

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905

Rev. Presbyter Dragan Vukovic

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The Twenty Sixth Sunday after Pentecost (12.11.2022.)

Luke 12:16-21

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. (*KJV*)

The length of earthly life is uncertain for each individual. The Psalmist says life is normally 70-80 years in length. (Ps.89/90:10) Every breathe, each heartbeat and thought are dependent upon the Lord God.

God's Holy Church proclaims the Gospel for believers to be mindful of the dependency on God for life. Believers are expected to live in ways that reflect God as the giver of life.

When believers are mindful of God as the giver of life, responsible believers show God gratitude, attention and glory. Responsible believers keeping the focus on God put earthly life and earthly goods into perspective.

The rich man in the present Gospel gave no thought to God. He focused on the abundance of his material goods. His desire was to keep his large amount of goods and maintain a life of ease.

The rich man wanted to party and have a good time with his life. No mention was made of him giving thanks to God for the abundance of his fruits. No thought is recorded of his interest in sharing his wealth with the less fortunate.

The Gospel has does not record the rich man as donating any portion of his wealth for glory and thanksgiving to God. The rich man's interest in the well-being of his soul appears non-existent.

Unexpectedly, the man's life was going to end. The wealth he accumulated would be of no benefit to him. He had not shown richness towards God. He had not shared his wealth with any neighbors that were needy.

The Lord Jesus Christ said: "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Mt. 6:20)

The present Gospel is a vivid lesson for attentive believers to be mindful of the soul and the fragility of life. Being rich toward God involves giving thanks, glory and honor to God.

Richness toward God includes showing concern and compassion for the needy met during the course of daily life. Jesus said:" Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Mt.25:40)

During the course of earthly life, every person will meet and come to know of others who might be sick, strangers, needing of food or clothing or having been imprisoned.

The way a person responds to the sick, the suffering, the needy and imprisoned will affect how the person will be judged when Christ returns. (Mt.25:31-46)

Today a person may be comfortable in his or her wealth.

Today may be the last day of earthly life and richness toward God may never have been shown. The way life is lived creates the record for the final judgment.

Ignoring gratitude toward God, taking it easy and failing to share with the less fortunate does not bode well for the final judgment. Abundance given to each person is to be used responsibly in God-pleasing ways.

We know from St. James's Epistle: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17)

Grateful recipients of wealth will acknowledge and give thanks to God. Those appreciative of God's goodness, will reflect the appreciation in sharing the abundance with the needy with whom Christ is identified. (Mt. 25:31-46)

Every person has a certain abundance of wealth received from God. The time of daily life is part of the abundance given each person. Responsible recipients of God's wealth take time to thank God in the Church and in daily life.

Many people have an abundance of time and have the opportunity to attend the Divine services of the Church. Praying and attending the Divine services of the Church is a way to thank God and benefit others.

The Church has weekday services that can benefit greatly from improved attendance. Every person has the ability to pray more wherever they are located. Praying benefits not only the persons prayed for but also the person praying.

Responsible recipients of God's wealth give time and effort to the Church and live according to God's commandments. Responsible believers welcome and strive to hear the word of God and keep it. (Lk. 11:28)

The Twenty Sixth Sunday after Pentecost. Holy monk-martyr Stephen the New. Holy Martyr Christo. November 28/December 11, 2022. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic

The Prologue from Ochrid *St Nikolai of Zhicha*

1. THE HOLY APOSTLE ANDREW THE FIRST-CALLED

Andrew, the son of Jonah and brother of Peter, was born in Bethsaida and was a fisherman by trade. At first he was a disciple of St. John the Baptist, but when St. John pointed to the Lord Jesus, saying, *Behold the Lamb of God!* (John 1:36), Andrew left his first teacher and followed Christ. Then, Andrew brought his brother Peter to the Lord. Following the descent of the Holy Spirit, it fell by lot to the first apostle of Christ, St. Andrew, to preach the Gospel in Byzantium and Thrace, then in the lands along the Danube and in Russia around the Black Sea, and finally in Epirus, Greece and the Peloponnese, where he suffered. In Byzantium, he appointed St. Stachys as its first bishop; in Kiev, he planted a Cross on a high place and prophesied a bright Christian future for the Russian people; throughout Thrace, Epirus, Greece and the Peloponnese, he converted multitudes of people to the Faith and ordained bishops and priests for them. In the city of Patras, he performed many miracles in the name of Christ, and won many over to the Lord. Among the new faithful were the brother and wife of the Proconsul Aegeates. Angered at this, Aegeates subjected St. Andrew to torture and then crucified him. While the apostle of Christ was still alive on the cross, he gave beneficial instructions to the Christians who had gathered around. The people wanted to take him down from the cross but he refused to let them. Then the apostle prayed to God and an extraordinary light encompassed him. This brilliant illumination lasted for half an hour, and when it disappeared, the apostle gave up his holy soul to God. Thus, the First-called Apostle, the first of the Twelve Great Apostles to know the Lord and follow Him, finished his earthly course. St. Andrew suffered for his Lord in the year 62 A.D. His relics were taken to Constantinople; his head was later taken to Rome, and one hand was taken to Moscow.

2. SAINT FRUMENTIUS THE ENLIGHTENER OF ABYSSINIA

In the time of Emperor Constantine the Great, a learned man from Tyre by the name of Meropius traveled to India. He took with him two young Christians, the brothers Edesius and Frumentius. On the journey, their boat was shipwrecked in a storm off the coast of Abyssinia, and the wild Abyssinians killed everyone on the boat except these two brothers. They lived in Abyssinia for several years, and managed to enter into service in the imperial court of the Abyssinian king. Frumentius began to preach the Christian Faith, initially very cautiously, and was convinced that this land would be fruitful for such preaching. The two brothers then took ship: Edesius to Tyre, to his parents, and Frumentius to Alexandria, to Patriarch Athanasius the Great. Frumentius explained the situation in Abyssinia to the Patriarch, and sought pastors for those newly converted to the Faith. St. Athanasius consecrated Frumentius to the episcopacy.

St. Frumentius returned to Abyssinia where, by his zeal and his miracles, he converted all of Abyssinia to the Christian Faith in his own lifetime. This great shepherd of the flock of Christ, the enlightener of Abyssinia, reposed peacefully in the year 370 A.D. and went to live in the Kingdom of his Lord.

HYMN OF PRAISE

THE HOLY APOSTLE ANDREW THE FIRST-CALLED

St. Andrew, by the Spirit enlightened,
And the First-called Apostle of Christ,
Proclaimed the Lord day after day,
And baptized the people with the Cross.
Like a gardener in his own garden,
Through village and town he walked,
And skillfully grafted wild trees,
Watering them with Living Water,
Until he came to the end of his days,
And saw the Cross awaiting him.
Joyful Andrew said to the Cross:
"Greetings, O Cross! God sanctified thee,
Christ sanctified thee with His body.
O Cross, be thou my resting place.
From the dust of the earth, take me;
To God in the highest, raise me up,
And let Christ take me from thee--

The very Christ Who, because of me, was crucified on thee."

Disciple of the holy Baptist,
And apostle of Christ the Savior
O Andrew, first-called star,
By your prayers, help us.

REFLECTION

St. John Chrysostom says: "All is given to the Apostles." That is, all gifts, all power, all the fullness of grace which God gives to the faithful. We see this in the life of the great apostle, St. Andrew the First-called: He was an apostle, evangelist, prophet, pastor and teacher (Ephesians 4:11). As an evangelist, he carried the good news of the Gospel to the four corners of the earth; as a prophet, he prophesied the baptism of the Russian people and the greatness of Kiev as a city and a Christian center; as a pastor, he established and organized many churches; as a teacher, he tirelessly taught people right up to and during his crucifixion, when he taught from

the cross until his last breath. In addition to this, he was a martyr, which is also according to the gift of the Holy Spirit, and is not given to everyone. And so we see in this apostle, as in the others, the fullness of the grace of the Spirit of God. And every great work that a follower of Christ performs must be ascribed to that grace. St. Frumentius testifies this to us. When he returned from Alexandria to Abyssinia as a consecrated bishop, he began to perform the greatest miracles, thus converting great masses of people to the Faith. Then the amazed king asked him: "So many years have you lived among us and never have we seen you perform such miracles. How is it that you do so now?" To this, the Blessed Frumentius replied to the emperor: "This is not my work, but the work of the grace of the priesthood." The saint then explained to the king how he had forsaken parents and marriage and the whole world for the sake of Christ, and how he had--by the laying on of hands by St. Athanasius--received the grace of the priesthood: miracle-working grace.

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the spiritual fall of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3):

1. How the serpent provoked greed and pride in Eve;
2. How the greedy and proud woman transgressed God's command and ate of the Tree of Knowledge;
3. How Eve sinned, not in the midst of poverty or need, but in an abundance of all things.

HOMILY

on the ignorance and hardheartedness of the pagans

The gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart (Ephesians 4:17-18).

What is vanity, my brethren? All that is seen outside God, cut off from God and done without the fear of God. What is vanity of the mind, my brethren? To live and interpret life, not by God's law but rather by one's own passing thoughts and desires. Whence, my brethren, does this evil come to men? From hardness of heart and from inner ignorance. What does hardness of heart mean, brethren? It means a heart empty of love for God and fear of God, and filled with lustfulness and fear of everything for the body's sake. Brethren, what is born of hardness of heart? Ignorance--complete ignorance of divine things, divine ways and divine laws; a heart completely dulled to spiritual life and spiritual thought. What is the final consequence, brethren, of hardness of heart and ignorance of divine truth? A darkened understanding and alienation from the Living God. Darkened understanding occurs when the mind of man becomes as darkened as the body, and the light that is in man becomes darkness. Oh, such a darkness! A darkened understanding is a darkened mind. A darkened mind knows the meaning of nothing, or denies the meaning of everything. In such a condition, a man is alienated from the life of

God, and he withers and dies like a body part cut off from the body. Such are the pagans, such are the godless, and such are those of little faith or false Christians. But even dry wood, when it is watered with the life-creating water of Christ, comes to life and bursts forth in greenery. Even the dried-up pagan world was raised up and brought to life by Christ the Lord. How much more so would it be for repentant Christian sinners!

Let us look at ourselves, my brethren. Let us do so every day. Let us ask ourselves every day whether we have become darkened and alienated from the life of God because of our vanity. Soon there will be death, the end and judgment. The dry wood will be cast into the unquenchable fire.

O Lord Jesus, our Mind and our Life, help us to think with Thee, and to live with Thee.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Services this Week

- ❖ ***Tuesday, 12.03. '22 – Holy Apostle Andrew the First-Called- 09:30 AM
Divine Liturgy***
- ❖ **Friday – 12.16.'22. – PARACLESIS - THE OFFICE OF SUPPLICATION TO
SAINT NECTARIOS -05:00 PM – Confession**
- ❖ ***The 27th Sunday after Pentecost – December 18th – Serbian Children's
Day (bring your children) Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy, ST.
NICHOLAS SLAVA Blessing of the Slavski kolac and banquet to follow***

Donations December 4, 2022

Offering - \$ 1,096.00 Candles - \$73.00 Dues - \$750.00

Donations - \$50

Building Fund

In Memory of Andrew Grisin

Gloria Cernic - \$15, Olga Lucas - \$25, and Amelia Coyle - \$25

In Memory of Peter Calaboyias - Eli Cvijanovich - \$25

Large Candles

In Memory of Charles Bulich from Olga Bulich

In Memory of Mildred Tumbas from Milica Knepp

In Memory of Vinny Czubak from Jeannette Czubak

In Memory of Mike & Mildred Tumbas from Kathleen McDowell

In Memory of Damenja & Lazo Gjurich from Diane and Dan Tomak

In Memory of Amelia & Joseph Kondas from Richard Kondas

ST. NICHOLAS SLAVA

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2022

Blessing of the Slavski kolac and banquet to follow Divine Liturgy

Honored Kumovi Gojko & Rose Marinkovich

\$15 - Adults Our Children Eat Free

KOLO MEETING

This Sunday, December 11th following Divine Liturgy

VISIT OUR WEBSITE!!!!

<https://stnicholasjohnstown.org>

**Today is the last day to order Poinsettias for
Christmas!**



POINSETTIAS

Provided by SEADS Garden Center

No.	Size	Price	Total \$
	5"	\$7	
	6.5"	\$11	
	8.5"	\$20	
	10.5"	\$23	
		Total =	

Name: _____

In Memory of: _____

Paid _____ Check # _____

Please return to Suzette Gardenhour no later than Sunday, December 11th.

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