

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 September 16, 2018
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SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Corinthians (6:1-10) Gospel: Matthew (25:14-30)

For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, "Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them." His lord said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord." Then he who had received the one talent came and said, "Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours." But his lord answered and said to him, "You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

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!

TROPARION OF THE NEW MARTYRS OF JASENOVAC TONE VIII

Because of your faith in God and God's justice, you have suffered earthly sorrow in the flesh; yet you saved your souls, as heaven rejoices and your ancestors sin our in Heaven, greeting you at the gate of Paradise in song; your names are in the book of eternity, enter into Paradise, you children of immortality! Therefore we on earth, your posterity, cry out in unison: Holy New Martyrs, pray for us!

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

Today - Memorial Service for the Holy New Martyrs of Jasenovac concentration camp and all Orthodox Serbians who were persecuted during WWII.

Today - Memorial Service for all members of Lodge 82.

Skolarac Serbian Language Classes – Beginning Monday, September 24th from 4:00 ó 5:30 p.m. in the downstairs hall. Ages 3-5 years old. www.skolarac.org

Tiny Tammies – Beginning Monday, September 24th from 6:00-6:30 p.m. in the downstairs hall for ages 3-6 years old. Contact Sonja Capuzzi: sonjacapuzzi@gmail.com

We appreciate your past assistance regarding St. Paul's Meals on Wheels in Pitcairn, which serves Pitcairn, Monroeville, Trafford, Level Green and Wall. Our program has grown over the past two years and we provide a quality and nutritious meal to those people in your area. We are in need of cook helpers on either Mondays or Wednesdays from 7 am to 11 am. For more information call Dan at 412-372-9116.

In our continuing effort to keep our facility neat, tidy and uncluttered, PLEASE refrain from bringing or dropping-off ANY item to the church or to the hall that you believe may be needed UNLESS you are obtaining approval from the Church Board.

In addition to the volunteers having to manually dispose of these unwanted / unneeded items - costs incurred to dispose of some of these items.

Please instead, donate your item(s) to a Donation Center of your choice. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

UPCOMING EVENTS

September 21st: The Nativity of our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary ó Liturgy at 10:00 a.m.

September 27th: The Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross ó Liturgy at 10:00 a.m.

Events continued...

September 29th: Choir Concert ó 5 p.m. doors open/6 p.m. dinner/7p.m. concert ó Dance to follow. Entertainment provided by *Pobeda*. *See insert.

September 30th: Quarterly Parish update

October 6th: Parastos/Memorial service for all hierarchs, clergy, and parishioners of St. Nicholas ó at 10:00 a.m.

October 14th: Triple B Farm field trip for Church School *Details to follow

October 28th: Kolo Srpskih Sestara Slava celebration of Sveta Petka

REMINDERS

Adult Bible Study – Bible study every Thursday at 7:30 p.m.

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

HOLY NEW MARTYRS OF JASENOVAC CONCENTRATION CAMP

The icon displayed today is a depiction of those martyrs who are commemorated on September 13th. This is a particularly poignant icon, because we have still among us survivors of the Ustasha terror of World War II, and many who's loved ones found martyrdom. Moreover, it is an important icon inasmuch as it will witness not only to the faith of these martyrs, but also to the genocide of Serbs itself, which many ignore, forget or deny having occurred.

A vast sea of haloed martyrs stands before a background showing the Jasenovac concentration camp in the upper left corner, with ominous gray walls, barbed wire and watchtowers. The Churches of Jasenovac (destroyed, sadly, twice now by Croats) and Glina (burnt to the ground with 500 Serbs in it) are shown centrally, while the upper right corner shows one of the many caves of Lika, Dalmatia, Bosnia or Hercegovina that became the graves of numerous innocents. In the lower foreground is a river perhaps the Sava, the Una, the Vrbas, or the Drina, all of which carried the tortured bodies. They bear crosses and appear peaceful, as they have accepted their martyrdom. The standing figures in the foreground are identified individually with an inscription in their halo.

What touches many of us when we contemplate this fresco is that these Holy New Martyrs are every man: a peasant, a student, a teacher with her pupils, a nun, an old woman, a priest, a bishop, a child. All of them were killed for the simple fact that they were baptized in and lived by the Orthodox faith. For this, they are crowned with martyrdom; Christ blesses them, while on either side St. John the Baptist (patron of the Jasenovac Church) and St. Sava intercede on their people's behalf.

April 22 – Anniversary day of the prisoner breakout from Jasenovac Concentration Camp

For us Orthodox Christians, this is not the City of the Dead but the City of the Living, as for the Lord all the martyrs ó victims of Jasenovac ó are alive. The innocent victims of the Great martyrdom of Jasenovac live in our hearts, as well as in our souls, in the memorial prayer of recollection. All of them, together with us, await for the resurrection of the dead and life of an age to come.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: *Investing Our Talents and Lives for the Kingdom*

When the stock market goes up or down, almost everyone hears about it and many pay attention. But those who have money invested in the stock market really take notice. The reason for their interest is clear: their wealth just went up or down. And people do not usually invest in order to shrink their assets; no, they want them to grow.

Today's gospel reading presents a similar situation. Three servants received large sums of money, called talents, from their master when he went away on a long journey. He was a shrewd businessman and expected them to make the most of what he had entrusted to them. One invested so wisely that his five talents turned into ten. The one given two talents did the same and earned two more. They both doubled their money and earned the praise of their master when he returned. But the third servant, who had only one talent to invest, was not such a good steward. Out of fear that he might lose what little he had, he simply buried the money in the ground and produced nothing at all. The master scolded him for not even putting the money in the bank and earning interest. So he took away his talent and gave it to the first servant. Near the end of the parable, we read that "to everyone who has, more will be given and he will have abundance, but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away."

Jesus Christ used this story about investing money as a reminder of the importance of being a productive steward of all that God has given us. Life itself and all our blessings and abilities come from the Lord. Ever since He created us in His image and likeness, He has called us to invest ourselves in ways that enable us to flourish as His sons and daughters. He invites us to an abundant life that bears fruit for the Kingdom, blesses others, and radiates the light of holiness throughout the world.

Most of us probably wonder, however, whether that is really possible for us. Perhaps we are so consumed by the practical challenges of just making it through the day that we find it difficult to imagine that our struggles could have any larger significance. Maybe we think that only what rich, powerful, and famous people do really impacts the world in meaningful ways. Perhaps we imagine that holiness is a possibility only for people with no problems or who have never done anything wrong. It may be that our previous efforts to grow in faithfulness have been somehow disappointing or frustrating, so we have given up. I imagine that many of us identify with that cowardly servant who had so little confidence in bearing fruit that he simply buried his talent in the ground.

That might seem like a practical response, but it is actually the opposite; it leads to nothing but weakness and loss. Just as a person who is unable to move physically for a long period of time quickly loses muscle mass and strength, any ability, talent, or gift that we have will become weaker the less use we make of it. Playing it safe by becoming stagnant never works. Nothing in this life ever stays exactly the same over time, and if we are not actively using our gifts to bear fruit in whatever circumstances we face, we will end up worse off than when we started. What St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians in today's epistle reading applies to each of us, regardless of whether we have one or ten talents, regardless of whether we think that our present situation is especially conducive to becoming a great channel of blessing to anybody. As St. Paul put it, "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Cor. 6:2) If we are going to be faithful stewards, we have to begin with our lives as they are now. To wait until all is perfect and we have time, energy, and resources to spare is to fall prey to an illusion, for life in this world will never be without its challenges. Cowardly servants will always find reasons to be afraid and to bury their talents in the ground. The more practice that we have in doing that, the harder it will be to invest ourselves in ways that bear fruit for the Kingdom. It is nothing but a lie and a delusion to think otherwise.

Remember that St. Paul endured beatings, imprisonment, attempts on his life, shipwreck, and so many other difficulties before he died as a martyr. He did not wait until life was completely peaceful and calm before serving God and blessing his neighbors. He describes the life of the apostles "as dying, and behold we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything." (2 Cor. 6:10)

We probably do not yet have the eyes to see it, but our paths are ultimately the same as his. No matter how sad, sick, frustrated, or deprived we may be, the Lord still calls us to invest our lives in holiness for the blessing and salvation of the world. We probably will not do that on as large or obvious a scale as St. Paul, but that is irrelevant. The servant with only one talent was still called to be as faithful with what he had as the one who had ten. Like it or not, we have the lives in this world that we have. We cannot say a magic word and become someone else or change anything about the past. We can, however, be faithful stewards of the present as we fulfill our identity as those blessed by God and called to become a blessing to others as a sign of His love, mercy, and holiness.

No matter how much or how little money someone has, the basic principles of making a budget and planning for the future are the same. That is also true about the life in Christ. Regardless of the details, we will all invest ourselves for the abundant life of the Kingdom through common and familiar practices, such as: prayer; fasting; generosity to the needy; repentance; forgiveness; reading the

Scriptures, the lives of the Saints, and other spiritually beneficial writings; and doing whatever we are able to do in the service of the Church and our neighbors. We do not have to be billionaires in order to live lives of abundant blessing or to be able to bless others in profound ways. We do not have to be spiritual superheroes in order to be faithful stewards of our talents and play our role in fulfilling God's purposes for the world. We simply have to offer what only we can offer to the Lord in obedience and let Him do the rest.

Nobody else can save or invest your money; you have to do it. Nobody else can become a faithful steward of your life and blessings; you have to do it. The choice that we all face is whether to cower in fear of failure as we bury our talents in the ground, weaken ourselves, and refuse to do what only we can do for the healing and transformation of the world. Or will we make a solid investment of our talents, no matter how large or small they may be, and grow in the abundant life for which God created us in His image and likeness? Unlike financial matters, there is no difference here between those who have a lot in this world and those who do not. The only difference is whether we will offer our humble lives to the Lord like the bread and wine of the Eucharist. If so, then we will receive back infinitely more than what we offered in the first place. And our life in this world, regardless of the outward details, will then become an icon of the Kingdom, producing fruit "thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold." (Mark 4:8) Now what shrewd businessperson would not want that rate of return?

