

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905

Rev. Presbyter Dragan Vukovic

(814) 244-4063

The Twenty Third Sunday after Pentecost

(11.20.2022.)

Luke 8:26-39

And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee. And when He went forth to land, there met Him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech Thee, torment me not. (For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.) And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were deep. And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that He would suffer them to enter into them. And He suffered them. Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked. When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country. Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed. Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought Him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and He went up into the ship, and returned back again. Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought Him that he might be with Him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him. *(KJV)*

The current Gospel offers written proof of the Lord Jesus Christ's ability to heal persons possessed by the devil. Jesus brought the man in the current Gospel to his right mind by expelling the devils.

The Lord Jesus Christ offers peace of mind to believers in the world today. Devils abound in the current culture and enter and affect the minds of unsuspecting persons.

Torturous thoughts can arise in individuals and destroy peace of mind. The Jesus Prayer is effective in confronting devils in daily life. Using the Jesus Prayer directly can push out of the mind thoughts that are unsettling.

Repeating the Jesus Prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner” is effective in keeping the mind right at all times. The power of Jesus Christ is second to none.

Jesus Christ’s ability to keep the mind right is second to none. Believers do well to reach deep within the heart, mind and soul to center life in Jesus Christ. With Jesus Christ as the Goal, Guide and Guardian, peace of mind is possible

The Church prescribes this Gospel to be read each year to reassure believers of Christ’s power over the devil. Rightness of mind is the desired state for believers in God’s Holy Church.

Individuals afflicted with the devil and tormented by the devil do well to turn to Christ in the Church for peace of mind and healing. Families and friends of the tormented find refuge and strength in God’s Holy Church

When Christ brings peace of mind to a person, expressions of gratitude are in order. In the present Gospel, Jesus told the man to go and tell others that he had been healed.

Believers benefitting from Jesus Christ in their lives have the opportunity to share their knowledge of Christ with others in the way they live. Jesus Christ’s love for the tormented is clear in the present Gospel.

Christ’s healing of the possessed man in the current Gospel is a convincing demonstration of love for the man. Communities and societies do well to demonstrate Christ’s love for those possessed by the devil in their midst.

The daily news tells of possessed individuals living on the streets in homeless camps. Residential mental health facilities need adequate staffing to treat possessed patients.

Too many individuals end up in jails and prisons because they are possessed by the devil and do not have access to necessary mental health care. The love of Christ is needed to be brought into the jails, prisons and residential facilities.

Persons possessed by the devil can strike fear in the minds of onlookers. The power of Christ to expel the devils can also be unsettling. Christians familiar with this Gospel do well to share it with others in their daily lives.

Christians have a responsibility to make a difference in their communities. Making sure that adequate mental health care is available to the needy is a Christian responsibility.

The Church proclaims Jesus Christ’s healing power. Parishes have a role in improving mental health for parishioners and the communities in which they are located.

Parishioners residing in mental health facilities benefit from the support and prayers of the parish. Parish priests visiting patients in mental health facilities bring Jesus Christ into the locked wards.

Parishioners working in mental health settings need the nourishment and support of the Church in the difficult and necessary work being done each day. Persons afflicted by the devil are remembered and not forgotten by Jesus Christ.

The Church offering healing to the mentally afflicted is Jesus Christ at work. Parishes do well to be sensitive to afflicted parishioners and afflicted persons in their communities. Taking action to help the afflicted is doing Christ's work.

The Twenty Third Sunday after Pentecost. November 7/20, 2022. Holy Martyr Heron and Thirty-Three Martyrs in Melitene. Venerable Lazarus of Mt. Galesius. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic

The Prologue from Ochrid *St Nikolai of Zhicha*

1. ST. JOHN THE MERCIFUL, PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA

John was born on the island of Cyprus. His father was Prince Epiphanius. John was raised as a true Christian from childhood. At the insistence of his parents, he married and had children. However, by God's providence, his wife and children passed from this world into the next. Renowned for his compassion and piety, John was chosen as Patriarch of Alexandria in the time of Emperor Heraclius. He governed the Church of Alexandria for ten years as a true shepherd, safeguarding it from pagans and heretics. He was a model of meekness, charity and love for his fellow men. He said: "If you desire nobility, seek it not in blood but in virtues, for this is true nobility." All the saints have been distinguished by mercifulness, but St. John was completely dedicated to this wonderful virtue. Once, while celebrating the Liturgy, the patriarch remembered the words of Christ, *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift* (Matthew 5:23-24), and he remembered that one of the clergy in that church had a grievance against him. He quickly left the Holy Gifts, approached that priest, fell before his feet and begged for forgiveness. And only when he had made peace with this man did he return to the table of oblation. Another time, as he was on his way to the Church of Saints Cyrus and John, it happened that he met a needy and unfortunate widow who spoke to him at length about her misfortune. The patriarch's escorts became bored by the woman's lengthy complaint, and urged the bishop to hurry to the church for the service, intimating that he could hear the woman's story afterward. John said to them: "And how will God listen to me, if I do not listen to her?" He would not leave until he heard the widow's complaint to the end.

When the Persians attacked Egypt, Patriarch John boarded a boat to escape from danger. Along the way he fell ill and, when he arrived in Cyprus, he reposed at his birthplace, in the year 620 A.D. After he entered the Immortal Kingdom of his Lord, his miracle-working relics were translated to Constantinople, then to Budapest, and finally to Presburg.

2. THE HOLY PROPHET AHIJAH OF SHILOH

Ahijah prophesied a thousand years before Christ. He prophesied to Jeroboam, Solomon's servant, that he would reign over ten of the tribes of Israel (I Kings 11:29-31).

3. THE VENERABLE NILUS OF SINAI

Nilus was at first a prefect in the capital city, Constantinople. As a married man, he had a son and a daughter. Seeing the sinful life of the capital, he agreed with his wife to withdraw from the world. This they did. His wife and daughter went to a convent in Egypt. Nilus and his son Theodulus went to Mount Sinai. Nilus lived a life of asceticism on Mount Sinai for a full sixty years. He wrote wonderful books on the spiritual life. He entered peacefully into rest in about the year 450 A.D., in the eightieth year of his earthly existence, and took up his habitation in the blessed heavenly life. These holy words are his: "Physical passions have their origin in physical desires, and against them abstinence is necessary; but spiritual passions are born of spiritual desires, and against them, prayer is necessary."

4. THE VENERABLE NILUS THE MYRRH-GUSHER

Nilus was born in the Morea. As a hieromonk he went with his uncle to the Holy Mountain and there lived a life of asceticism as a recluse in a deserted place called "the Holy Rocks." When he entered into rest, myrrh flowed from his body in such abundance that it ran down from the top of the mountain into the sea. This miracle-working myrrh attracted ailing men from all over. A disciple of St. Nilus was so distracted by the many visitors that he complained in prayer to St. Nilus, and the flow of myrrh ceased at once. St. Nilus lived a life of asceticism in the fullest sense, like the saints of old. He entered into rest in the seventeenth century.

HYMN OF PRAISE

THE VENERABLE NILUS OF SINAI

St. Nilus of Sinai spoke to the monks:

"Repeat the name of Jesus in your heart!

Exercise your heart in innocence,

And your body in purity and abstinence.

If you are insulted, endure the insult,

And thus the insulter will feel the injury.

Weep for the sinner, even when he advances:

He is on an eternal journey to meet justice.

If you endure misfortunes, they will serve you--

Misfortunes are thorns on which roses grow.

Whenever you pray to God, ask not for pleasant things,

But for that which brings benefit to the soul!

Fear not death, but await the death of the body;

Feel shame before the angels, before you feel the shame of men.

Avoid temptation and do not seek it,

But when it comes of its own accord, show yourself a hero.

He who often partakes of Communion with the gracious Christ
Is a temple in which Christ abides.
Speak little and rarely with men,
But speak more and more often with God."
Thus, did Nilus of Sinai teach the monks,
And his deeds bore witness to his words.

REFLECTION

Their time of death and the necessity of preparation for it was revealed beforehand to many holy men and women. This is a great gift from heaven, but as we do not expect this gift, we unworthy ones need daily repentance to prepare for our departure. One can flee from men, but never from God. When St. John the Merciful fled Egypt from the Persians, a gloriously radiant man with a golden sceptre in his hand appeared to him on the boat and said: "The King of kings is calling you to Himself." John understood these words and began to prepare for his repose, which came soon. The holy King Stefan of Dečani's beloved St. Nicholas often appeared to him, and did so before Stefan's repose, saying: "Stefan, prepare for your departure, for soon you will appear before the Lord." Both saints were very similar in their compassion. Despite the immeasurable wealth that St. John had at his disposal as Patriarch of Alexandria, he personally had only one-third of a dinar at his repose, and he willed even that to the poor. When St. Stefan of Dečani was in the Monastery of the Pantocrator in Constantinople, a generous Serbian nobleman secretly sent him a substantial sum of money. "I give thanks to the good gentleman for his love," replied Stefan to the bearer, "but he would give me greater joy if he would distribute this money, intended for me, to the poor."

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the courage of the Apostle Paul (Acts 28):

1. How he sat in chains for two years in Rome;
2. How he freely preached the Gospel to the pagans and Jews, not fearing anyone;
3. How neither chains nor prison nor death could turn him away from preaching the Gospel.

HOMILY

on how strangers become members of the household

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God (Ephesians 2:19).

Before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, it seemed that only the Jews were close to God and that the pagans were farther away from God. But as a matter of fact, the Jews and the pagans were equally estranged from God, and from true reverence for Him. Then He came, Christ the Savior, *and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh* (Ephesians 2:17) and by that, brought both Jews and pagans *by one Spirit unto the Father* (Ephesians 2:18). In the new creation, or the new man, or the Church of God, the Spirit is one; and everyone who

enters the Church of God receives this Spirit, so that no matter how much the Church increases in members, there always remains the one Spirit of God; and no matter how many nations or tribes or races enter the Church of God, the Spirit does not change, but remains forever and ever, one and the same Spirit. That is why pagans are not *strangers and foreigners* in the Church, but are *fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*, as are all other members of the Church. For the Church is founded on holiness, and her cornerstone is the Saint above saints, and according to the plan, all of her members should be holy. All those who lived before Christ but expected Christ and hoped in Him, as well as those who lived after Christ, and who recognized Christ as Lord, Son of God, Savior, Redeemer, Resurrector and Judge, are also called saints. Sin separates and alienates from God, but through the Lord Jesus Christ, division and alienation have vanished, and all the faithful--whether former Jews or pagans--became members of the household of God, by and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

O my brethren, the Lord Jesus Christ gave us something greater and more precious than this life: He gave us peace and friendship with God, and this is greater and more precious than life in alienation from God.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Creator of Peace and Giver of Peace, sustain us to the end in peace with God.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Services this Week

- ❖ ***Monday, 11.21. '22. - Synaxis of the Archangel Michael and other Bodiless Powers — 09:30 AM Divine Liturgy***
- ❖ ***Thursday, 11,24. '22 – Holy Great-martyr Menas - 09:30 AM Divine Liturgy***
- ❖ ***Friday – 11.15.'22. – PARACLESIS - THE OFFICE OF SUPPLICATION TO SAINT NECTARIOS -05:00 PM – Confession***
- ❖ ***Saturday, 11.26. '22. – St, John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinopole - 09:30 AM Divine Liturgy***
- ❖ ***The 24th Sunday after Pentecost – November 27th – 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy***

Donations November 13, 2022

Offering - \$ 802.00 Candles - \$138.00 Dues - \$400.00

Building Fund

In Memory of Amelia & Joseph Kondash from Richard - \$20

In Memory of Judy Raich from Ann Luy - \$150.00

Large Candles

In Memory of Julie Lambrinos from Dan & Dyne Tomak

In Memory of Steve & Stella Baich from Kathy & Gerry Szmyd

In Memory of Connie Bartis from Rick Kondas

In Memory of Father, Mike Tumbas from Milica Knepp

In Memory of Linda Zedlar Griffiths from Milica Knepp

In Memory of Christine and Charles from Olga Bulich

NEXT FISH FRY

FRIDAY DECEMBER 9, 2022

Please see Donna Zimmerman or Suzette if you can help!

Anyone interested in running for and/or remaining on the St Nicholas Church Council for 2023 must submit their name and intent in writing to a member of the nominating committee

(Carole McAllister, Joseph Golden and Helene Gleason) You may also leave this information in the Candle Room to the attention of the Committee.

MUST BE SUBMITTED BY TODAY, SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2022

VISIT OUR WEBSITE!!!!

<https://stnicholasjohnstown.org>

Thanks Brady (Malichi) Doyle for the Great update!