

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church
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The Twenty First Sunday after Pentecost
(10.29.2023.)

Luke 8:5-15

A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. **(KJV)**

The word of God is sown in God's Holy Church. Attentive believers cherish the word of God and keep it. Serious believers bring forth good fruit when keeping the word of God.

The devil is always present to snatch the word of God from the hearts of inattentive believers. Hard times arise in the world and believers without a firm grip on God's word will have the word torn from their hearts.

Cares of the world and temptations are always present to lure the believer away from the life in Christ. The word of God is jeopardized when believers become enmeshed with daily cares and do not use the word of God as strength.

Serious believers find strength and direction for life in the word of God. Faithful believers experience joy in reading the word of God. The word of God offers safe refuge in times of great difficulty.

Healing emanates from reading the word of God. God's love is revealed and becomes known through reading the word of God. The life and teachings of Jesus Christ are synonymous with God's word.

St. John's Gospel equates Jesus Christ with the word of God. On Pascha St. John's Gospel is proclaimed in celebration of Jesus Christ' Resurrection and speaks about the Word becoming flesh.

The word of God is present for believers to hear in the churches and to read wherever believers are located. Reading and studying the word of God is an investment in the Kingdom of God.

The parable of the sower describes different experiences of those who hear the word of God. Each person chooses the value to ascribe to the word of God for personal life.

The Gospel of St. Luke is always read during feasts of the Mother of God. Believers are reminded during these feasts of Jesus' words. Jesus said: "blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it. (Lk. 11:28))

Each moment believers choose the way to use the time of life. Reading and keeping the word of God is a secure investment in the Kingdom of God. Wise believers choose to invest extensively in God's Kingdom.

The Divine services of the Church are completely rooted in God's word. The Epistle and Gospel readings are central to the Divine Liturgy. Documentation exists of the extent God's words forms and shapes the Divine services.

The Psalter is known as the perfect prayer book. The Gospel is always on the Altar Table in the Church. The parable of the sower reaffirms the value of God's word for attentive listeners.

Life is challenging from birth to departure. The soul needs strength and nourishment constantly. God's word serves as the guide through life from birth to life eternal.

The millions of people that have lived under communism and other oppressive forms of government where God's word is banned cherish the opportunity to learn of God's word.

People blessed to live in the free world should be ever-grateful for having God's word constantly present. God's Church has withstood the perils of the centuries while guarding and expanding the spread of God's word.

Each believer has the responsibility to hear the word of God and keep it. This responsibility was accepted at Holy Baptism. The commitment is intended for everyday of life following Baptism.

Believers hearing God's word and keeping it experience joy and peace. Life is lived fully when God's word is central to the heart, mind and soul. Growth in Christ continues as the word of God is heeded.

Thank God for the parable of the sower being proclaimed in the Church. God's love spreads with the spread of God's word. God's saving grace is revealed in God's word.

The value believers ascribe to God's word is reflected in daily life. Keeping God's word will lead to eternal life. Each person chooses each moment whether to hear the word of God and keep it.

**The Twenty First Sunday after Pentecost. Holy Martyr Longinus the Centurion.
October 16/29, 2023. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.**

Father Rodney Torbic

ON HALLOWEEN

From Bishop Nikolai (Velimirovic)

As Orthodox Christians we must carefully examine every aspect of our involvement in the world, its activities, holidays and festivals, to be certain whether or not these involvements are compatible with our Holy Orthodox Faith. For a while now everything in the outside world is reminding us that Halloween is near: at school our children are busy painting pumpkins, cutting and pasting bats, ghosts and witches and planning the ideal costume in which to go trick-or-treating. Most of our schools, local community organizations and entertainment on television, radio and press will share in and capitalize upon the festival of Halloween. Many of us will participate in this festival by going to costume parties, or by taking our children trick-or-treating in our neighborhood after dark on October 31st. Most of us will take part in the Halloween festivities believing that it has no deeper meaning than fun and excitement for the children. Most of us do not know the historical background of the festival of Halloween and its customs. The feast of Halloween began in pre-Christian times among the Celtic peoples of Britain, Ireland and Northern France. These pagan peoples believed that physical life was born from death. Therefore, they celebrated the beginning of the "new year" in the fall, on the eve of October 31st and into the day of November 1st, when, as they believed the season of cold, darkness, decay and death began. Instructed by their priests, the Druids, the people extinguished all hearth fires and lights and darkness prevailed. According to pagan Celtic tradition, the souls of the dead had entered into the world of darkness, decay and death and made total communion with Samhain, the Lord of death, who could be appeased and cajoled by burnt offerings to allow the souls of the dead to return home for a festal visit on this day. The belief led to the ritual practice of wandering about in the dark dressed in costumes indicating witches, hobgoblins, fairies and demons. The living entered into fellowship and communion with the dead by this ritual act of imitation, through costume and the wandering about in the darkness. They also believed that the souls of the dead bore the affliction of great hunger on this festal visit. This belief brought about the practice of begging as another ritual imitation of the activities of the souls of the dead on their festal visit. The implication was that any souls of the dead and their imitators who are not appeased with "treats", i.e. offerings, will provoke the wrath of Samhain, whose angels and servants could retaliate through a system of "tricks", or curses. In the strictly Orthodox early Celtic Church, the Holy Fathers tried to counteract this pagan new year festival by establishing the feast of All Saints on that same day (in the East, this feast is celebrated on another day). The night before the feast (on "All Hallows Eve"), a vigil service was held and a morning celebration of the Eucharist. This

custom created the term Halloween. But the remaining pagan and therefore anti-Christian people reacted to the Church's attempt to supplant their festival by increased fervor on this evening, so that the night before the Christian feast of All Saints became a night of sorcery, witchcraft and other occult practices, many of which involved desecration and mockery of Christian practices and beliefs. Costumes of skeletons, for example, developed as a mockery of the Church's reverence for holy relics. Holy things were stolen and used in sacrilegious rituals. The practice of begging became a system of persecution of Christians who refused to take part in these festivities. And so the Church's attempt to counteract this unholy festival failed. This is just a brief explanation of the history and meaning of the festival of Halloween. It is clear that we, as Orthodox Christians, cannot participate in this event at any level (even if we only label it as "fun"), and that our involvement in it is an idolatrous betrayal of our God and our Holy Faith. For if we imitate the dead by dressing up or wandering about in the dark, or by begging with them, then we have willfully sought fellowship with the dead, whose Lord is not a Celtic Samhain, but Satan, the evil one, who stands against God. Further, if we submit to the dialogue of "trick or treat," our offering does not go to innocent children, but rather to Satan himself. Let us remember our ancestors, the Holy Christian Martyrs of the early Church, as well as our Serbian New Martyrs, who refused, despite painful penalties and horrendous persecution, to worship, venerate or pay obeisance in any way to idols who are angels of Satan. The foundation of our Holy Church is built upon their very blood. In today's world of spiritual apathy and listlessness, which are the roots of atheism and turning away from God, one is urged to disregard the spiritual roots and origins of secular practices when their outward forms seem ordinary, entertaining and harmless. The dogma of atheism underlies many of these practices, denying the existence of both God and Satan. Our Holy Church, through Jesus Christ, teaches that God alone stands in judgment over everything we do and believe and that our actions are either for God or against God. No one can serve two masters. Therefore, let us not, as the pagan Celts did, put out our hearth fires and wander about in the dark imitating dead souls. Let us light vigil lamps in front of our Slava icons, and together with our families, ask God to grant us faith and courage to preserve as Orthodox Christians in these very difficult times, and to deliver us from the Evil One.

Services this Week

- ❖ **Saturday 11.04.2023. – Holy Equal-to-the-Apostol Abercius, Bp Hieropolis – Memorial Saturday 09:30 AM Divine Liturgy for Ripose**
- ❖ **22nd Sunday after Pentecost - 11.05.2023.- Holy Apostle James, First Bishop of Jerusalem - 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy**

Donations October 22, 2023

Offering - \$ 1,119.00 Candles - \$145.00

Large Candles

In Memory of My Wife, Martha Banda from Husband Nick
In Memory of Parents, Andrew & Mildred Banda from son Nick
In Memory of Betty Gjurich from Lazo & Debbie Gjurich

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

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.

Anyone interested in running for and/or remaining on the St Nicholas Church Council for 2024 must submit their name and intent in writing to a member of the nominating committee (Helene Gleason, Joseph Golden and 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 12, 2023.

KOLO NEWS

The Kolo is taking orders for our famous PUMPKIN ROLLS! \$12 each. See any Kolo member. Order forms are in the hall by the coffee pot. Order by November 5th. Pik up and pay after church November 19th.

UPCOMING EVENTS

BASKET PARTY

Sunday, October 29, 2023

FISH FRY

Friday, December 8, 2023

Annual Congregational Meeting

Sunday, December 10, 2023

St. Nicholas Slava Celebration!!!

Sunday, December 17, 2023