

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church
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The Twenty-Eighth Sunday after Pentecost
(12.17.2023)

Luke 17:12-19

And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole. **(KJV)**

The ten lepers in the present Gospel called Jesus their Master. The lepers desired mercy from Jesus. Jesus told the lepers to show themselves to the priests. They listened to Jesus and were cleansed.

At each Divine service believers pray to the Lord for mercy. All believers need of cleansing of personal sins. God is good and merciful. God hears the pleas for mercy. God is forgiving more than believers will ever know.

The Church provides the Holy Mysteries of Confession and Communion. Believers repenting of their sins receive forgiveness and experience renewal in Christ.

Ten lepers were cleansed. Only one leper returned to Jesus in thanksgiving. Only one of the cleansed lepers gloried God for being healed. This Gospel challenges believers to self-examination and to always give thanks to God.

Believers can never give God sufficient gratitude. Believers are protected and healed throughout life in ways known and unknown. Believers experience healing of soul and body when participating in Holy Confession, Communion and Unction.

God's goodness and mercy are beyond measure. God's goodness and mercy are beyond human comprehension. Appreciative believers take time to thank God. Appreciative believers glorify God in the ways they live.

Believers healed by God testify to that healing with their words and actions in daily life. Appreciative believers keep their hearts, minds and souls filled with gratitude to the good, merciful and loving God.

The Church has prayers of thanksgiving. Believers knowledgeable of the prayers utilize them fervently when healed. A person cannot travel the path of life from life from Baptism to the Heavenly Kingdom without being healed constantly.

The Church proclaims the present Gospel for believers to be grateful to God. Holy Apostle Paul said "In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." (I Thess.5:18)

The journey from birth to departure from earthly life is normally many decades. Persons experience physical illnesses. The heart, mind and soul are always faced with afflictions to take the person away from the life in Christ.

Believers face constant struggles to remain on the path to the Heavenly Kingdom and eternal life. Sins and afflictions to the soul occur regularly. Words are said, behaviors occur that impair functioning and need corrected.

Jesus is the healer in addition to being the goal of the believer. Jesus' healing powers enable the believer to be cleansed and released of sins. Jesus frees believers from the weight and burden of sins.

Strong faith includes being grateful for Jesus' healing actions. The cleansed and grateful leper's faith is an example for all believers. Only one of the ten lepers that were cleansed had the mind and grateful heart to say thank you.

The grateful leper fell before Jesus in gratitude. How often during our lives do we fall in gratitude to Jesus? Each time Jesus forgives us of sinful thoughts, words or actions, we are healed from the plague of sin.

When we recover from illnesses or accidents, do we fall before Jesus and say thank you? After surgery, do we take time to show gratitude to the Lord? Do our lives demonstrate we are grateful for renewed life after having been healed?

Our churches should be filled every week with grateful believers benefitting from prayers offered in the church for their health and salvation. The Church offers prayers for the sick and the suffering every day. Believers around the world benefit from the Church's prayers.

The present Gospel enters deep into the attentive heart, mind and soul for serious consideration. Personal thoughts, words and actions reflect whether the believer is grateful to God.

While life is in the body, the person can show gratitude to God. Life comes from God and continues only by the will of God. The wise believer chooses to be like the grateful leper and not like the ungrateful nine.

Each day is an opportunity to thank God. Each day is lived only by the goodness and mercy of God. Even the ability to say thank you to God depends on God.

Life is more than making requests of God. A healthy life entails fully recognizing and appreciating God's part in health. To be healthy is to live in Christ free of the weight and illness of sin.

Jesus is the cleanser of sins and healer of heart, mind and soul. Faith keeps the believer focused on Christ. Vigilance keeps the believer united with Christ. Now is the time for gratitude to Christ. It is always the time for gratitude to Christ.

The Twenty Eighth Sunday after Pentecost. Holy Greatmartyr Barbara. Venerable John of Damascus. December 4/17, 2023. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.

Father Rodney Torbic

THE MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF FASTING **On Fasting and Prayer. Part 2**

Having established a general concept of [fasting](#), having briefly revealed its meaning and significance for us, now, beloveds, let us begin to uncover its essence.

In accordance with our twofold being—bodily and spiritual—the Church has commanded a twofold fast: bodily and spiritual. Let us first discuss the [bodily fast](#).

What is bodily fasting?

Bodily fasting is the measured consumption of food and drink, and fasting food in particular. The Church typikon clearly lays out both the time of consumption and quality of fasting food. And how wisely and lovingly all this is done! Sometimes, when necessary, no food is prescribed at all; sometimes the most meager food is indicated—only bread with salt and water; sometimes fruits and vegetables are provided for; sometimes a type of broth; sometimes just one dish is appointed for a meal, sometimes two; sometimes wine is permitted, and fish on major feasts as well. Everything is strictly calculated, with the aim of weakening the passionate movements of the flesh that are aroused by abundant and sweet eating; but not so as to completely weaken our bodily nature, but, on the contrary, to make it light, strong, and fully capable of obeying the movements of the spirit and energetically fulfilling its demands.

Anyone who has decided to fast according to the precepts of the Church typikon regarding the consumption of food knows from experience all the beneficence and salutariness of the appointed xerography.¹ Countless hosts of saints who shone forth in fasting have experienced this. They all strictly adhered to the once-and-for-all prescribed rules and order in the quantity and quality of food. And what then? They were always healthy; they almost never needed treatment; and if they did need it sometime, they were treated by fasting and abstinence; that's why they lived for a hundred years, performing incredible feats.

So, beloveds, fasting consists in consuming food according to the determination of the Church regarding its quantity, time, and especially quality. During the fast, the faithful should not consume food before noon, should only consume fasting food, and moreover, in moderation; they should abstain not only from all drinks that inflame the blood or gratify the taste, but also from all amusements, games, pleasures, and idle gatherings; in general, everything that arouses sensuality.

It is the duty of every son of the Orthodox Church to preserve the fasts as a Divine institution and as an action or means of worshiping God. The Lord Himself commands: *Sanctify a fast* (Joel 1:14, 2:15); *turn ye even to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning* (Joel 2:12). For the violation of fasts, the wrath of God befalls families, nations, and kingdoms with great calamities (Ps. 77:29-30, Lk. 21:34). Failing to observe the fasts, disrespecting the laws of the Church, a man can't be a true son of the Church. Can it be expected that a son of the Orthodox Church who is disobedient in small, external matters should maintain obedience in more important obligations?

Fasting is a necessary means for success in the spiritual life and for attaining salvation; for fasting—depriving the flesh of excessive food and drink—weakens the force of sensual drives. From this it can be seen that fasting has diverse benefits: a) Fasting quickly and clearly shows a man that little is needed for his life, and his health depends not on refined, but on simple food and drink; b) fasting very soon reveals the passions and vices reigning in a man, which he has clung to with his heart, and which his flesh loves most of all; c) fasting makes us capable of prayer and reflection upon God and the Divine. “Whoever fasts prays with a good spirit,” says [St. John Chrysostom](#). In general, fasting is a very powerful means of preparation for all great and saving deeds. This is deeply felt by all prudent and God-loving people, always and everywhere. All the saints very strictly fasted and unanimously advised others to fast.

My beloved listeners! Having understood the essence and grasped the meaning and significance of fasting, let us, of course, as obedient sons of the Church, no longer oppose the Church's teaching on fasting, but resolve to observe all the fasts prescribed by the holy Church, according to its typikon. But we must prepare ourselves for fasting gradually: One cannot become a faster all at once.

Amen.

*[St. Justin \(Polyansky\) of Ufa and Menzelinsk](#)
Translation by Jesse Dominick*

Services this Week

- **Tuesday 12.19.2023 – St Nicholas Wonderworker of Myra in Lycia- *Divine Liturgy starts at 09:00 AM***
- **29th Sunday after Pentecost (12.24.2023) - Holy Fathers (Serbian Mother's Day) – Venerable Daniel the Stylite- *Divine Liturgy starts at 10:00 AM***

Donations December 10, 2023

Offering - \$ 1,053.00 Candles - \$49.00
Dues - \$200.00

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
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.

Donations are now being taken for the Gold coin for our Christmas Cesnica. Please see Richard Gardenhour.

DONATION ENVELOPES

**Please be aware that there is a mistake for the Palm Sunday Envelope – It is marked as March 31st. Our Palm Sunday is Sunday, April 28th.
Sorry for any inconvenience.**

**Please join us TODAY in celebration of our Krsna Slava Celebration!!
Blessing of the Slavski Kolac and Zito during Divine Liturgy with a celebratory Dinner to follow and a special visitor for the children!!**

UPCOMING EVENTS

**St. Nicholas Slava Celebration!!!
(Children's Day)**

Sunday, December 17, 2023

**Serbian Mother's Day – Sunday,
December 24, 2023**

**Serbian Father's Day – Sunday
December 31, 2023**

St. Sava Celebration
Sunday, January 28, 2023
