

SUNDAY
June 2, 2019

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SIXTH SUNDAY OF PASCHA: THE BLIND MAN

TROPARION TONE V (RESURRECTION)

Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word, co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, born for our salvation from the Virgin; for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the flesh, to endure death, and to raise the dead//by His glorious Resurrection.

KONTAKION - TONE IV (PENTECOSTARION)

I come to You, O Christ, blind from birth in my spiritual eyes, and call to You in repentance: "You are the most radiant Light of those in darkness."

KONTAKION - TONE VIII (PASCHA)

You descended into the tomb, O Immortal, You destroyed the power of death. In victory You arose, O Christ God, proclaiming: "Rejoice!" to the Myrrh bearing Women, granting peace to Your Apostles, and bestowing resurrection on the fallen.

Epistle: Acts 16:16-34

Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour. But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities. And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, "These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe. Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods. And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. But Paul called with a

loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here." Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.

Gospel: John 9:1-38

Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing. Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, "Is not this he who sat and begged?" Some said, "This is he." Others said, "He is like him." He said, "I am he." Therefore they said to him, "How were your eyes opened?" He answered and said, "A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and I received sight." Then they said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know." They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." Therefore some of the Pharisees said, "This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. They said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet." But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself. His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, "Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner." He answered and said, "Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see." Then they said to him again, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" He answered them, "I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want

to become His disciples?” Then they reviled him and said, “You are His disciple, but we are Moses’ disciples. We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from. The man answered and said to them, “Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing. They answered and said to him, “You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?” And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” He answered and said, “Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” And Jesus said to him, “You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you.” Then he said, “Lord, I believe!” And he worshiped Him.

Instead of “It is truly meet ...,” we sing: The Angel cried to the Lady, full of grace: “Rejoice, O pure Virgin! Again, I say: ‘Rejoice, your Son is risen from His three days in the tomb! With Himself He has raised all the dead.’” Rejoice, O ye people! Shine, shine, O New Jerusalem! The glory of the Lord has shone on you! Exult now, and be glad, O Zion! Be radiant, O pure Theotokos, in the Resurrection of your Son!

Saints we commemorate today – *Holy Martyr Thaleleus; Venerable Stephen of Piperi*

REMINDERS

Confession – Every Saturday at 6:30 p.m. after vespers and Sunday morning at 9:30 a.m. before Liturgy.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Thank you – On behalf of the entire St. Nicholas parish, thank you to Marsha Watt for her generous monetary donation for the children’s playground. This donation was made in loving memory of +Martha Visnic. May Martha’s memory be eternal, and may God bless you and your family, Marsha.

Thank you – On behalf of the entire St. Nicholas parish, thank you to Pero and Mila Prpa for their generous donation of the Bishop’s blessing cross in loving memory of Nikola “Nick” and Ljubica “Violet” Jokola. May their memory be eternal! Vjecnaja pamjat!

The Committee for the 2019 SNF Summer Golf Tournament has met and is excited to begin planning for this big event for our church and local SNF lodges. To be successful, we will need everyone’s help! There will be many opportunities for you to contribute. The Committee will keep you informed of our progress over the coming months. Pam Matejevich will be coordinating volunteers for the event which will take place August 7-11, 2019. Reach out to Pam or to Chairman Dushan Markoff to offer your help or ask any questions!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Monday, June 3rd – Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Emperor Constantine and Helen – Divine Liturgy at 10:00 a.m.

Thursday, June 6th – The Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ – Liturgy at 10:00 a.m.

Saturday, June 15th – **Blessing of the graves** – 9:00 a.m. memorial service at Grandview cemetery in N. Versailles and 4:00 p.m. service at Export.

Sunday, June 16th – Pentecost – Trinity Sunday

Monday, June 17th – Pentecost Monday – Divine Liturgy at 10:00 a.m.

Tuesday, June 18th – Pentecost Tuesday – Divine Liturgy at 10:00 a.m.

Friday, June 21st & Saturday, June 22nd – St. Nicholas Church Summer Camp – For more information contact Amanda Formatto 412-980-8944 or amandabilak@gmail.com

Friday, June 28th – Holy St. Lazarus and All Serbian Martyrs – Vidovdan – Divine Liturgy at 10:00 a.m.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Holy Equal to the Apostles Emperor Constantine and Helen (June 3)

Saint Constantine was the son of Constantius Chlorus, emperor of the western half of the Roman Empire in the year 274 AD in today’s Niš, Serbia. His mother, Helen was a Christian, of humble birth. In 294, Constantius divorced Helen in favor of a woman of nobility, so as to further his political ambitions. Upon the death of Constantius in 306, Constantine was proclaimed emperor of Gaul and Britain and subsequently led his army against co-rulers of the empire. On the eve of the Battle of Milvain, Constantine saw in the sky above the sign of the Cross with the words “In this, conquer.” Ordering his troops to paint a cross on their shields, Constantine lead his army to victory, effectively uniting the Roman Empire and become sole emperor of East and West.

Although he was only baptized on his deathbed, Constantine ensured the freedom of Christians to worship openly [Edict of Milan, 313 AD] and supported the work of the Church, building new churches, and supporting its clergy. He transferred the capital of the Empire to Byzantium to the East, and the city was renamed Constantinople in his honor.

The emperor-saint came to the aid of the newly emancipated Christian Church in 325 AD when he convened the 1st Ecumenical Council in the city of Nicea (located in today’s Turkey), to settle quarrels provoked throughout the Empire by the Arian Heresy, which denied the divinity of Christ, teaching that He was a mere creature. The Council soundly condemned Arius and his teachings, producing the Symbol of Faith [Creed] still recited by the Church today [I believe...’].

After the Council of Nicea, Constantine remained deeply committed to overseeing the welfare of the Church. He was ever-reverent of the Sign of the Cross of Christ and wished to find the actual Cross. For this purpose he sent his mother Helen to Palestine, giving her both the money

and authority to search for the Cross and places connected with the earthly life of Jesus. In 326 AD, the Cross was miraculously discovered in Jerusalem in 326 AD. Helen gave the Cross to the Patriarch of Jerusalem for safe keeping, taking a piece of it with her back to Constantinople. Emperor Constantine subsequently ordered a magnificent church be built over the site of the Crucifixion, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

In the year 337, knowing that death was imminent, Constantine accepted Baptism, having prepared for the moment his entire adult life. He died on the Feast of Pentecost and was buried in the Church of the Holy Apostles in a crypt which he had prepared for himself.

Saint Helen was the mother of St Constantine the Great, and was probably born at Drepanum (Helenopolis) in Asia Minor to parents of humble means. After Constantine became the sole ruler of the Western Roman Empire in 323 AD, he extended the provisions of the Edict of Milan to the Eastern half of the Empire. After three hundred years of persecution, Christians could finally practice their faith without fear. It was shortly after this that St. Helen led an expedition to the Holy Land in search of Christian relics. The party located the Cross of Christ as well as numerous sites of interest to pilgrims and the Church.

After distributing generous alms at Jerusalem and feeding the needy (at times she even served them herself), the holy Empress Helen returned to Constantinople, where she died in the year 327. Because of her great services to the Church and her efforts in finding the Life-Creating Cross, the empress Helen is called “the Equal of the Apostles.”

The Ascension of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (*June 6*)

The Feast of the Ascension of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ is celebrated each year on the fortieth day after the Great and Holy Feast of Pascha (Easter). Since the date of Pascha changes each year, the date of the Feast of the Ascension changes. The Feast is always celebrated on a Thursday.

The Feast itself commemorates when, on the fortieth day after His Resurrection, Jesus led His disciples to the Mount of Olives, and after blessing them and asking them to wait for the fulfillment of the promise of the Holy Spirit, He ascended into heaven.

The story of the Ascension of our Lord, celebrated as one of the Twelve Great Feasts of the Church, is found in the book of the Acts of the Apostles 1:3-11. It is also mentioned in the Gospels of Mark (16:19) and Luke (24:50-53). The moment of the Ascension is told in one sentence: “He was lifted up before their eyes in a cloud which took Him from their sight” (Acts 1:9).

Christ made His last appearance on earth, forty days after His Resurrection from the dead. The Acts of the Apostles states that the disciples were in Jerusalem. Jesus appeared before them and commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the “Promise of the Father”. He stated, “You shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (Acts 1:5).

After Jesus gave these instructions, He led the disciples to the Mount of Olives. Here, He commissioned them to be His witnesses “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). It is also at this time that the disciples were directed by Christ to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). Jesus also told them that He would be with them always, “even to the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20).

As the disciples watched, Jesus lifted up His hands, blessed them, and then was taken up out of their sight (Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9). Two angels appeared to them and asked them why they were gazing into heaven. Then one of the angels said, “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him going into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

The icon of The Ascension of Our Lord is a joyous icon. It is painted with bright colors. Christ is shown ascending in His glory in a mandorla. A mandorla is a design which is almond-shaped or round. Inside the mandorla is the figure of a holy person. Christ blesses the assembly with His right hand. In His left is a scroll. The scroll is a symbol of teaching. This icon shows that the Lord in heaven is the source of blessing. In addition, Jesus is the source of knowledge. The icon reminds us that Christ continues to be the source of the teaching and message of the Church, blessing and guiding those to whom He has entrusted his work.

The Theotokos occupies a very special place in this icon. She is in the center of the icon, immediately below the ascending Christ. The gesture of her hands is gesture of prayer. She is clearly outlined by the whiteness of the garments of the angels. The Theotokos is depicted in a very calm pose. This is quite different from the appearance of the Disciples. They are moving about, talking to one another and looking and pointing towards heaven. The entire group, the Theotokos and the disciples represent the Church.

The icon of the Ascension includes some who did not witness the Ascension. St. Paul is shown to the left of the Theotokos, but we know that he was not present at the Ascension. At that time, St. Paul did not yet believe in Jesus. But he became a Christian and one of the greatest Apostles and missionaries of Church.

The icon expresses the sovereignty of Christ over His Church; He is its Head, its guide, its source of inspiration and teaching; it receives its commission and ministry from Him, and fulfils it in the power of the Holy Spirit.

APOLYTIKION - TONE IV - O Christ our God, You ascended in Glory and gladdened Your disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit. Your blessing assured them that You are the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world.

KONTAKION - TONE II - O Christ our God, upon fulfilling Your dispensation for our sake, You ascended in Glory, uniting the earthly with the heavenly. You were never separate but remained inseparable, and cried out to those who love You, "I am with you and no one is against you."