

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church
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The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost **(08.11.2024.)**

Matthew 9:27-35

And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed Him, crying, and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us. And when He was come into the house, the blind men came to Him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto Him, Yea, Lord. Then touched He their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad His fame in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a dumb man possessed with a devil. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel. But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils. And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. **(KJV)**

God's Holy Church is where believers confidently enter seeking healing for the soul and body. Every soul requires healing, Every person sins. The nature of the sinfulness affects the healing required.

Bodily afflictions are directly intertwined with personal sinfulness. The sins of a person impact the health of the body. Persons repenting of sins and living a life pleasing to God face bodily ailments with strength.

The present Gospel illustrates Jesus' ability to heal physical ailments. Jesus' ability to heal is verified in many places in the Gospel. Two blind men had their sight restored by Jesus in the current Gospel.

In the present Gospel Jesus removed the influence of the devil from the mute man. Jesus gave him the ability to speak. The Gospel describes Jesus healing every sickness. Today's Gospel offers hope for every suffering person.

Believers blind to seeing the world through the eyes of the Church and mute in the face of worldly happenings benefit by turning to Jesus in hope. Jesus Christ offers the perspective to see the world as God's Creation.

Jesus Christ gives believers the words to speak when worldly ways conflict with the Lord's intentions. Travesties of justice, abuse of the environment, and greed need corrected in the present world.

Jesus Christ guides believers to address malignancies in the present world. Jesus Christ is the Healer for the world's ills. The Church puts daily life in perspective. The Church defines the worldview for believers to embrace.

Each Divine Liturgy offers healing. Each Divine Liturgy unites participating believers with the Lord Jesus Christ. The heart, mind and soul are nourished in the Divine Liturgy.

Believers are never alone. The Holy Apostle was clear about the constant presence of God. The Apostle said: "He be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:27-28)

Jesus is within reach of every believer. Believers unite with Jesus Christ by exercising the power of their minds, the actions of their hearts and the readiness of their souls. Believers determine their access and unity with the Lord God.

God is always present. The person controls the degree of participation in the world as created by God. Too often believers seek to participate in an ungodly polluted world.

Blindness to the way of the Lord and muteness in the face of corruption occur when the person is overcome with sin. Abuse of the body, judging others and being unkind distorts the ability to see and speak.

The present Gospel is a challenge for believers to engage in careful self-examination. The Gospel challenges believers to personally assess their world view. Believers are to examine their actions toward the self and others.

Believers are responsible for care of the self. The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit necessitating great care. (I Cor. 6:19) The body is not to be abused or used in unhealthy ways.

Similarly, believers are to demonstrate love to others. When love does not characterize personal interactions, relationships are distorted and life unravels.

Jesus Christ made clear love is paramount in relationships. (Mk.12:31)

Growing in the Lord is a life-long process. From Baptism until departure from this life believers are expected to refine and develop their world view to conform to the ways of the Lord.

The believer's vision of life and the person's communications will be measured by the Lord at the Great and Second Coming. Each person will stand before the Lord for the Great and Final Judgment.

Personal daily actions grow out of personal thoughts. Thoughts and actions accrue and form the evidence Jesus will use at the time of judgment. Great care is needed for the believers not to travel the road leading to personal peril to the soul.

Repentance is always timely and proper for believers. Constant corrections on the path of life keep the believer on the narrow path to the Heavenly Kingdom and Eternal Life.

**The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost. Holy Martyr Gallinicus. Holy Martyr Seraphima.
July 29/August 11, 2024. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic**

The Prologue from Ochrid

Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic

1. THE SEVEN MACCABEES, THEIR MOTHER SOLOMONIA AND ELEAZAR THE PRIEST

They all suffered for the purity of the faith of Israel under King Antiochus, called by some "Epiphanes," the "enlightened one," and by others "Epimanes," the "insane one." Because of the great sins of Jerusalem, and especially because of the attempted dissolution of priestly authority and the crimes committed during this struggle, God allowed great misfortune to befall the Holy City. After that, Antiochus wanted to impose Hellenic idolatry upon the Jews by any means, and he did everything he could to completely replace the faith in the One Living God. Disaffected high priests and other elders of Jerusalem assisted Antiochus in his intention. King Antiochus himself came to Jerusalem and ordered that all Jews eat the meat of swine, contrary to the Law of Moses, since eating pork was a blatant disavowal of the faith of Israel. The elder Eleazar, a priest and one of the seventy translators of the Old Testament into the Greek language [the Septuagint], would not partake of pork. Because of this, Eleazar was tortured and burned. On his return to Antioch, the king took with him the seven young men known as the Maccabees and their mother Solomonia. The seven Maccabean brothers were Avim, Antonius, Eleazar, Gurius, Eusebon, Achim and Marcellus. Before the eyes of their mother, the wicked king tortured the sons, one by one--tearing the skin from their faces and then casting them into the fire. They all bravely endured torture and death, but they did not disown their faith. Finally, when the mother saw her last son, a three-year old, cast into the flames, she leapt into the flames and was consumed, releasing her soul to God. They all suffered honorably for the faith in the One Living God, in about 167 B.C [one hundred eighty years before Christ].

2. THE PROCESSION OF THE HONORABLE CROSS

This feast was instituted by a mutual agreement between the Greeks and Russians, at the time of the Greek Emperor Manuel and the Russian Prince Andrew, in commemoration of the simultaneous victories of the Russians over the Bulgars, and the Greeks over the Saracens. In both of these battles, crosses--from which heavenly rays blazed forth--were carried by the armies. Therefore, it was ordained that, on August 1, the Cross be carried first to the middle of the Church of the Divine Wisdom [Hagia Sophia] and afterward through the streets for the veneration of the people, as a commemoration of the miraculous help of the Cross in battle. This was not an ordinary cross, but the true Honorable Cross itself, which was kept in the church of the imperial court. On July 31, the Honorable Cross was carried from the imperial court to the Church of the Holy Wisdom, and from there it was carried along the streets, for the consecration of the earth and the air. Finally, on August 14, it was returned to the church of the

imperial palace.

3. THE NINE HOLY MARTYRS

The names of these martyrs were: Leontius, Attus, Alexander, Cindeus, Mnesitheus, Cyriacus, Menaeus, Catunus and Eucleus. Leontius was a carpenter and the others were farmers. Because of their bold confession of the Christian Faith and their destruction of the temple of the pagan goddess Artemis, they were cruelly tortured and beheaded in Perga of Pamphylia, during the reign of Diocletian, and became heirs of the Kingdom of Christ.

HYMN OF PRAISE

THE HONORABLE CROSS OF CHRIST

Before the Honorable Cross of Christ,

All honorably prostrate:

By the power of this, the Cross of Christ,

From misfortune, we are delivered.

The Holy Cross is mightier than the demons,

And than any earthly king.

From sickness, the Cross saves us,

And from the assaults of barbarians.

Prince Andrew, by the power of the Cross,

His enslaved land, rescued;

Emperor Manuel, by the power of the Cross,

The Saracens, gloriously defeated.

The power of the Cross has been shown to be far more powerful

Than the armies of pagans,

Than violent aggressors,

Than all evils.

REFLECTION

The weak man protects himself by hypocrisy, while the strong man protects himself by tyranny. That no man can defend his life before God--either by hypocrisy or by tyranny--is clearly shown to us by the example of the holy elder Eleazar and King Antiochus. When the tyrannical king brought Eleazar to trial and demanded that he eat pork if he desired to save his life, Eleazar adamantly refused. Then those partial to Eleazar offered him meat that was not pork, begging him to eat it in the presence of the king in order to appease him, thereby to preserve his own life and perhaps assuage his own conscience as well. The elder refused this offer, saying to them: "Hypocrisy is not becoming to me, nor is it meet for me, an old man, to be a scandal and stumbling-block to the young." The elder Eleazar was slain in the body, but he saved his soul. The punishment of God came upon the tyrannical King Antiochus while he was still living. A dreadful disease from within overcame him, and his body swarmed with worms. The stench from his body spread afar. In his despair, the king remembered the shedding of the innocent blood of thousands of human beings who, by his order, were mercilessly slaughtered. Overcome by the fear of God, he began to confess the One God, Whose faithful he had ruthlessly persecuted. However, heavenly mercy did not manifest itself to him.

CONTEMPLATION

To contemplate the punishment of God upon Israel (Judges 10):

1. How the Israelites committed that which was evil before the Lord, worshipping the Syrian, Sidonian and Moabite idols, and others;
2. How the Lord gave them over in bondage to the Philistines, who, for eighteen years, punished them and oppressed them;
3. How the Lord is fearsome toward apostates from the true Faith.

HOMILY

About prophetic visions

"The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amos" (Isaiah 1:1).

He who has understanding can know the one and true God. He who is without understanding should listen to the one who understands; and both the one who understands, and the other [who listens] will be saved. It is possible to clearly know God from created nature, and still more clearly from the inspired men of God, and most clearly from the Lord Christ. Before Christ, the inspired men of God were the prophets. Among the first was Isaiah, the son of Amos. The Spirit of God opened his sight, and he saw that which other men did not see. That is why he called his message to his people "a vision." How the prophets saw the heavenly mysteries and the mysteries of future events cannot be described: it can only be experienced by those to whom God gives that gift.

The visions of the holy prophets are true, for those prophecies and heavenly appearances were actually confirmed by later events. They are true because they served for the good of men,

turning them from evil to good. Furthermore, they are true because the prophets fearlessly declared them, without regard for the suffering that subsequently befell them, and even without regard for the torturous death that many of them also suffered.

What did Isaiah receive from the world of men for his salvific visions? Riches, honor or an exalted office? The Jews sawed him in half! The wealth, honor and glory of the prophet is to suffer for the truth of God!

Therefore, let us listen to the prophets of God, for they are the paths that lead to the city of the Great King; they are the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; they illumine men with the heavenly light, pointing out the true Sun to them.

O Lord Christ, Who revealed Yourself through the prophets and prepared the way for Your descent into our valley, help us. Help us to recognize Your light and Your providence in Your holy prophets.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Services this Week

- **Wednesday (08.14.2024.)**
 - Procession of Honorable Cross;
Holy Maccabean Martyrs (
Beginning of Dormition Fast)
 - *Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM*
- **8th Sunday after Pentecost
(08.18.2024.)**
 - Holy Martyr Eusebius
 - *Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM*

Donations August 4, 2024

Offering - \$985.00 Candles - \$55.00

Large Candles

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

UPCOMING EVENTS



Johnstown Slavic Festival – September 20-21st

**BASKET PARTY
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2024
DETAILS COMING SOON**