

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church
971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905
Rev. Presbyterian Dragan Vukovic
(814) 244-4063

The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost **(08.04.2024.)**

Matthew 9:1-8

And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city. And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men. **(KJV)**

The Lord Jesus Christ's power to forgive sins is life-renewing. Unforgiven sins weigh on a person and affect personal health and wellness. Sins buried in the consciousness affect the ability to think clearly.

Hidden and unconfessed sins will destroy personal peace. The Church provides confession for believers seeking to repent of their sins. Repenting of sins is the way to be reconciled and united with Jesus Christ.

The man in the present Gospel afflicted with paralysis had his sins forgiven. Jesus Christ gave the man mobility. Jesus gave the man freedom of movement. Believers forgiven of their sins have new found freedom in Christ.

The Church proclaims the present Gospel to keep believers constantly aware of Jesus' power of forgiveness and of the value of forgiveness. Forgiveness offers hope to individuals dealing with despair.

Forgiveness offers individuals a road to freedom, the road to God's Kingdom and eternal life. Everyone sins. Thoughts come to mind that are contrary to the Lord's teachings.

Words come out the mouth that are harmful and often unintended. When a person sins, the individual can become depressed and feel trapped. Jesus welcomes the person turning to Him sincerely seeking forgiveness.

Jesus demonstrates His love for each person. Jesus' love actively washes away the repentant person's sins. The heart, mind and soul are energized when forgiveness occurs. The body changes when Jesus' forgives the person.

The Gospel proclaimed in the Church is always timely and relevant. The Gospel speaks to each heart, mind and soul. Believers gathered in the Church unite when attentively hearing the Gospel.

The heart, mind and soul are nourished with the Gospel's proclamation. Believers are transformed and lifted to new heights when the Gospel is proclaimed.

The man in the Gospel was freed from the prison of his paralysis by Christ.

The Gospel is the key to freedom for believers imprisoned by sin. Christ enters the heart, mind and soul through the Gospel. Christ unites with believers through Confession and Communion.

Each Divine Liturgy is a freeing experience. The Divine Liturgy frees the believers of worldly cares. The Divine Liturgy lifts the believer to the heights of the glory of God.

Believers have a responsibility when being freed of sin. Believers forgiven of sins are expected to honor Christ and make a sincere effort to follow Christ's teachings. Jesus Christ is due gratitude when sins are forgiven.

Believers taking the life in Christ seriously demonstrate faithfulness to Christ in daily actions. Gratitude to Jesus Christ becomes a daily effort for believers cherishing forgiveness,

The Church nourishes and guides believers seeking to avoid committing further sins. The healed man in the current Gospel had the opportunity to begin life anew.

Persons healed of sins prove their gratefulness to Christ by the way they live.

Newness in Christ transforms believers. Behavior changes for the better. Vocabulary changes. Demeanor is different. Joy replaces gloom and negativity.

The body moves more freely when a person's sins are forgiven.

Each Divine Liturgy affects the participants collectively. Communities improve with each celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Believers exit the Church renewed and go to their homes and occupations with increased strength.

Jesus broke down the barrier of death when He rose from the grave. Jesus destroys the paralysis of sin by forgiveness. Jesus brings Light to the darkest moments of life.

Each Divine Liturgy brings with it the expectation that believers in attendance will be full attentive to the content. Individuals attending the Divine Liturgy have a responsibility to be fully immersed in the service.

The heart, mind and soul have an active part in the Divine Liturgy. The believer controls his or her degree of attentiveness and participation. Each person determines the degree he or she actively participates in the Liturgy.

The Divine Liturgy enters time and transports believers to a foretaste of God's Kingdom. Jesus Christ entered the paralyzed man's life and lifted the man to newness of life.

Each heart, mind and soul open to Christ has the opportunity to experience the heavenly heights. Believers open to Jesus Christ experience immeasurable joy. Peace and freedom enter the lives of the forgiven in Christ.

Holy Myrr-bearer and Equal to the Apostles Mary Magdalene. Hieromartyr Phocas. July 22/August 4, 2024, Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic.

The Prologue from Ochrid

Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic

1. THE HOLY GREAT MARTYR PANTALEON [PANTELEIMON]

Panteleimon was born in Nicomedia of a Christian mother and a pagan father. His mother was named Eubula and his father Eustorgius. As a young man, he studied the science of medicine. The priest Hermolaus befriended him, and taught him the Christian Faith and baptized him. Panteleimon miraculously cured a blind man whom other doctors had treated in vain; he healed him by the name of Christ and baptized him. The doctors, full of envy, accused Panteleimon of being a Christian, and he went before the Emperor Maximian to stand trial. "He stood before the earthly king in body but in mind he stood before the heavenly King." He freely declared to the emperor that he was a Christian, and in his presence healed a paralytic of his long-standing illness. This miracle drew many pagans to the Christian Faith. The emperor subjected Panteleimon to torture, but the Lord appeared to him on several occasions, and delivered him whole and unharmed. Then Saint Hermolaus, along with Hermippas and Hermocrates suffered. Sentenced to death, Saint Panteleimon knelt in prayer. At that moment, the executioner struck him on the neck with a sword, but it broke as though it were made of wax. The executioner was unable to execute Panteleimon until the saint completed his prayer and gave him permission to do so. His relics possess the ability to heal. Panteleimon was executed under an olive tree which was thereafter adorned with much fruit. "Panteleimon" means "all-merciful," or "all compassionate." The All-merciful God received his righteous soul and glorified him among His great saints. This wonderful martyr suffered honorably for Christ in his youth, on July 27, 304 A.D. Saint Panteleimon is invoked during prayers of the Blessing of Waters and in the Sacrament of Holy Unction, together with Saint Hermolaus and the other unmercenary and wonder-working saints. A most beautiful church dedicated to this saint is located on Holy Mount Athos.

2. SAINT CLEMENT, ARCHBISHOP OF OHRID

Clement was a disciple of Saints Methodius and Cyril. After the death of St. Methodius, Clement, under pressure from the Germans, traveled southward from Moravia. Clement and his companions--Gorazd, Nahum, Sava, and Angelarius (together, they were called "The Five")--crossed the Danube River, where they were guests of Emperor Boris Michael. Following this they came to the region of Ohrid. They first founded a monastery in Belica [Velitsa], where Clement's first episcopal see was located. Afterward, he moved to Ohrid, and from there developed his great arch-pastoral and illuminating activity for the entire region. In Ohrid St. Clement erected a church to Saint Panteleimon. He had many disciples, who copied books in the Slavonic script for the Slavic peoples. Saint Nahum especially assisted him in this work. He worked miracles during his life, and his relics manifest a healing power to the present day. Following great labors and faithful service to God, he reposed peacefully in Ohrid, in the year 916 A.D. His wonder-working relics repose in a church formerly dedicated to the Holy Birth-giver of God (The Theotokos), which was re-dedicated to St. Clement.

3. BLESSED NICHOLAS, THE FOOL-FOR-CHRIST

Nicholas was from Novogrod, and was the son of wealthy parents. He left his wealth, and ran through the streets as a fool-for-Christ, instructing men through his foolishness. His companion in the same asceticism was Blessed Theodore. Once, in the presence of witnesses, they both ran across a river on the surface of the

water. Nicholas reposed in the Lord in the year 1392 A.D.

4. THE VENERABLE FEMALE ANTHUSA

After a long solitary ascetic life Anthusa founded a convent of ninety sisters. During the Iconoclastic controversy under Emperor Constantine Copronymos, all ninety nuns were slain, after which the Venerable Anthusa herself died, in the year 759 A.D.

5. THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-THREE MARTYRS

They were drowned in the sea of Thrace.

HYMN OF PRAISE

THE FIVE (SAINTS CLEMENT, NAHUM, ANGELARIUS, SAVA, AND GORAZD)

The Five God-pleasers,
Diligent bearers of the honey of the Gospel,
Spread the Faith throughout the wide world,
Until, on the blue lake, they settled--
But with greater effort from there they labored
With the Lord, to sweeten the bitter life of men.
Clement the hierarch, a true servant of God,
Who, much pain and mockery, endured,
At Ohrid, became Christ's banner.
And with him, Saints Nahum, Angelarius, and Sava,
And blessed Gorazd, five in number;
All were men of God, His laborers.
In heaven, for a thousand years, they have lived;
For a thousand years, mankind have they amazed.
In baptizing the people, no labor did they spare,
With glory they were crowned, for God they loved.
The glory of the Five, Ohrid preserves,
As the boast and glory of the Slavs.

REFLECTION

If you give alms to the poor, know that inasmuch as you do good works for your neighbor, so much and more do you do for yourself. St. Anthony says: "Both life and

death come to us from our neighbor." St. Peter Damascene writes: "As the poor should give thanks to God and love the rich who do them good, even more should the rich give thanks to God and love the poor; for they are saved by the providence of God, both now and in the future age, because of their alms. For without the poor, they not only cannot attain the salvation of their souls, but they also cannot avoid the temptations of wealth." Alms which are given out of vanity or with disdain are of no benefit. In earlier times, the wealthy would bring gold to the hermits and beg them to accept it. It was a rare occurrence for the hermits to accept alms gladly, and when they did, it was out of compassion for the rich. The most destitute of men received alms out of compassion!

CONTEMPLATION

To contemplate the miraculous deliverance of the Israelites from Sisera and his forces (Judges 4):

1. How the Lord showed mercy on the enslaved Israelites, hearing their cries, and granted them victory over Sisera;
2. How the prophetess Deborah sent a small force to Mt. Tabor against Sisera, who had nine-hundred chariots of iron and an enormous army;
3. How the forces of Sisera were scattered, and Sisera himself perished.

HOMILY

About the prophesied scoffers of holy things

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts" (2 Peter 3:3).

Does the mirror change and warp when a scoffer stands before it, laughing and scoffing at it? No, the mirror does not change and warp, but remains the same as it was. Brethren, neither does God change or warp when scoffers laugh and scoff at Him. The unchanging and All-pure God knows that the scoffer scoffs at himself. By his scoffing at the holy things of God, the scoffer warps and deforms himself, while the holy things of God remain intact.

Oh, how many scoffers there already are in our own time! Many--too many--but their multitudes are weaker than the One and Only. What is a mass of dust to a strong wind? You have only to wait, armed with patience, until a strong wind blows.

Far too many scoffers have come, who scoff at God's word. They offer their own words in place of God's word; they offer the unholy in place of the holy, the putrid in place of the healthy and the death-dealing in place of the life-creating. The word of God is like a strong wind, and their words are like dust.

The scoffers are already here--far too many--that scoff at God's works, and still many more will arrive. They praise their works above God's works, and say that the works of their hands are better and wiser than the works of God. Their works are thievery; for everything good that they have built, they have built from God's materials, and according to the likeness of God's creations. All the evil that they have built, they have built from the devil's materials, and according to the likeness of the devil's creations. Therefore, of what will the dust boast? In what will the scoffers boast today or tomorrow, when wild asses will trample over their graves with their hooves?

O All-pure Lord, Your words are Holy and Powerful as a strong wind, and Your works are holy, and they are numberless and measureless. O All-pure Lord, save our tongues from scoffing, and save our lives from the scoffers.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Services this Week

- **Thursday (08.08.2024.)**
 - Holy Nun-martyr Parascera of Rome; St Sava III, Archbishop of Serbia
 - *Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM*
- **Friday (08.02.2024.)**
 - Holy Great-Martyr and Healer Panteleimon; St Gliment of Ochrid
 - *Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM*
- **7th Sunday after Pentecost (08.11.2024.)**
 - Holy Martyr Gallinicus; Holy Martyr Seraphina
 - *Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM*

Donations July 28, 2024

Offering - \$997.00

Candles - \$57.00

Dues - \$50.00

Large Candles

- (5) For Health of Olga Lucas from Sharon & Jim Urban
IMO Cecilia Gresh Shuman from Olga Bulich

UPCOMING EVENTS

SATURDAY, AUGUST 10th



Taste of Serbia

Lamb Sandwiches, Sarma (Stuffed Cabbage),
Grah I Kupus (Beans & Sauerkraut Soup),
Cevapi (Grilled Meat Sausages), and
Various Serbian Specialties!

SATURDAY, AUGUST 10th NOON to 6 PM
Live Music by Orchestra
"Srpski Sinovi"
Under The Tent | 1 PM TO 5 PM
St. Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church
1001 St. Clair Road, Johnstown PA
CASH OR CREDIT CARDS ACCEPTED



Johnstown Slavic Festival – September 20-21st



**HOLY TRANSFIGURATION
ORTHODOX MONASTERY
PATRONAL FEAST**
Annual Pilgrimage

Presiding Hierarch
His Grace the **Right Reverend Irinej**
Bishop of Washington-New York
and Eastern America
The Serbian Orthodox Church

Monday, August 5—Eve of Transfiguration

6:00 Festal Vigil Service

Tuesday, August 6—Feast of Transfiguration

9:00 Greeting, Procession, and Vesting of
Hierarch in Outdoor Church

9:30 Hierarchical Liturgy

12:00 Catered Luncheon

2:30 Holy Unction with singing of
Paraklesis Hymn

321 MONASTERY LANE, ELLWOOD CITY, PA 16117

