s life, is a gift from God: *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights* (Jas. 1:17). But God does not force anyone to accept His gifts. The acceptance of these gifts on our part comes through faith at the moment when we open our hearts to Him. Faith in God is not just a reasonable consent to Divine revelation, but, above all, spiritual consent and feeling that require us to lead a new way of life.



Christianity is a new life in Christ. But in order to be able to live this new life we must first abandon the old life, reject the old man, who is used to sin and lust, *And... put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness* (Eph. 4:24). This rebirth into the new man begins with Baptism and should continue throughout our lives. But after being baptized, most of us stray from the right path, and our hearts harden and cease to be receptive to the grace of God. And we no longer allow grace to work in us and no longer co-work with it. If we realize our mistake and awaken, we must run to church and try to start to live its life anew. After all, it is there, through the holy sacraments, that we will be able to receive help on our Christian path. God rewards us for our struggle with passions, for our efforts to acquire the virtues that give us back the freedom that we lost through sin.

As a matter of fact, our whole life is a continuous effort to move forward on the path of goodness and virtue to becoming like Christ. And in this striving, we are continuously sustained by the grace of the holy sacraments, especially the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ. All the gifts we have always come from God, but at the same time it depends on our will, whether to accept or reject them. The acceptance of Divine gifts takes place through our life according to faith and through ascetic life: *Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin* (Heb. 12:4); *But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway* (1 Cor. 9: 27). The Eucharist and all the other Church sacraments are a gift from God that sanctifies us and unites us with Christ. But this happens only to the extent that we make an existential effort in faith through prayer and feasible asceticism.

*Metropolitan Serafim (Joanta) of Germany and Central Europe*

## Services this Week

- **Thursday (10.31.2024.)**
  - **Holy Ap. and Evangelist Luke; St Peter I, Metrop. And Wonderworker of Getinje**
  - *Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM.*
- **Saturday (11.02.2024.)**
  - **Holy Great-martyr; St Gerasimus of Kefalonia – Memorial Saturday**
  - *Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM.*
- **19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost (11.03.2024.)**
  - **Ven. Hilarion the Great; St Hilarion, Bishop Mrglin; Ven. Confessor Bessarion**
  - *Divine Liturgy starts at 10:00 AM.*

**Donations October 20, 2024**

**Offering – \$2,466.00      Candles – \$86.00**

**Building Fund**

**In Memory of Marko & Olga Galagaza from Christopher Galagaza – \$100**

**In Memory of Protinica Grgurevic from Christopher Galagaza – \$50**

**Large Candles**

**IMO Grandparents Amelia & Pete Matovich from Richard Kondas**

**For the Health of Joanne Todorich from Pete Todorich**

**IMO Shawn Novatny from Dan & Diane Tomak**

**IMO Lazo & Bosa Vuckovich from Helene Gleason**

**IMO Parents Mike & Mildred Tumbas from Milica Tumbas**

**IMO Bonnie Niemann from the Malich Family**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Anyone interested in running for and/or remaining on the St Nicholas Church Council for 2025 must submit their name and intent in writing to a member of the nominating committee (Helene Gleason, Joseph Golden or Carole McAllister) – You may also leave this information in the Candle Room to the attention of the Committee. All intentions due no later than Sunday, November 10, 2024.**

\*\*\*\*\*

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**TODAY!!!!**

**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**