

CHURCH BULLETIN	V. Rev. Fr. George Veselinovic, Parish Priest Monroeville, Pennsylvania 15146 412.622.4714 (cell) 412.856.8166 (office) dj.veselinovic@yahoo.com www.stnicholasmonroeville.org stnicholasmonroeville@gmail.com	SUNDAY July 22, 2018
--------------------	---	-------------------------

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Epistle: Corinthians (1:10-18) Gospel: Matthew (14:14-22)

And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food." But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." And they said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish." He said, "Bring them here to Me." Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children. Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.

TROPARION TONE VII

By Your Cross, You did destroy death! To the thief, You did open Paradise! For the myrrhbearers, You did change weeping into joy! And You did command Your disciples, O Christ God, to proclaim that You are risen, granting the world great mercy!

KONTAKION TONE VII

The dominion of death can no longer hold men captive, for Christ descended, shattering and destroying its powers! Hell is bound, while the prophets rejoice and cry: "The Savior has come to those in faith! Enter, you faithful, into the Resurrection!"

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Important Dates:

Tuesday, July 24th-July 26th – St. Nicholas Summer Church Camp ó Ages 2-15. Contact Amanda Bilak Formatto (amandabilak@gmail.com) or 412-980-8944 for more information. **Help is needed in many ways/areas (donating food, snacks,**

cooking, cleaning, etc.) even if you do not have children attending! Do not hesitate to ask, "How can I help?" Come and have fun with our children!

Monday, August 2nd – There will be no Divine Liturgy served for Saint Elijah.

Saturday, August 4th – Diocesan Day at Shadeland! Divine Liturgy at 10:00. Picnic immediately following Liturgy with the performance beginning at 1:00. Cevapi, food, beverages will be served. Please support our children and Shadeland!

Saturday, August 11th – The Saint Nicholas Maintenance Committee is sponsoring an "Oldies Concert/Dinner Dance". The proceeds will be used to purchase a storage shed. A basket auction will be available with the following themes: Golf, Pittsburgh sports, lottery tickets, Bath & Body Works, gift cards, wine, liquor/bourbon, and scrapbooking. Additionally, a small freezer of meat will be raffled! The Maintenance Committee will purchase all items and assemble baskets. We are asking all auxiliary organizations, committees, and parishioners for a monetary donation to offset the costs. We are suggesting a minimum donation of \$10 per person. Money may be given to: Sondra Deaunovich, Natalia Petrucci, or Susan Glenn. Thank you for your help!

Father George, the committees, and the entire parish would like to thank **all** involved for making our annual picnic a huge success! We would also like to thank the visiting clergy from other jurisdictions and also our Serbian clergy from the Pittsburgh deanery along with those who attended from out of town! Thank you to all who attended in supporting St. Nicholas parish. We look forward to making next year's event even bigger.

REMINDERS

Adult Bible Study – Cancelled for Thursday, August 2nd.

Vespers ó Saturday evening 6:00 p.m. Confession 6:30 p.m.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Suppose you were invited to a magnificent celebration ó it could be a wedding, a family celebration, or even an invitation to someone's home for a special dinner. If everyone sat down, and the meal was placed before you, and as all are about to eat, you chose NOT to eat, how would you host feel? Especially in a Serbian home, where food and hospitality play a central role, the host would insist on his guest eating, and if the guest continued to refuse, the host would feel insulted.

St. John Chrysostom used this analogy to describe how insulting it is to God, to have Christians come to Church, participate in the Divine Liturgy, and then at the most sacred moment of Holy Communion, when our Lord is offering Himself to the faithful, have people refuse to approach and partake of His heavenly banquet!

“You have sung the hymns, you preached St. John Chrysostom, you have declared your faith. Why do you not partake of the heavenly table? Some of you will say you are not worthy. Then you are also unworthy to participate in the prayers of the Church. Look, I beg you. A royal table is set before you. Angels serve at the table. The King Himself is present. And do you stand staring? Are your clothes defiled, and yet you take no account of it?”

Jesus has invited us to heaven, to the table of the great and wonderful King, and do we hesitate, instead of running to it? What then is our hope of salvation? We cannot lay the blame on our weakness. We cannot blame our nature. ***It is laziness and nothing else that renders us unworthy [to receive Holy Communion]! I beg you, therefore to approach WITH FEAR AND REVERENCE.*** For you shall behold with boldness Christ Himself in heaven, and shall be counted worthy of that heavenly kingdom which God will grant all of us!

What shocking words from St John Chrysostom! How many of us have considered it an offense to God when we come to Church on Sundays, and don't receive Holy Communion!

And yet, Chrysostom isn't alone in this attitude towards receiving Holy Communion. St. John Cassian advises, “It is much better if, in the humility of our hearts and knowing that we are never worthy to receive Holy Communion, [we would approach and] **receive them every Sunday for the healing of our diseases**, rather than, blinded by pride we think that by receiving Holy Communion once a year we become worthy of receiving it.”

St. John Cassian continues, “We must not avoid Holy Communion because we deem ourselves sinful. We must approach it more often for the healing of the soul and the purification of the spirit, but with such humility and faith, that we consider ourselves unworthy . . . **Holy Communion is medicine for our wounds.**”

How many of us understand that the Eucharist or Holy Communion is the first and greatest means by which we unite ourselves with God. In a mystical way, one which we can never fully explain or understand, Jesus Christ offers Himself to us, and enters into us, in the most intimate manner. Jesus Himself said, **“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty...Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you.”** (John 6:35,53)

As the theologian Alexander Schmemman has written, “The last supper is the completion, the crowning, the fulfillment of Christ's love, the essence of his ministry, teachings, and miracles. Think of the last supper not only as the meal, but the entire act of [washing the disciples' feet, giving His disciples the bread and wine, and offering his teaching on the new commandment of love.] Holy Communion is an icon of Divine Love. It is a taste of the heavenly banquet, the messianic banquet or dwelling in the presence of God, abiding in His love, participating in His joy! Holy communion is a manifestation of our goal or participation in the Kingdom of God.”

If Holy Communion is the central means by which we unite with Christ, then we can understand why or week after week or we celebrate the Divine Liturgy. For those who ask why we celebrate the same service every week, and for those who think that the Divine Liturgy is boring, they misunderstand the essence of what is happening. We come together every Sunday, and even on special weekdays, to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, and unite ourselves with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

As Schmemman continues to explain, “The well-established and undisputed fact is that in the early Church [of the first centuries] the *communion of all the faithful at every Divine Liturgy was a self-evident norm*. In fact, the early Church knew no other sign for membership [in the Church] save participation in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. **“It was commonly held that the one who did not receive Holy Communion for a few weeks had excommunicated himself from the Body of the Church.”** Communion with the Body and Blood of Christ was the self-evident fulfillment of Baptism and Chrismation, and there existed no other conditions for receiving Communion.

So membership in the Church wasn't about “paying dues” or stewardship to the Church. Membership was about participating in Holy Communion; it was about being prepared to unite yourself with Christ constantly and on a regular basis.

Thus, each of us should prepare each week to unite ourselves with God through Holy Communion. How should we prepare? What must we do each week to be in the proper disposition to receive Holy Communion?

HOW TO PREPARE TO RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION:

First and foremost, the greatest preparation for receiving Holy Communion is sincerely trying to live a serious, sober, dedicated Christ-centered life each and every day.

1. This implies connecting with God every day through our prayers and through the Bible and other spiritual readings.

2. And above all, the serious Christian who wants to receive Holy Communion should have love in their heart, which implies being at peace and reconciled with all people. One should NOT receive Holy Communion if they are holding onto bitterness, hatred or anger towards another.
2. The serious Christian will come to Church regularly and attentively and actively participate in the worship.
3. The serious Christian will try to live a Christ-centered, disciplined life. Part of this disciplined life includes denying ourselves certain foods at certain times, not because the food is bad in and of itself. But because we give up something in order to remind us of God, and to turn our attention to God. Thus, we fast every Wednesday (the day that Jesus was betrayed by Judas) and Friday (the day He was crucified), as well as the evening before receiving Holy Communion. We typically fast by not eating any meat; a stricter fast is not to also eat anything with dairy products. **And of course, the morning before the Divine Liturgy we do not put anything in our mouths, unless there is a medical reason to do so. This means we don't drink our coffee, we don't drink water, we don't chew gum. From the moment we wake up on Sunday mornings, we should turn our attention to receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, and thus, we struggle to put nothing in our mouths.** (And for those who think this is too hard, think about what you would do if a doctor told you to not put anything in your mouth before a certain test. Everyone would listen to the doctor! In like manner, listen to the spiritual doctors of our faith who teach us this!
4. The serious Christian will be a faithful steward of God's gifts, including generously offering one's time, talents and treasure to the Church and others in need.
5. The serious Christian will offer a witness of Christian love, trying to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ locally, nationally and globally.

If we are seriously trying to live this Christ-centered, disciplined life, where we are trying to love all people and forgive those who have hurt us, than we are prepared to receive Holy Communion and unite ourselves with God each and every week!

And if we have not given our faith much attention one week, or simply not put forth much effort, it is OK to NOT receive once in a while. If we have gotten into a big fight with someone and need to reconcile, then maybe we shouldn't receive Holy Communion until we reach out to that person and reconcile. We

should still come to church, pray the prayers, and during the moment of Holy Communion, reflect on why we are NOT receiving, and then make a commitment to Christ to try to be more serious in our spiritual struggle the upcoming week!

One other point about how we receive Holy Communion. If we understand that we are truly approaching to receive Jesus Christ and be united with Him, then we should be very careful as we approach. We should not be talking with one another, looking around and allowing our minds to wander. We should be saying our prayers or simply keep repeating the Jesus Prayer (Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me), or say "Lord remember me when you come in your kingdom."

Each week, let this be the most sacred moment of the week. Yes, each and every day we try to connect with God through our prayers and in our actions. But on the Day of Resurrection, the Lord's Day, let us gather together to unite with Him in the most intimate way. Let us enter into the Mystery of Holy Communion, and encounter the living God in a blessed, special way!

