

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

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost
(11.10.2024.)

Luke 7:11-16

And it came to pass the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and much people. Now when He came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And He came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And He said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother. And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited His people. (KJV)

Crosses are a part of life. The widow of Nain experienced her cross with the death of her only son. She was already a widow. She had lost her husband and was dealing with death of her son. The widow was not alone. Jesus Christ was present in her life.

The Lord Jesus Christ is always present in life! Jesus Christ is present during times of sorrow, times of joy and in all moments in between. Jesus' reassuring presence exists in every moment of life.

The widow of Nain experienced Jesus Christ's healing presence when He restored life to her son. Jesus Christ is present to restore life in every person dead in sin.

Sin is a form of death. Sin reduces the joy and growth possible in life. Sin infects and limits the mind. Sin has a negative effect upon the body. Believers not conscious and united with Christ limit their life experiences.

Jesus entered the woman's life. Christ enters each person's life. The widow opened herself to Christ's comforting words to not weep. Christ offers comfort to each person with ears to hear and eyes to see.

Jesus proceeded to restore the dead son to life. Jesus restores life to each person rejecting death in sin and receiving Christ in the heart, mind and soul. Joy replaces sorrow when Christ replaces death with life.

The Psalmist said: "Be still, and know that I am God:" (Ps. 45/46:10) Believers find and experience God in stillness. God is deep within the heart, mind and soul. The challenge for believers is to look deeply within the self to know God.

God's Holy Church brings the Gospel to believers to consider the teachings and life of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Church introduces and educates believers on the joys of life and the way to experience that joy.

Jesus Christ is always present in the Church. Believers need only be open to Christ when coming to church. Open hearts, minds and souls receive Jesus Christ abundantly in the Church.

Personal attitudes and expectations have a profound affect on the joy found in God. Believers seeking God with openness benefit from the fulness of joy. Skeptics and doubters limit their experiences.

A life polluted with sin affects the experience with God. The active life in God is always voluntary. God is always present. Individuals choose the degree of active participation.

The widow of Nain did not reject Jesus' comforting words and presence. She was accepting of Jesus. She came to know the resurrection power of Jesus. The Church teaches and celebrates Jesus' Resurrection.

Learning about Jesus and appreciating the Resurrection is constant throughout life. Growth in the life is limited only by the limits established by the believer.

Jesus is ever-present for all to continue to grow.

Apostle Paul set the goal for each person in these words to the Ephesians: “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)

Each Divine Liturgy is a growth experience for active believers. Each moment of life has the potential for growth in Christ. Jesus Christ is ever-present for persons opening their hearts, minds and souls to Him.

The life in Christ brings peace, love and joy. Continuing to choose Christ keeps the person grounded in the presence of Christ. Continuing to choose Christ leads the believer to the Kingdom of God and life eternal.

The widow of Nain learned a lasting lesson from Jesus. The son of the widow of Nain personally experienced Jesus’ power over death. At the Divine Liturgy believers are exposed to the lesson of Christ’s power over death.

Every Divine Liturgy is an opportunity for believers to partake of the Precious Body and Blood of Christ. Jesus Christ is very much alive in the Divine Liturgy.

Resurrection joy continues to the present day!

Today is the day to commit to keeping the heart, mind and soul open to Jesus Christ. Now is the time to open the eyes and ears to Jesus Christ’s presence. Be thankful for Jesus Christ always being present.

Seek to reach out and remain united with Christ. Cultivate the desire to grow in Christ. Be fervent in holding on to Christ. Ward off thoughts that contaminate the soul.

Thank God for the Church. Thank God for the opportunity to hear the Gospel.

Thank God for knowing of Christ’s power over death demonstrated to the widow of Nain. Always thank God.

The Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost. Holy Martyr Terrance, St. Arsenius of Srem, Archbishop of Serbia.

October 28/November 10, 2024. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic

Preparation for the Holy Mystery of Repentance and Confession



The following is by no means a complete treatise on the Holy Mystery of Repentance and Confession. Rather, it is a humble guide to help you examine your life and to make a good and complete confession before God and your priest-confessor. Do not be afraid or embarrassed to speak in confession of all things that you have done.

Do not let any sin linger on your conscience and in your soul to condemn you on that dread and awful day of judgment before God almighty; it will be too late at that time to repent, to confess, or to ask forgiveness.

Remember that three things are necessary for the complete abolishment of your sins: forgiveness, remission, and repentance. God will "set aside" your sins if you ask Him to forgive you; after all, He knows your weaknesses and your faults. God has paid the price which your sins cost you: your very life; Jesus Christ remitted your sins by giving His life in payment for your sins when He, the Sinless One, died on the Cross.

You, however, must be repentant; this means that you must have a change of heart, a change of attitude, a change of life. From this day forward, from this moment on, love God above all else, and live your life as

though this day were your last on earth and tomorrow you expect to stand before God in judgment with the hope of entering His heavenly Kingdom for all eternity. For all these reasons, overcome any obstacles that stand in your way to Holy Confession. The priest-confessor awaits you with love and much affection as the representative of Christ. As a man like you he is capable of understanding and sympathizing with his brothers and sisters who are fellow sinners. Do away with any thought of embarrassment or fear. What is there to be fearful of, or embarrassed about, when your soul is suffering and being torn by the terrible consequences of sin? Why let fear and embarrassment keep you from receiving the great gift of peace and consolation which our Lord offers to you through His Church and this great Mystery? It is surely the Evil One who tells you to be afraid and embarrassed; he does not want you to be healed and to slip away from his clutches. But remember, he is like a prowling lion, seeking someone to devour. Do not be misled by some people who simply ask to have the absolution prayer read over them without going through the actual confession. Whenever this takes place through ignorance or negligence, a terrible fraud is committed which is a sin and mockery of God. With faith and sincerity walk toward the Mystery of Holy Confession. Be absolutely certain that the infinite love of the Crucified Savior will receive you and deliver you, and will take away the weight that is upon your shoulders. It is the Lord Himself Who says: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

Ask yourself the following questions about your relationship with God:

1. Do I believe in God and the Holy Trinity, in the Divinity of Christ, and in the Holy Spirit? Do I believe in the Church and Her Mysteries (sacraments)? Do I believe in the existence of Paradise and Hades (hell)?
2. Do I entrust myself always — and especially in difficult times — to the providence of God; or do I become discouraged and show lack of faith?
3. Do I lose my faith and courage, and/or do I grumble against God, at times of affliction, illness, and trials in my life?
4. Do I believe in psychics, card-readers, palm-readers, astrologers, and/or horoscopes? Have I advised others to believe in these false and demonic practices?
5. Do I believe in superstitions, and/or in "bad omens" (such as the number 13, walking under a ladder, crossing the path of a black cat, spilling salt, or other such foolish "bad luck" beliefs)?
6. Do I believe in "luck" or in "fate"?
7. Do I faithfully recite my prayers in the morning, at mealtimes, in the evening, and before going to bed? Am I embarrassed to make the Sign of the Cross in public, or in front of other people (such as in a restaurant or whenever passing in front of an Orthodox church)?

8. Do I study the Holy Scripture, as well as read other Orthodox religious books? Do I read religious books or tracts not published by the Orthodox Church?
9. Do I attend Church on Sundays and on major feast days?
10. Do I attend the Divine Liturgy from beginning to end, or do I arrive late and/or leave early? 1
1. Do I go to Church dressed modestly, or do I dress to look good or to be attractive to others? Am I careful not to start conversations with others during the services of the Church, or even to make comments to them?
12. Do I hinder my spouse, children, parents, brothers or sisters, or any other person from attending Church? Do I tell others not to attend Church, or not to attend certain services?
13. Do I receive Holy Communion often? Although no one is worthy to receive Holy Communion, do I prepare myself to receive the Body and Blood of our Savior Jesus Christ?
14. Do I swear for no reason, or falsely? Have I broken an oath or a promise?
15. Do I use the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, or of the Virgin Mary, the Panagia (*Bogorodica*), or of the saints in any other way than with the deepest of respect and in my prayers? Do I use these names as a curse, or as idle, obscene, and/or vulgar talk?
16. Do I use obscene and/or vulgar words?
17. Do I abide by the fasting rules of the Church: Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the year; Great Lent; Holy Week; the Apostles Fast (the days before June 29); the Dormition Fast (August 1 through 15); the Nativity Fast; the day before the Feast of Theophany (January 5); the feast day of the beheading of Saint John the Baptist (August 29); the feast day of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14)? Do I fast before Holy Communion (from after the evening meal the night before)? Do I have health problems that mitigate or affect my ability to abide by the fasting principles?
18. Do I treat religious objects carelessly (such as piling papers or books on top of icons; or tossing religious books or pamphlets in dirty places or in the trash)?

Ask yourself the following questions about your relationship with other people:

1. Do I have hatred, or a strong dislike, toward someone, even if they may have treated me badly or insulted me?
2. Am I suspicious of others, or do I distrust others without good reason or cause? Do I think that others may be talking about me, that they do not want me, that they do not like me, or that they do not love me?
3. Am I jealous and/or bothered by the progress, happiness, beauty, or possessions of others?

4. Am I untouched and/or unmoved when I see or hear about the misfortune(s) or serious need(s) of another person?
5. Am I honest, straightforward, sincere, and upright in my every day dealings with friends, partners, co-workers, and/or customers?
6. Have I slandered, libeled, or accused another person?
7. Do I speak sarcastically or make fun of others? Do I belittle or make fun of those who are pious and devout? Do I put down or make fun of those who are handicapped by physical, emotional, or spiritual weakness?
8. If I heard some information or an accusation about someone, did I repeat it to another person? Have I damaged the reputation and honor of another person? Do I gossip about others?
9. Do I judge the behavior, deeds, mistakes, shortcomings, or weaknesses of others? Do I do so even if such attributes appear to be true?
10. Do I curse those whom I dislike, or who have done wrong to me, or who have hurt me? Have I cursed myself in difficult times or circumstances in my life? Have I regretted the day I was born?
11. Have I sent people "to hell" in my words, either in idle talk or in anger? Have I used insulting gestures toward others?
12. Do I respect my parents, despite their faults? Do I care for my parents, and do I put up with their weaknesses if they have any? Do I help them with their physical and spiritual needs? Do I help them go to Church and to receive Holy Communion? Have I deserted my parents, or do I treat them with indifference and neglect?
13. Have I sought to receive a greater share of inheritance from my parents, and thus dealt unfairly with my brothers and/or sisters?
14. Do I get mixed up in other people's lives, work, family, or personal affairs; do I cause arguments and/or fights?
15. Did I strike any one in my anger, or abuse anyone verbally?
16. Did I ever kill anyone; have I committed murder in any way? 17. Have I had an abortion, or have I urged or encouraged someone else to have an abortion? Have I helped someone have an abortion?
18. Do I carry out my vocation in life with integrity and honor?

19. Do I steal? Have I robbed any one, or embezzled from my employer? Do I suggest these acts to others, or have I helped them do it? Have I covered for a thief, or have I knowingly received stolen items?

20. Have I committed forgery? Have I taken advantage of my position or authority for my own gain? Have I borrowed money or other objects and failed to return them?

21. Do I hang around with the "wrong crowd," and/or am I involved in sinful relations or actions with others? Have I pushed or encouraged someone to sin either by my example or through my words?

22. Am I ungrateful and thankless to God, and to those people who are good to me?

23. Do I give to the poor, to the needy, to orphans, to widows, to the elderly, to large or disadvantaged families?

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Have I been attached to material things and/or to worldly items?

2. Have I been selfish, stingy, or "cheap," or a lover of money?

3. Have I been greedy?

4. Have I been a spendthrift? I must remember that my surplus belongs to the poor, and what I have kept back from them is theft.

5. Have I been conceited, or "puffed up" with pride?

6. Do I like to show off my clothes, my wealth, my success, my — or my child's — grades or accomplishments? Do I brag about myself or my family?

7. Do I crave admiration and adulation from the people around me?

8. Do I accept praise with pleasure, and/or do I seek praise? Do I want others to flatter me, and/or do I get angry when they offer suggestions or constructive criticism? Do I say that there is no one like me, or better than me in some aspect of my life?

9. Do I get upset when someone points out my mistakes and errors; or when I am corrected or reprimanded by my seniors and/or supervisors?

10. Am I stubborn, obstinate, egotistical, self-proud, or self-centered? I must pay attention to these sins because it is very hard to get rid of them. 1

1. Do I engage in useless and/or idle pastimes that have no purpose or good? Do I play cards to "kill time"? Do I gamble?

12. Have I polluted my body and soul with carnal sins? Do I masturbate? Do I read "dirty," lewd, indecent, or obscene material? Do I look at "dirty," lewd, or indecent pictures or photographs? Do I purchase or look at pornographic materials? Do I go to places of "entertainment" that have such displays? Do I watch movies or television shows that have such images, words, or suggestions?

13. Do I control my eyes so that they do not curiously examine provocative people or pictures?

14. Do I dress indecently? Do I wear clothing appropriate to the opposite sex? Do I dress provocatively, or cause scandal by my appearance? Have I entered a Church dressed in these ways?

15. Do I take part in frantic or sinful dancing? Do I sing or listen to immoral, violent, or negativistic songs — especially to many of the songs and music that are produced today and such as are featured on MTV? 16. Do I expel from my mind any bad thoughts that come to pollute my thinking?

17. Have I ever considered suicide? Have I been seriously or severely depressed?

18. Have I been using obscene, insulting, or improper words for the sake of being comical or to insult or humiliate another person?

19. Do I drink alcohol heavily or to excess? Have I been drunk?

20. Do I take drugs without proper medical supervision? Am I addicted to drugs or other substances?

21. Do I smoke tobacco? I must remember that smoking destroys health and is a sinful waste of money.

22. Do I practice humility; do I have a spirit of self-denial?

23. Do I practice obedience; do I quietly accept the directions of others who are my seniors, my guides, my leaders, or my supervisors?

If you are married, ask yourself the following questions about your relationship with your spouse: 1. Am I loyal and faithful to my spouse? I must remember that it is terrible when one of the partners is having extramarital relations, whether these are physical or even if they are simply an affection for another that is more important or more "interesting" than the relationship with their spouse.

2. Have I offended or saddened my spouse publicly or in the presence of others?

3. Do I overlook my spouse's weaknesses? Have I been insensitive?

4. Do I encourage my spouse to follow the latest fashions or popular attitudes which contradict God's Law and my Orthodox faith? Do I influence my spouse to attend parties or social gatherings so that I — or both of us —

can "be seen"? Do I insist on having money to spend on myself, on clothes, new fashions, or other selfish pursuits?

5. Am I sensitive to the personal struggles that each of us may have outside the house and inside the home, so that we can support each other in the daily struggle by providing emotional, psychological, physical, and spiritual comfort for each other?

6. Am I overly demanding of my spouse?

7. Do I inhibit or prevent my spouse from going to Church or from attending spiritual gatherings, sermons, or instruction?

8. Is my spouse guilty of a habitual sin or a sinful habit; if so, have I patiently urged him/her through example and through kind words to repentance?

9. If I am the husband, have I assumed my ordained role as a Christ-like head of the family by sacrificing myself in every way to love, cherish, and care for my wife and my children? Do I make the "tough decisions" fairly and with total self-denial for the good and welfare of my wife and children? Do I come home at an early and reasonable hour from work? Do I spend unnecessary or excessive time away from my family with friends or associates in business, athletic, or social activities? Do I put my wife and my children first, or do other pursuits, occupations, or my career come before them? I must remember that I will learn humility by being a Christian husband and father; and the gates of heaven will open unto me.

10. If I am the wife, have I given over my natural inclination and desire to be the head of the family to my husband? Do I accept his decisions regarding the family with patience, or do I seek to argue and criticize him? Do I encourage him with patience and kindness to assume his proper role in the family?

11. If I am the husband, am I under the false impression that child-rearing and development is a responsibility of my wife? Do I understand that I also am responsible to care for them physically, to read to them, to advise them, to teach them, to spend time with them, to let them feel my kind and patient presence? Do I teach them by my example that they must hold back, restrain themselves, and not get into trouble; or do I mislead them through neglect, abandonment, and/or bad example?

12. Do I love and respect my in-laws? I must remember that the most severe test of my love for my spouse is the degree to which I can love the parents who nurtured him/her, who fashioned him/her according to their lives, and who presented him/her to me as my groom/bride. I must remember that in many cases the things that I consider irritating in my in-laws are the very things that are difficulties in my relationship with my spouse; overcoming them in one will help me deal with them in the other.

If you have children, ask yourself the following questions about your relationship with them:

1. Do I teach my children that the Lord God is Lord alone, and that they must love Him with all their heart, all their soul, and all their might?
 2. Do I take an interest in the whole education of my children, personal, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual; or do I ignore certain of these?
 3. Do I take my children to Church, to Holy Confession, to Holy Communion, to the Church (Sunday) School?
 4. Do I teach my children by word and example; or does my example contradict my words?
 5. Do I teach my children to pray each morning and each night? Do I teach them to pray at mealtimes?
 6. Do I know what my children are reading? Do I encourage them to read books that will profit them and help them develop intellectually and spiritually?
 7. Do I know who my children associate with and play with? Do I encourage them to associate and play with other moral, Christian, and Orthodox children?
 8. Do I take my children to sinful movies, shows or other such entertainment? Do I carefully monitor what they are watching on the television, and listening to on the radio?
 9. Do I let my children engage in useless pastimes? Do I allow them to watch television indiscriminately, or to waste their time in idle pursuits?
 10. Do I teach my children humility and obedience — above all, by my example?
 11. Do I encourage my children to dress modestly and appropriately to the occasion?
 12. Do I curse my children when I am angry with them?
 13. Am I unjust or unfair to my children in the distribution of food, toys, belongings, necessities, or their inheritance?
 14. Have I physically struck my children inappropriately?
 15. Have I hurt my children emotionally? 1
6. Have I abused my children physically and/or emotionally?

Summary

Do I see how many things there are to consider? Do I see how much I will discover about myself if I will retreat to a quiet place and carefully examine my life? I must use this opportunity to search deep within myself; I must seek to be rid of all that is unworthy and undignified in my life. Instead, I must ask God to fill my life, and I

must live my life in such a way that I will love, honor and serve Him all the days of my life. I must not neglect to approach the Mystery of Holy Confession; this is the greatest gift that I can — and should — offer myself and others. May the All-Good God enlighten me and strengthen me on this uphill yet beautiful path which passes through Holy Confession and Holy Communion into the Kingdom of Heaven.

A Brief Form of Confession When indicated by the priest to do so, the penitent may say the following: I confess to the Lord my God before you, reverend father, all my sins which I have committed up to the present day and hour, in deed, word, and thought. Every day and every hour I sin through ingratitude to God for His great and numberless blessings to me and His most gracious providence and care for me, a sinner. I have sinned through: The penitent then mentions those sins from the following list he is guilty of: anger concealing sins in confession disobedience disrespect insubordination drunkenness gluttony or over-eating evil speech foul speech saying unseemly things gossip grumbling idle talk lying, greed inattention carelessness laziness negligence or carelessness love of money love of sensual pleasure sexual sins impure thoughts missing church services sleeping in church neglect of prayer attachment to things love of glory or honor pride self-love self-will vainglory or false values envy jealousy remembering wrongs reproaching others judging others condemnation of others resentment scorn slander theft The penitent then mentions any other sins which he is guilty of, and concludes: I repent of all my sins, and I beg forgiveness of our almighty God. I also ask forgiveness for all those sins I have not confessed because of their multitude and my forgetfulness. Forgive and absolve me, reverend father, and bless me to receive the Holy Communion of the precious, holy, and life-creating Mysteries of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto the remission of sins and life everlasting.

Services this Week

- **Thursday (11.14.2024.)**
 - **Holy Wonderworker and Unmercenaris Gosmas and Damian**
 - *Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM.*
- **Saturday (11.16.2024.)**
 - **Dedication of the Church of the Great-Martyr George in Lydia**
 - *Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM.*
- **21th Sunday after Pentecost (11.17.2024.)**
 - **Ven. Joannicius the Great; Holy Hieromartyr Nicander, Bishop of Myra**
 - *Divine Liturgy starts at 10:00 AM.*

Donations November 3, 2024

**Offering - \$1,660.00 Candles - \$55.00 Dues - \$50.00
Donations**

In Memory of Grandparents from Dianna Dunnington - \$100

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.**

NEXT SUNDAY - November 17, 2024
Pancake & Sausage Breakfast
Sponsored by the Men's Club - Donation Appreciated

UPCOMING EVENTS

FISH FRIES
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2024 - 3:00 TO 6:30 PM

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING - SUNDAY,
DECEMBER 8, 2024 - LITURGY BEGINS AT 9:30 AM

ST. NICHOLAS SLAVA CELEBRATION -
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2024