

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

**The Thirty Fifth Sunday after Pentecost**  
**(02.04.2024)**

**Luke 18:35-43**

And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.  
**(KJV)**

The blind man in the present Gospel was resolute in reaching out to the Lord Jesus Christ for healing. The blind man was not silenced or deterred when others told him to hold his peace. He pressed on in crying out to Jesus.

The blind man's persistence in reaching out to Jesus resulted in his healing. Jesus recognized the depth of the man's faith. Believers of each generation are inspired by the faith of the blind man and seek to follow his example.

In every generation there are people who try to silence people of faith. There are naysayers who discourage efforts of believers crying out to Jesus in faith and in hope. The present Gospel has been preserved through the centuries as truth.

Healing by Jesus Christ is truth. Jesus Christ is Truth. Having strong faith in Jesus Christ reveals the Truth that is Jesus Christ. The Church proclaims the Gospel at each Divine Liturgy to strengthen, heal and unite believers with Christ.

Attentive believers heed the Gospel and incorporate the message in their lives. People of faith value and love the Gospel. The Gospel is truth. Believers learn from and about Jesus

Christ when reading or listening to the Gospel. The Church does not force the Gospel on believers.

The Church does not force people to hear the Gospel. The Gospel is proclaimed in the Church faithfully for those freely choosing to attend the Divine Liturgy. God's Church has proclaimed the Gospel through the centuries.

Preservation of the Gospel has come at a high price for the faithful of the Church. The Church has been persecuted. Martyrs have given their lives to proclaim the Gospel.

Just as there existed individuals wanting to silence the blind man in crying out to Jesus, there have been governments and groups in every century trying to silence efforts of faith. Resolute faith in Christ will not be silenced or defeated.

Resolute faith in Christ results in peace and healing. The man knew what he was doing when he reached out in hope and in faith. The man stuck to his principles of faith. He was resolute.

The blind man was healed by Jesus Christ. In today's world much hedonism exists. Many distractions and perils to the soul abound. Commercial distractions and leaders of falsehoods seek to capture believers' hearts, minds and souls.

Believers' hearts, minds and souls belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. The blind man kept his focus on Jesus Christ. The man directed his cries in full attention to Jesus Christ.

The blind man did not give in to distractors or naysayers. His faith and effort did not weaken in the face of differences. Jesus recognized the depth of the man's faith. Jesus acknowledged and responded to the strong faith.

Mothers and fathers, husband and wives, sons and daughters in every generation benefit from the Gospel lesson of the blind man being healed. Church leaders do well to keep the focus on Jesus Christ when distractions arise.

Through Jesus Christ healing and peace occur. Distractions are always present in life. Evil is always present. Jesus Christ triumphs over distractions. Jesus Christ triumphs over evil. Strong faith is always beneficial.

Believers honestly searching their hearts, minds and souls will determine if Christ is held in firm faith and hope. Attentive believers will heed the healing of the blind man. Attentive believers will seek to duplicate the blind man's faith.

Faith needs to be focused on Jesus Christ. Efforts of faith need to be directed toward following Christ. It is all too easy to depart from the path to God's Kingdom. It is very easy for faith to become diluted.

The Church offers nourishment to keep believers strong in faith. The Gospel is strong and necessary nourishment for believers. The Body and Blood of Christ are essential for faith to remain strong and resolute.

Repentance has a part in faith remaining strong. Repentance involves keeping the focus on Christ and removing from life all that is not of Christ. Prayer, fasting and self-assessment facilitate keeping the focus on Christ.

The blind man greatly appreciated being healed by Jesus. He glorified God because of the healing. The man set an example. When Jesus answers prayers of believers, giving thanks and glorifying God is very important

Being able to hear and learn from this Gospel lesson is reason to thank God. Thanking and glorifying God has a place throughout daily life. Jesus Christ is always present to offer healing for those reaching out in faith and hope.

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**The Thirty Fifth Sunday after Pentecost. Holy Apostle Timothy of the Seventy. Holy Monk Martyr Athanasius the Persian. January 22/February 4, 2024.  
Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic**

## ***The Great Blessing of Water and the Home***

The Great Blessing of Water in our homes takes place after the Feast of Theophany, the Baptism of Christ, bringing the holy water & prayer in which Christ was baptized to our homes, as a blessing upon our families.

Traditionally, in most Orthodox parishes, the priest personally visits all his parishioners each year to pray with them in the place where they live, and to bless their surroundings with the newly sanctified water of Theophany (January 19).

We also bring the blessed water to our homes to use throughout the year to bless our homes and to drink whether we are ill or as part of our daily prayer life.

"There are many occasions in family life when a sip of holy water can help to remind us of the blessing that was given 'to bestow sanctification', 'unto healing of soul and body', 'to be a fountain welling forth unto life eternal', as the priest prayed in the litany of Epiphany day."

## **Weaving Christ into Our Lives**

The blessing of homes by these holy waters maintains the spiritual association between the 'family church' and the parish, as well as again providing for the sharing of God's spiritual gifts. ... This annual blessing is not as elaborate as the blessing of the new dwelling, but because of this it should not be overlooked, for it is in this way that the grace of God is extended to individual dwellings.

When the children are present, they have the opportunity to see the parish priest in a different and personal situation. If the priest permits, they can lead the way through the house, or hold a candle. They can show him their rooms or pets or favorite toys. They receive a blessing with water. For children, the house blessing shows the connection of the Church to the home. This is a perfect time to introduce your small children to having their bedrooms blessed as a 'shield of armor' to protect them when they sleep and all the fears they may have as children do so often.

## **In Summary**

What does it mean to ask God to bless something? All things in the world have been spoiled right along with us. God must bless His world again in order for it to be the way that He wants

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it to be. For this reason God sent His Son Jesus and the Holy Spirit to the world: to bless everyone and everything that He made, to make all things good again. When the priest comes to bless our homes, he asks God to have mercy on the house, to rid it of every evil and to fill it with every blessing.

*What a wonderful way to begin the New Year!*

*Schedule your Visit with Fr. Dragan Vukovic directly by calling your parish priest 814-244-4063*

*God bless you all!*

## [The Prologue from Ochrid](#) *St Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic*

### **1. ST GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN, ARCHBISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE**

Gregory was born in Nazianzus of a Greek father [who later became a Christian and a bishop] and a Christian mother. Before his baptism, he studied in Athens with Basil the Great and Julian the Apostate. Gregory often prophesied that Julian would become an apostate and a persecutor of the Church, and this actually happened. Gregory's good mother, Nonna, had an especially great influence on him. When he had completed his studies Gregory was baptized. St. Basil consecrated him as Bishop of Sasima, and Emperor Theodosius the Great summoned him to fill the vacant archepiscopal throne of Constantinople. He wrote numerous works, the most famous of which are those on theology, for which he is called The Theologian. Especially known, because of its depth, is his work *Homilies on The Holy Trinity*. Gregory wrote against the heretic Macedonius, who erroneously taught that the Holy Spirit is a creation of God. He also wrote against Apollinarius, who erroneously taught that Christ did not have a human soul, but that His divinity was in lieu of His soul. Additionally Gregory wrote against Emperor Julian the Apostate, his one-time fellow student. In 381 A.D., when a debate began regarding his election as archbishop, he withdrew on his own and issued a statement: "Those who deprive us of our archepiscopal throne cannot deprive us of God." Afterward he left Constantinople and went to Nazianzus, and there he lived a life of solitude and prayer, writing beneficial books. Although he was in poor health throughout his entire life, Gregory nevertheless lived to be eighty years old. His relics were later transferred to Rome. A reliquary containing his head reposes in the Cathedral of the Dormition in Moscow. He was, and remains, a great and wonderful light of the Orthodox Church, as much by his meekness and purity of character as by the unsurpassable depth of his mind. He reposed in the Lord in the year 390 A.D.

### **2. THE VENERABLE PUBLIUS**

At first Publius was a senator. Recognizing the light of Christ, he left his worldly honors, distributed his possessions to the poor, and devoted himself to a life of asceticism in the proximity of his town, Zeguma, on the Euphrates River. He established two monastic communities and reposed in the year 380 A.D.

### **3. THE VENERABLE MARES**

Mares was distinguished by physical beauty and a sweet-sounding voice. He withdrew from the world and lived in a hut for thirty-seven years, in fasting and cleansing the heart of impure thoughts. Mares reposed in the Lord at the age of ninety, in the year 430 A.D.

### **4. THE HOLY FEMALE MARTYR FELICITAS AND HER SEVEN SONS**

As a Christian, Felicitas was condemned to death with her seven sons during the reign of Emperor Antoninus, in the year 164 A.D. She implored God only that she not be killed before her sons and that she might be able to encourage them during their torture and death, so that they would not deny Christ. According to God's providence, it so happened. With joy, this superb mother accompanied her sons one by one, until she had witnessed the death of all seven. Then she herself, with gratitude to God, received a martyr's death. She and her sons suffered in Rome, where their relics are now.

#### **HYMN OF PRAISE SAINT FELICITAS**

Felicitas prayed to God:

"I have a crown of seven pearls,

I wish to wrap them in purple,

And in purple to present them to Thee.

O dear Lord, receive these gifts!"

Seven sons, seven pearls;

And purple, the blood of the martyrs.

The prayer of the mother ascended,

And as incense reached unto God.

The Roman emperor sentenced her sons

To bitter death and bitter tortures;

The mother was happy--and all were amazed at her!

Felicitas encouraged her sons:

"This is why I gave birth to you, my children;

This is why I nursed you, my children,

So that I can make a gift of you to God.

For God gave you to me."

This having been said, the executioner began his work:

The first fell, the mother bowed;  
The second fell, the mother bowed twice;  
The third fell, the mother bowed thrice;  
With the fourth, four times she bowed;  
The fifth fell, five times she bowed;  
The sixth fell, six times she bowed;  
The seventh fell, seven times she bowed;  
The mother, bowing, gave thanks to God.  
The eighth time, she bowed for herself,  
And on the block she rested her head.  
The sword gleamed, her head was severed--  
The mother kissed her children in Paradise.

### REFLECTION

They deceive themselves who speak self-confidently that they know men well enough, and that they do not allow themselves to be deceived. Who can know what kind of spirit is in a man-- except only God, Who knows the secrets of the heart? Even the great saints were mistaken about people. For example: for a long time St. Basil considered a certain hypocritical heretic to be a holy man, and he defended him from many attackers until, finally, convinced of the heretic's falseness, Basil was bitterly disappointed. St. Gregory the Theologian baptized a certain philosopher, Maximus by name, and liked him so much that he kept the philosopher in his home, sharing his table with him. However, this Maximus was as dangerous and cunning as a serpent. After a period of time, through intrigue and bribes, Maximus convinced numerous Constantinopolians to recognize him as patriarch in place of St. Gregory. When, after great confusion, this trial was removed, some rebuked Gregory for having kept his greatest enemy with him. The saint replied: "We are not to blame if we do not discern someone's evil. God alone knows the inner secrets of a man. And we are told by the commandments to open our hearts with fatherly love to all who come to us." A good man cannot easily understand the malice of a malevolent man.

### CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the Lord Jesus as King:

1. As Ruler over nature, which He tames and places in service to Himself;
2. As Ruler over demons, over disease and over death;

3. As Ruler over the Immortal Kingdom of angels and saints.

## HOMILY

### on Who Christ is

"Who do men say that I am?" (Mark 8:27).

Brethren, it is almost two-thousand years from that day when our Lord Jesus posed this question to His disciples. From then until today, this question has been put to every generation of men, to every bright day and every dark night. And every generation of men--and every bright day and every dark night--has had to give an answer to this question. This question is the question of life or death, and the answer to it is life-bearing or death-bearing. *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God* (Matthew 16:16), the Apostle Peter responded. And that reply was approved and praised by the Lord Jesus.

"Who is Christ?" men ask today. Some say, along with the Jews, that He is a destroyer of the Law and a self-styled Messiah. Others say, along with Pilate, that on the whole they cannot arrive at the truth about this man. The third say, along with the apostles, that He is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, the Savior, the Redeemer of the human race from sin and death, the Resurrected and the Resurrector, the Living One and the Giver of Life. And all of us, who are baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity, agree with the apostles and the Holy Apostolic Church, which with her universal voice thus confesses Christ the Lord.

O Lord, Only-begotten Son of God, help us, that we may all the days of our life believe in Thee in our hearts and confess Thee with our lips, as our God and our Savior, *as the power of God and the wisdom of God* (I Corinthians 1:24).

**To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.**

## Services this Week

- **The 36<sup>th</sup> - Sunday after Pentecost  
(02.11.2024)**
- **Transfer of the Relics of Hieromartyr  
Ignatius the God-bearer - *Divine Liturgy  
starts at 10:00 AM***

**Donations January 28, 2024**

**Offering - \$ 1,855.00 Candles - \$58.00 Dues - \$250.00**

**DONATIONS**

Saint Sava Donation to the Cemetery Fund from Eli Cvijanovich In Memory of my Bear Hunting Buddies; Nikola Todorich, Milan Spanovich & William (Bill) Keiper - \$100

**Large Candles**

IMO Mary Ellen Locher-Byrd from Helene Gleason  
IMO Mike & Mildred Tumbas from Milica Knepp  
IMO Grandparents Amelia & Pete Mastovich from Rick Kondas  
IMO brother Joseph Kondas from Rick Kondas

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**Saturday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> - 2:00 PM**

At the Church Hall

A Baby Shower for our wonderful  
Popadaja Vladanka & Father Dragan

Details coming soon - Please see Suzette with questions.

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**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**TODAY**

**Men's Club Pork Chop Dinner**

**Sunday, February 4<sup>th</sup>**

**FISH FRIES BEGIN**

**Friday, February 16<sup>th</sup> and continue to**

**Friday, March 29<sup>th</sup>.**

**PLEASE SIGN-UP TO WORK !!!!!**