

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church
971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905
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The Twenty Fifth Sunday after Pentecost
(11.26.2023.)

Luke 10:25-37

And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

(KJV)

Attentive reading and listening to the Holy Gospel are direct experiences with the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Gospel proclaims the words of the Lord Jesus Christ as they are known and have been preserved.

Attentive listeners and readers of the Gospel are directly and deeply affected. The Gospel transforms lives. The Gospel affects thoughts and actions. The Gospel touches the heart, mind and soul.

The present Gospel teaches a lasting lesson of love for our neighbors. Love of neighbor is directly connected to experiencing eternal life. The lawyer in the current Gospel asked what was required of him to experience eternal life.

The plight of the robbery victim as neighbor was presented to the lawyer. Jesus told the lawyer to show mercy as did the Samaritan to the robbery victim. Attentive believers heed this message in considering neighbors suffering in their midst.

Seeking eternal life is the goal believers embrace at Holy Baptism. Living in ways pleasing to Jesus Christ is expected from the time of Baptism until departure from this life. Repentance is always possible to begin anew in Christ.

God's Holy Church provides the guidance, nourishment for the soul and experiences for the journey from Baptism to the Heavenly Kingdom. Attentiveness in reading and listening to the Gospel is completely voluntary.

The hunger in the soul seeks the Gospel's nourishment. The soul requires the words of the Lord Jesus Christ throughout earthly life. The soul needs the Precious Body and Blood of Christ.

The Holy Mysteries of the Church, Baptism, Chrismation, Holy Confession and Communion, Marriage, Ordination and Holy Unction provide structure, purpose and direction for the Christian life.

The present Gospel reveals the value of showing mercy to a suffering neighbor. This message is proclaimed in the Church every year. The lesson of providing mercy to suffering individuals has eternal value.

Believers attentive to the present Gospel readily show mercy to suffering persons met in daily life. Attentive believers increase their sensitivity to suffering neighbors. The value of showing mercy increases in value to attentive believers.

Christians are to be active following Holy Baptism. Believers are to live in ways pleasing to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus' known compassion for the sick and the suffering serves as an example for believers to make a part of their lives.

God's Holy Church offers continuous learning for believers. The heart, mind and soul benefit from the learning opportunities in the Church. Life is continually enriched in the Church.

Growth in Jesus Christ is possible throughout life. The Church offers the opportunities in Jesus Christ for unlimited growth. Believers choose at each moment of time whether to grow in Christ.

Valuing learning is beneficial throughout earthly life. The Church offers the best learning opportunities available. The Church offers the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Mother of God, the saints and martyrs are proven examples to learn from.

The lives and writings of the Holy Fathers and Mothers inspire learning opportunities for all aspects of life. The Holy Scriptures are completely relevant for each day in each century.

Suffering exists in every community, in every neighborhood. Persons suffer in the streets, in jails and in workplaces. Serious Christians demonstrate Christ's love by responding to the suffering.

Parish churches are examples in outreach efforts to the sick and suffering. Priests encourage parishioners to show mercy to the hurting and victimized. Priests and deacons are personal examples in responding to the abused and needy.

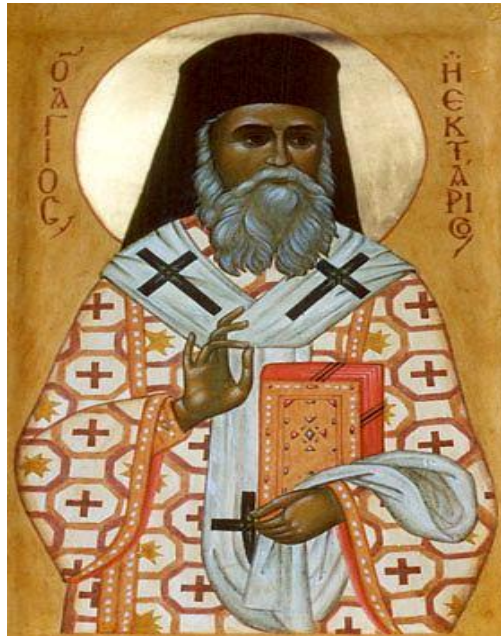
The lawyer in the current Gospel asked about attaining eternal life. His question resulted in a lasting lesson that has endured through the centuries. Thank God for the question being asked. Thank the Lord Jesus Christ for the answer.

The Twenty Fifth Sunday after Pentecost. St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople. November 13/26, 2023. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.

Father Rodney Torbic

THE PATH TO HAPPINESS

[St. Nectarios of Aegina](#)



[St. Nectarios of Aegina](#) is one of the most well known Greek saints of modern times, glorified by many miracles. He was born in 1846, became a monk in his youth, and later became the bishop of Pentapolis in the Alexandrian Orthodox Church. Due to intrigues and false accusations from detractors the saint was sent into retirement and exiled. Moving to Greece, he labored as a simple preacher in province of Euboea, and later founded a woman's monastery on the island of Aegina. The bishop and elder reposed in 1920 and was ranked among the saints of the Greek Orthodox Church in 1961. Below we publish extracts from the saint's letters, compiled by the monastery of the Paraclete in Oropos (Attica).

The Path to Happiness

There is nothing greater than a pure heart, because such a heart becomes the throne of God. Is anything more glorious than the throne of God? Of course not. This is what the Lord says to those who have a pure heart: *I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people* (2 Cor. 6:16). Thus, who can be happier than these people? And what blessings could they lack? Aren't there all blessings and all gifts of the Holy Spirit in their blessed souls?

What else could they possibly lack? Nothing, verily nothing! Because they have the greatest goodness in their hearts—God Himself!

How those people err who seek happiness outside themselves—in foreign countries and travels, in riches and glory, in large properties and delights, in pleasures, abundance, and in empty things, which end in bitterness! Erecting a tower of happiness outside our own hearts is the same as building a house in a place that is constantly subjected to earthquakes. Such a building will soon collapse...

Brothers and sisters! Happiness is in us ourselves, and blessed is the one who has understood this. Search your hearts and be watchful of its spiritual state. Perhaps you have lost boldness before the Lord? Perhaps your conscience reproaches you for violating His commandments? Perhaps it reproaches you for injustice, for falsehood, for not fulfilling our obligations before God and neighbor? Search yourself; perhaps evil and passions have filled your heart; perhaps it has turned away to the crooked and impassible path...

Unfortunately, whoever has left his heart without attention has lost all blessings and fallen into a multitude of evils. He has cast out joy and been filled with bitterness, sorrow, and vexation of soul. He has cast out peace and gained depression, worry, and horror. He has cast out love and gained hatred. And finally, he has cast out all the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit that he received at his Baptism, and become kin to all evil-doing that makes a man pitiful and accursed.

Brothers and sisters! The All-Merciful God wants us all to have happiness in both this life and the next. For this He has founded His holy Church, so that it would cleanse us from sin, illumine us, make peace between us and God, and give us heavenly blessings.

The Church's embrace is always open to us. Let those whose conscience is heavy hasten to this embrace. Let us hasten, and the Church will take up the weight of our burden, give us boldness before God, and fill our hearts with happiness and bliss.

Holy Baptism

As many of you who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Gal. 3:27).

What a great truth does the apostle Paul show us by these words!

Baptized Christians do not wear the old man with the passions and lusts, but have put on the new man, have put on Christ Himself, Who now lives in their hearts. And the words, “put on” do not refer to some simple and external garments, but to something deeper, something essential and inalienable.

Through our faith in Christ and through our Baptism we put on Christ Himself and become children of God, the habitation of the All-Holy Spirit, temples of God, holy and perfect, gods by grace. Thus have we thrown off corruption from ourselves and been clothed in incorruption. We

have put off the man of sin and put on the man of righteousness and grace. We have cast out death and put on immortality...

But have we understood our great obligation, which through Baptism we have taken upon ourselves before God? Have we recognized that we should behave like children of God and brothers of our Lord, that we must make our own will the same as God's will; that as children of God we must abide free from sin, that we must love Him with all our strength from the depths of our hearts and souls, that we must worship Him and impatiently await being united with Him forever? Have we thought about the fact that our hearts should be so filled with love that it will pour out upon our neighbors? Do we have the feeling that we are obligated to become saints and perfect, the image of God, children of God, and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven?

For the sake of all this we must struggle, so that we will not turn out to be unworthy of God's call and be rejected. Yes, brothers and sisters, let us struggle with zeal and self-denial, that we might be victorious. Let none of us lose his boldness, so that we might not neglect our duty, or be cowardly, not lose heart in the face of the difficulties of spiritual battle. Therefore do we have God as our helper, Who will strengthen us on the difficult path of the virtues.

Spiritual warfare

The goal of our life consists in becoming perfect and holy, to be shown to be God's children and heirs to the Kingdom of Heaven. Let us be vigilant, that for the sake of this life we might not lose the future life; that in our daily cares and fuss we might not neglect the goal of our life.

Fasting, vigil, and prayer do not by themselves bring the desired fruits, because these are not the goal of our life but the means for achieving the goal.

Adorn your lamps with virtues. Struggle to cut off emotional passions. Purify your heart of all defilement and preserve it in purity, so that the Lord would come down and abide in you; so that He would fill you with the Holy Spirit and divine gifts.

My beloved children, all your zeal and efforts should be aimed at this. This should ceaselessly be your goal and striving. Pray for this to God.

Ask the Lord every day, but within your heart and not outside of it. And when you find Him, stand in fear and trembling like the cherubim and seraphim, because your heart has become God's throne. But in order to find the Lord, humble yourself to the ground, because the Lord hates the proud, but loves and visits the humble of heart.

If you struggle in the good fight, God will strengthen you. In struggles we discover our weaknesses, our inadequacies, and our defects. It is the mirror of our spiritual state. Whoever does not struggle will not come to know himself.

Be attentive also to your insignificant falls. If from inattentiveness some sin happens with you, do not despair but immediately take yourself in hand and fall down before God, Who has the power to raise you up.

In excessive regret pride is hidden. Therefore it is harmful and dangerous, and is often made even worse by the devil, in order to stop the progression of the struggler.

The path that leads to perfection is long. Pray to God that He would strengthen you. Patiently accept your falls, and having immediately arisen, run [to God], do not stop like children who sit in the place where they've fallen, crying and sobbing inconsolably.

Be vigilant and pray, so that you would not fall into temptation. Do not despair if you continually fall into old sins. Many of them are strong in essence, and come from acquired habit. Nevertheless, they are conquered with time and zeal. Let no one deprive you of your hope.

Temptation

Temptations are sent to us in order to reveal our hidden passions and so that we would struggle against them, and in this way heal our souls. They are also a sign of God's mercy; therefore, give yourself into God's hands and ask His help, that He would strengthen you in your struggle. Hope in God never leads to despair. Temptations bring humble-mindedness. God knows how much each of us can bear and allows us temptations according to the measure of our strength. But we must also take care to be vigilant and attentive, and not lead our own selves into temptation.

Trust in God Who is Good, Strong, and Living, and He will lead you to a place of rest. Remember, that after temptations come spiritual joy, and that the Lord watches after those who endure temptations and suffering for the sake of His love. Thus, do not be fainthearted or afraid.

I do not want you to suffer and be confused by all that is happening against your will, no matter how just it might be. Such suffering testifies to the existence of egoism. Watch out for egoism, which hides under the façade of correctness. Watch out also for inappropriate regret, which springs up after deserved rebukes. Excessive distress [over this] is a temptation. The only true [proper] distress is what we feel when we are well aware of how wretched the state of our soul is. All other distress has no relation whatsoever to God's grace.

Take care to preserve the heart, in order to guard the joy of the Holy Spirit and not allow the evil one to pour his poison into us. Be attentive, so that paradise, which is within us, would not turn into hell.

Prayer

Man's most important labor is prayer. Man was created to glorify God. This is the labor worthy of him. Only this is capable of revealing his spiritual essence. Only this justifies his extraordinary status in all the created world. Man was created in order to honor God and to be a participant in His divine goodness and blessedness.

As the image of God, man desires God, fervently strives for Him and thirsts to be raised up to Him. Through prayer and hymns, he exalts. His spirit rejoices, his heart leaps, and the more he prays, the more his soul casts off worldly lusts and is filled with heavenly blessings. And the more he separates himself from the earthly and delights of this life, the more he delights in heavenly exaltation. Our experience proves to us that this is the truth.

God accepts those prayers raised up in the proper manner; that is, with a feeling of our imperfection and unworthiness. But in order for this feeling to exist, there must be complete self-renunciation of our low selfishness, and submission to God's commandments; there must be humility and ceaseless spiritual labor.

Entrust the Lord with all your cares—He provides for you. Do not be fainthearted and do not fret. He Who searches the hidden depths of the human soul also knows about your desires, and He has the power to fulfill them as [only] He knows how. But you must ask God and not lose boldness. Do not think that because your striving is holy you have a right to complain when your prayers are not heard. God fulfills your desires in ways that you do not know about. And so, be at peace and call out to God.

Our prayers and requests do not lead us to perfection by themselves. The Lord Who comes and abides in us leads us to perfection when we fulfill His commandments. And one of the first commandments is that in our lives, not our will but God's be done; and that it be done exactly, as in heaven with the angels. So that we too could say, "O Lord, not as I wish, but as Thou willest, may Thy will be done on earth and it is in the heavens." Thus, without Christ in us, prayer and requests lead us to *prelest* [spiritual delusion].

Love

Acquire love. Ask God every day for love. Along with love comes a whole multitude of blessings and virtues. Love, so that you also might be loved. Give God your heart, so that you would abide in love. *God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him* (1 Jn. 4:16). You must maintain great caution in your relationships with others and respect each other as sacred images. Never look at his body or beauty, but watch after his soul. Be attentive to the feeling of love, because if the heart is not warmed by pure prayer, love risks being fleshly and unnatural; it risks darkening the mind and scorching the heart.

It is necessary to confess every day—perhaps our love [for another] does not proceed from our bond with Christ, does not flow from our complete and total love for the Lord. Whoever is attentive and preserves love in purity is protected from the snares of the evil one who tries to gradually turn our Christian love into general love and sensual love.

Good Christian manners

Christians, according to God's commandments, should become saints and perfect. Perfection and sanctity are first engraved deep in the soul of the Christian, and only later are they also imprinted

in his desires, speech, and deeds. In this manner, God's grace, which exists in the soul, is poured out upon his entire outward personality.

A Christian must be polite with everyone. His words and deeds should breathe the grace of the Holy Spirit, which abides in his soul; so that in this way his Christian life would be witnessed and the name of God be glorified.

He who tests every word also tests every deed. He who searches the words he is about to speak searches also the deeds he intends to commit, and he never oversteps the boundaries of good and virtuous behavior.

A Christian's grace-filled speech is characterized by sensitivity and politeness. This is what gives birth to love, and brings peace and joy. On the contrary, rudeness gives birth to hatred, enmity, grief, the desire to win [arguments], disorder, and wars.

Thus, let us always be polite. May no base words proceed from our lips—words that are not filled with the salt of God's grace—but may our speech be always filled with grace, with goodness; speech that witnesses to politeness in Christ and a developed soul.

St. Nectarios of Aegina

Services this Week

- **Wednesday 11.29.2023.- Holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew 09:30 AM Divine Liturgy**
- **26th Sunday after Pentecost - 12.03.2023.- Venerable Gregory Decapolites (Forefeast of the Entry into Temple) - 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy**

Donations November 19, 2023

Offering - \$ 1,699.00 Candles - \$75.00

Dues - \$300.00

Donations

Altar Boy Robes - Dianna Dunnington - \$100

Altar Boy Robes - Eli Cvijanovich - \$25

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
In Memory of Amelia & Joseph Kondas from Richard Kondas
In Memory of Betty Gjurich from the Gjurich Family
In Memory of Damjena & Lazo Gjurich from Dyne & Dan Tomak

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.



Please see attached form for Poinsette order!



Due, to Suzette (or the candle room) Sunday, December 3rd.

KOLO NEWS

- We will be making holiday rolls on December 12th. Order forms are in the hall. \$15 each. Nut, poppyseed and apricot. Come help us and learn how to make them.
- GOBS for sale NOW: Vanilla and chocolate. \$3 each, 6 for \$15 and 12 for \$28. See Donna Zimmerman.
- Christ the Saviour Cathedral (in the basement of the Cathedral) is having their basket party on Saturday, December 2nd. Doors open at 11:00 AM and drawing begins at 2:00 PM. Tickets are \$15.

UPCOMING EVENTS

FISH FRY

Friday, December 8, 2023

Annual Congregational Meeting

Sunday, December 10, 2023

St. Nicholas Slava Celebration!!!

Sunday, December 17, 2023



POINSETTIAS



Provided by SEADS Garden Center

No.	Size	Price	Total \$
	5"	\$6.50	
	6.5"	\$12	
	8.5"	\$20	
	10.5"	\$24	
		Total =	

Name: _____

In Memory of: _____

Paid _____ Check # _____

Please return to Suzette Gardenhour no later than Sunday, December 3rd. If you are out of town – payment and completed form can be mailed to:

St. Nicholas Church
1001 St. Clair Road
Johnstown PA 15905

Or contact Suzette at 814-421-1276 or shliva16@gmail.com