

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

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The Twenty Seventh Sunday after Pentecost (12.18.2022.)

Luke 13:10-17

And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day. The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day? And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him (*KJV*)

Today's Gospel is filled with joy about the healing power of the Lord Jesus. Observes of Jesus' healing power rejoiced. The woman healed of the infirmity for eighteen years glorified Jesus.

Glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ is part of the responsible Christian life. Each person is healed by Jesus Christ in ways that are beyond number. The ways Jesus heals each believer is beyond full recognition and identification.

When an honest look is taken at daily life, Jesus' healing powers are revealed. The more a person grows in Christ, the more Jesus' healing actions are apparent. The honest believer takes time to glorify and thank Jesus for the healings.

Healings come from Christ and are due to Christ's love, goodness and mercy. The woman with the infirmity in the Gospel was bound by Satan. Jesus saw within the woman the reason to heal her and Jesus took action to complete the healing.

Every person is a sinner. Each person's actions are inhibited and restricted by the sins committed. Not all sins are identifiable, acknowledged or recognized. The power of sin and the inhibiting actions of Satan are destroyed when Jesus acts.

Each believer has the opportunity and responsibility to glorify Jesus in daily life. Glorifying Jesus is possible through living a life of love, compassion and forgiveness. Glorifying Jesus is possible by uniting with Jesus throughout life.

Believers glorify Jesus when partaking of His Precious Body and Blood. Jesus is glorified when others are treated as the image and likeness as Christ. Believers give glory to Christ when welcoming the stranger, visiting the sick and feeding the hungry.

Jesus is glorified when believers are mindful of the imprisoned and when forgiveness abounds in daily relationships. The Holy Scriptures have ample instructions on how to love, glorify and be appreciative of Jesus.

Daily life is an opportunity to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. When Christ is glorified and desired most in life, all else is in proper perspective. During this time of the Nativity Fast, believers are encouraged to reassess the priorities of life.

Jesus Christ is the intended priority of the Christian. Jesus Christ is the goal and the life of the Christian embraced at Holy Baptism. Living in Christ is possible at every moment of life. Loving Christ and seeking Christ are possible at all times.

God's Holy Church nourishes, guides and gives direction to believers seeking to remain united with Christ. The present Gospel is part of the nourishment, instruction and direction for attentive believers.

Parish life and life in the home and community offer ways to live in Christ and remain united with Christ. Constant self-evaluation facilitates making the best of each moment of life. The time of life is precious and is not to be wasted.

The time of life comes only once. The time of life remaining for each person is not known. Life can end abruptly or change unexpectedly. Being grateful to Jesus Christ and glorifying Christ is always timely and beneficial.

The woman in the present Gospel was immediately grateful to Jesus. The people rejoicing over Jesus' healing were responsible in their actions. Too often the society we live in is absent of glorifying Jesus.

Believers change the darkness and the illness that exists in present day society by glorifying Jesus. Parishes, neighborhoods and communities benefit when the love and healing power of Christ are alive in believers.

The present Gospel message attests to that healing power. Christ opens the eyes of the faithful to His healing power. Christ opens the hearts and minds of the observant and attentive to His healing power and love for the suffering.

Being grateful to Jesus Christ for healing was exemplified in the woman in the present Gospel. The woman is a lesson for all hearing the present Gospel. All hearing the Gospel have been healed in some way by Christ.

The woman in the Gospel suffered for eighteen years. She came to experience deeply the healing power of Christ. When adversity strikes in life, the healing power of Christ is present to uplift and heal the suffering.

Keeping the present Gospel in mind is a lasting lesson for life. Glorifying Christ is a lasting expectation for the Christian. Giving glory to Christ is not too much to ask for having been healed, loved and forgiven by Christ.

Renewal in Christ brings renewal in daily relationships in the parish, home and community. Renewal in Christ results in joy and glory to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ rejoices when sinners repent and every person is a sinner.

Repenting glorifies Christ and shows appreciation for Christ. Repentance is an acknowledgement of the Divinity of Christ and a demonstration of love for Christ. Repentance reflects the desire to show love for others in daily life.

Thank God for the present Gospel. Thank God for the Church proclaiming the Gospel. Thank God for healing we all experience. Today let glory and appreciation abound in our lives in Christ.

The Twenty Seventh Sunday after Pentecost. Venerable Sabbas the Sanctified. St. Nectarius of Bitola. Serbian Children's Day. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic

The Prologue from Ochrid St Nicholai of Zhicha

1. SAINT NICHOLAS THE WONDERWORKER, ARCHBISHOP OF MYRA IN LYCIA

This glorious saint, celebrated even today throughout the entire world, was the only son of his eminent and wealthy parents, Theophanes and Nona, citizens of the city of Patara in Lycia. Since he was the only son bestowed on them by God, the parents returned the gift to God by dedicating their son to Him. St. Nicholas learned of the spiritual life from his uncle Nicholas, Bishop of Patara, and was tonsured a monk in the Monastery of New Zion founded by his uncle. Following the death of his parents, Nicholas distributed all his inherited goods to the poor, not keeping anything for himself. As a priest in Patara, he was known for his charity, even though he carefully concealed his charitable works, fulfilling the words of the Lord: *Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth* (Matthew 6:3). When he gave himself over to solitude and silence, thinking to live that way until his death, a voice from on high came to him: "Nicholas, for your ascetic labor, work among the people, if thou desirest to be crowned by Me." Immediately after that, by God's wondrous providence, he was chosen archbishop of the city of Myra in Lycia. Merciful, wise and fearless, Nicholas was a true shepherd to his flock. During the persecution of Christians under Diocletian and Maximian, he was cast into prison, but even there he instructed the people in the Law of God. He was present at the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea [325] and, out of great zeal for the truth, struck the heretic Arius with his hand. For this act he was removed from the Council and from his archiepiscopal duties, until the Lord Christ Himself and the Most-holy Theotokos appeared to several of the chief hierarchs and revealed their approval of Nicholas. A defender of God's truth, this wonderful saint was ever bold as a defender of justice among the people.

On two occasions, he saved three men from an undeserved sentence of death. Merciful, truthful, and a lover of justice, he walked among the people as an angel of God. Even during his lifetime, the people considered him a saint and invoked his aid in difficulties and in distress. He appeared both in dreams and in person to those who called upon him, and he helped them easily and speedily, whether close at hand or far away. A light shone from his face as it did from the face of Moses, and he, by his presence alone, brought comfort, peace and good will among men. In old age he became ill for a short time and entered into the rest of the Lord, after a life full of labor and very fruitful toil, to rejoice eternally in the Kingdom of Heaven, continuing to help the faithful on earth by his miracles and to glorify his God. He entered into rest on December 6, 343 A.D.

2. SAINT NICHOLAS, BISHOP OF PATARA

Nicholas was the uncle of the great St. Nicholas, and it was he who guided him to the spiritual life and ordained him a priest.

3. THE HOLY MARTYR NICHOLAS KARAMOS

Nicholas was cruelly tortured for the Christian Faith by the Turks and was hanged in Smyrna in the year 1657 A.D.

4. SAINT THEOPHILUS, BISHOP OF ANTIOCH

A man well educated in Hellenic philosophy, Theophilus, after reading the Holy Scriptures, was baptized and became a great defender of the Christian Faith. His work "On the Faith" is preserved even today. He governed the Church of Antioch for thirteen years and entered into rest in the year 181 A.D.

HYMN OF PRAISE

SAINTE NICHOLAS THE WONDERWORKER, ARCHBISHOP OF MYRA IN LYCIA

Holy Father Nicholas,
The four corners of the world glorify you
As a knight of the powerful Faith,
The Faith of God, the true Faith.

From the cradle he was devoted to God,
From the cradle until the end;
And God glorified him--
His faithful Nicholas.

Famous was he throughout his life,
And even more renowned after death;
Mighty on earth was he,

And even more mighty is he in heaven.

Glowing spirit, pure heart,
He was a temple of the Living God;
For this the people glorify him
As a wondrous saint.

Nicholas, rich in glory,
Loves those who honor him as their "Krsna Slava";*)
Before the throne of the eternal God,
He prays for their good.

O Nicholas, bless us,
Bless your people
Who, before God and before you,
Humbly stand in prayer.

*) The patron saint of a family.--Trans.

REFLECTION

In icons of St. Nicholas, the Lord Savior is usually depicted on one side with a Gospel in His hands, and the Most-holy Virgin Theotokos is depicted on the other side with an episcopal omophorion in her hands. This has a twofold historical significance: first, it signifies the calling of Nicholas to the hierarchical office, and second, it signifies his exoneration from the condemnation that followed his confrontation with Arius. St. Methodius, Patriarch of Constantinople, writes: "One night St. Nicholas saw our Savior in glory, standing by him and extending to him the Gospel, adorned with gold and pearls. On his other side, he saw the Theotokos, who was placing the episcopal pallium on his shoulders." Shortly after this vision, John the Archbishop of Myra died and St. Nicholas was appointed archbishop of that city. That was the first incident. The second incident occurred at the time of the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea. Unable to stop Arius through reason from espousing the irrational blasphemy against the Son of God and His Most-holy Mother, St. Nicholas struck Arius on the face with his hand. The Holy Fathers at the Council, protesting such an action, banned Nicholas from the Council and deprived him of all emblems of the episcopal rank. That same night, several of the Holy Fathers saw an identical vision: how the Lord Savior and the Most-holy Theotokos were standing around St. Nicholas--on one side the Lord Savior with the Gospel, and on the other side the Most-holy Theotokos with a pallium, presenting the saint with the episcopal emblems that had been removed from him. Seeing this, the fathers were awestruck and quickly returned to Nicholas that which had been removed. They began to respect him as a great chosen one of God, and they interpreted his actions against Arius not as an act of unreasonable anger, but

rather an expression of great zeal for God's truth.

CONTEMPLATION

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

1. How God cursed the serpent;
2. How He imposed upon Eve the pain of child-bearing and on Adam the burden of toil;
3. How He cursed the ground in the works of man;
4. How He did not curse ground as ground but rather *in thy works*,^{*)} i.e., in the works of man.

*) According to the Greek and Slavonic texts.

HOMILY

on the absence of sin in the works of God

And God saw that it was good (Genesis 1).

Brethren, everything that was created, and the means by which the pure and sinless God created it, is pure and sinless. Every creature of God is pure and sinless as long as it is turned toward God, as long as it is neither separated from God nor hostile to God. Every creature of itself praises and glorifies God as long as it is pure and sinless. That is why the Psalmist sings: *Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Alleluia!* (Psalm 150:6). Every intelligent creature of God feels that its natural and primary purpose is to praise the Lord. Thus, brethren, people ask: "If this is so, from whence comes evil into the world?" It comes from sin, and only from sin. Sin changed a bright angel into a devil. The devil willingly made himself a vessel of sin and then hurried to make other creatures of God similar vessels. By their own free choice, other angels consented to sin with the devil, and afterward the first people, Eve and Adam, consented. From this proceeded the mixture of good and evil in the world. However, even today, that which is of God in creation is good, as it was in the first days of creation. Poison came from sin, for sin is indeed poison, the most bitter poison that exists. Sin was the cause of the curse. It brought about the darkening of minds and caused created things to become hostile toward their Creator. It distanced man from God, and man from man, and man from nature, and nature from man. O my brethren, all that comes from God is good, and all that comes from sin is evil. No evil exists that is bound to God, and there exists no kind of evil that is not bound to sin. Many philosophers have examined the essence of evil, and because of their crude minds they have asserted that evil is in matter and that matter is evil. However, only we Christians know that sin

is the essence of evil and that evil has no essence other than sin. It is obvious from this that if we desire to protect ourselves from evil, we must protect ourselves from sin. O sinless God, help us to protect ourselves from sin and the corruption of sin. **To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.**

About Serbian Children's Day, Mother's Day, and Father's Day

The following is from the book, "Divine Liturgy, Prayers, Catechism," St. Sava Seminary Fund, 1979. To purchase a copy of this book, please call the St. Sava Church Office at 219-736-9191. Among many national customs, the Serbs have a special one in which we REMEMBER and TIE as well as give gifts on Children's, Mother's, and Father's Day.

The Church Books dedicate the two Sundays preceding Christmas to the Forefathers and Fathers, the Righteous Ones and the Prophets of the Old Testament, who awaited the coming of the Saviour, symbolically depicted Him and prophesied His Advent, but did not live to see Him. Why did the Church choose to institute this commemoration of the Old Testament Fathers just before Christmas, the day we celebrate the Birth of the Creator of the New Testament? The Church felt it obligatory to portray to its adherents the connection between the old and the new, to teach us to see the history of mankind as a whole, and to show us that God's plan is a continuous one.

The Serbian people willingly adopted this tradition from the Apostolic Church, and through the years have faithfully kept its teaching. However, being of a very practical intellect, the Serbian people have applied this ancient custom to enhance their lives in the way most beneficial to them.

They divided this commemoration of the Fathers so that one Sunday was dedicated to Children, one to Mothers and one to Fathers. Why? Because Serbs put a strong emphasis on the importance of unity and sharing in family life.

Enlightened by Orthodox Christianity, and realizing that family observances are a priceless tool in preserving family unity, the Serbs guard and nurture their family observances with unparalleled zeal.

Knowing that the Birth of Christ is a fulfillment of the past, a reality of the present and promise of the future, the Serbs, in their preparation for the solemn celebration of the Christmas Holiday want the entire family to participate in demonstratively incorporating itself for the most important and climactic day – the Christmas Feast.

Just as the blood relationship between parents and children is indissoluble, the religious tie between true Christians and Christmas is inseparable. This is the reason why our calendar proposes three holidays before Christmas: Children's, Mother's, and Father's Day. In doing so, we remember the holy children, the holy mothers, and the holy fathers: we link children with

parents and parents with children. All three of these observances have one and the same purpose: REMEMBRANCE and TYING.

In celebrating CHILDREN'S DAY we remember all the holy children of God, those innocent creatures of God who Christ Cites as the prime example to those of us who want to enter the kingdom of heaven. For He said: "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 18, 3).

Then he continued: "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come to me: for such is the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 19, 4). And He concluded: "Whosoever offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a milestone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matthew 18,6).

When we cease to be children physically, we lose the receptiveness, naturalness, and candor characteristic of children, which, if properly nurtured, may inspire divine feelings of happiness, ecstasy, and charity. Through proper education the children learn to respect their parents, and concomitantly, earn the reputation of being good children and good Christians.

In our celebration of MOTHER'S DAY we dearly remember all the holy mothers from the past history of the Christian Church plus those from our own Serbian Orthodox Church. If there were no holy mothers, many of the Saints would not have been pious, virtuous people, nor would they be commemorated in our calendar today. "Mother" is a holy Name. She suffers much for children both spiritually and physically. Like Christ, her love is inexhaustible. Why did Christ give Himself to be crucified for the sinners? Because He saw in every sinner some good under the shadow of evil. In like manner, only the mother can see something good in her most corrupt son or immoral daughter. And it is very hard to understand Christ's Love for mankind if we do not properly understand the love of a mother for her children.

In celebrating FATHER'S DAY we remember with esteem all the holy fathers from both the old and new Church. We also remember all the Serbian fathers who gave their lives for "the Holy Cross and golden freedom."

Psychology and Religion agree that a child receives its first idea about God from its parents. And the role of the father is vital in developing that idea. Traditionally, one of the first things we teach our children is to cross themselves and pray, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Consequently, the word "Father" is tied to God from the very beginning. Also, the first prayer we teach our children is the Lord's Prayer which begins with "Our Father..." Again, here is a tremendous responsibility imposed upon the father since the word "Father" is tied directly to God. With this concept we are telling our children that God is like our Father. And this puts a heavy load on the father for he must be an example of everything good, moral, and charitable. Perhaps we should mention here also that children can get a totally opposite conception of God if their earthly father is a drunkard, or without love, understanding or forgiveness – or if he doesn't care for his children. But in such cases, the mother comes to the rescue. By showing her devotion and inexhaustible love for her offspring, she overshadows the father's weakness and molds a beautiful picture of God on their children.

In addition to REMEMBERING, TYING is a representative factor in celebrating these holy days. On Children's Day parents tie their children, on Mother's Day children tie their mothers,

and on Father's Day children tie their fathers. The loosing is done with an exchange of gifts. And giving gifts represent devotion and love.

The custom of tying symbolically connects the past with the present: we link them with mutual respect. The two generations are tied with mutual symbolize the love for God. So we see the Serbian people following the Lord's words, "The wise father brings out of his household the old and the new." This entire action of tying children with their parents vividly expresses a mutual bond of love between the generations.

A clear picture is exposed of one people, how should they go through their history and living a life of wholeness, combining the priceless treasures of the past with the new adornments of the present and the future.

This moral practice is greatly needed today when there is less and less attention given to the family and unity. Atheistic and other dark powers of this world are increasingly cutting the trunk of the family tree from its roots and creating animosity and divisiveness between the generations. Therefore, we should preserve and perpetuate this important Serbian tradition, one of our many beautiful customs, in celebrating Children's, Mother's, and Father's day. it is imperative because the family observances complement the church and its effort to preserve family unity. Proper observance of these three holidays prior to Christmas, augmented with our diligent preparation for the Holy Day, will inspire a more meaningful and solemn Feast of the Nativity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Services this Week

- ❖ *Monday, 12.19.'22 – St. Nicholas Wonderworker of Myra and Lycia- 09:30 AM Divine Liturgy*
- ❖ **Friday – 12.16.'22. – PARACLESIS - THE OFFICE OF SUPPLICATION TO SAINT NEGTARIOS -05:00 PM – Confession**
- ❖ *The 28th Sunday after Pentecost – December 18th – Serbian Mother's Day (BRING YOUR CHILDREN) Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM*

Donations December 11, 2022

Offering - \$ 1,267.00 Candles - \$43.00 Dues - \$300.00

Building Fund

In Memory of Andrew Grisin

Allen & Beverly Reeve - \$250, Cara & Jeff Fay Family - \$50, Robert Olsowsky - \$50 and Sherwood Hall Association Library - \$25

In Memory of Peter Calaboyias – Lazo & Debbie Gjurich - \$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

TODAY

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

BRIEF KOLO MEETING

Today, Sunday, December 18th following Banquet

VISIT OUR WEBSITE!!!!

<https://stnicholasjohnstown.org>