

# A Voice in the Wilderness

The Newsletter of St. George Orthodox Christian Church



Rev. Matthew P. Binkewicz, Pastor



*Glory be to Jesus Christ!*

*Glory be Forever!*

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18<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost-Christ Raises the Widow's Son

October 8, 2023



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Unfortunately, some people do say to those who are grieving things like "Do not weep" as in "Stop crying, knock it off." Or perhaps, even if they don't say it, they are thinking, "Why won't this person stop crying?" We may want to put limits on other people's grief because it makes us uncomfortable or we do not know how to handle it

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+ 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost +

++ St. Pelagia the Penitent ++

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

Gospel: Luke 7: 11-16

St. George Orthodox Christian Church is a community of believers who strive to live a life according to the Gospel of Christ and teachings of the Church.

We worship God in Trinity - Father+Son+Holy Spirit.

We are dedicated to Christ's commandment, *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, ad with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.*

## **Who Says God Exists? by St. Nikolaj Velimirovich**

*(From a letter to a school-teacher and her mother).*

Both you and your elderly mother are interested in the Orthodox faith. Since you began to fulfil the commandments of fasting, prayer, charity and communion, the secrets of the truth have become ever more apparent to you. And this, indeed, is the proper path: by practicing what we know, we arrive at the unknown.

Silent prayer over long years reveals the truth. But your heart is burning

with the desire to direct many others onto the path of truth. People are people, however: in one, the mind is darkened by lies; in another, the heart is hardened by the passions; and what you desire won't come easily. It requires much cleansing, many washings in holy water, seven-fold immersions in the Jordan.

So, a worker from the city surprised you with the question: 'Who says God exists?' And you're at a loss to reply to him. First of all, pray to God about it, and then answer

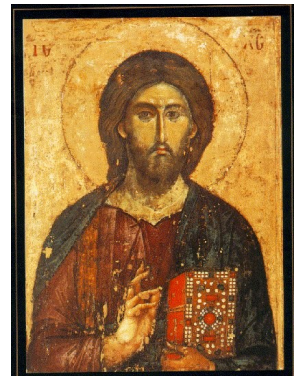
as follows: The vegetation under your feet is evidence, brother. It can be traced back to the day and moment that the words of the Creator were spoken: Then God said, 'Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kind, (Gen. 1, 11).

The sun, the moon and the stars are evidence. If, brother, you're looking for testimony above your head, the blazing sun's a  
*(continued on p.2)*

We invite all to worship in our services. Sunday Divine Liturgy begins at 9:30 AM

If you have any questions about the church or would like to speak with our pastor, please call Fr. Matthew at 607-280-1586

Glory be to Jesus Christ.  
Glory be Forever.





As the deliverer  
of captives  
and defender  
of the poor,  
healer of the infirm  
and champion of kings,  
victorious great  
martyr George  
intercede with Christ  
our God that our souls  
may be saved.

**News and Notes**

We welcome all who are with us today and invite you to join us at our coffee social following the Divine Liturgy.

**Pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5.17)**

Please keep the following in your prayers: Mother Onufria, Meg, Larissa, Jack, Evan, Ryan, Anatoly, Alexey, Heidi, Mackenzie, Mike, Jessica, Lisa, Jeff, Bonnalee, David, Carol, Norris, Debbie, Linda, Daniel, Matthew, Michael, Tom, George, Rochelle the homeless, the hungry, victims of abuse and violence, & those persecuted for their faith in Christ

**From St. John Kronstadt**

It is especially necessary for Christians to have a pure heart, so that they may be able to see God with the eyes of the heart, as He is, with His love to us and with all His perfections, and to contemplate the beauty of the angels, all the glory of the Holy Virgin, the beauty of Her soul and Her greatness, as the Mother of God, and the beauty of the souls of God's saints, and their love to us; we must see them as they are in themselves, we must contem-

plate the truths of the Christian faith, with all its sacraments, and feel their greatness; we must see the state of our own souls, and especially our sins.

An impure heart, occupied with earthly passions, feeds itself on the carnal desires of the eyes and worldly pride; it cannot see any of the things we have indicated. Prayer is the lifting up of the mind and heart to God. From this it is evident that it is quite impossible for anyone to pray whose mind and heart are attached to anything carnal--for instance, to money or to honors--or who has in his heart passions such as hatred or envy for others, because passions usually contract the heart, in the same way as God expands it and gives it true freedom.

The problem of our life is union with God, and sin completely prevents this; therefore flee from sin as from a terrible enemy, as from the destroyer of the soul, because to be without God is death and not life. Let us therefore understand our destination; let us always remember that our common Master calls us to union with Himself.

**Who says God exists, cont'd from p.1**

witness, the strange moon and the clusters of stars. Go wherever you want to, to try and find out where they came from and you won't learn, until you arrive back at that day and moment when the Lord's words rang out over the darkness and chaos: God said, 'Let there be lights in the vault of the sky... to shed light on the earth. God made two great lights... He also made the stars' (Gen. 1. 14-16).

The sea and the air are also evidence. If you're looking, brother, the length, breadth and depth of the sea is evidence, as are the mountains, the wind and the forest, the ant-hills, the honeycombs of the bees, and everything that lives in the sea, in the air, in the mountains, in the forests and in the mounds of earth and cells of bees-wax. Trace them back in time, turning neither right nor left- asking nobody the way- and you'll arrive back at that festive moment when the voice of love rang out from heaven. 'Let there be, let there be, let there be'. 'And it came to pass' (Gen. 1).

The ox and the ass are evidence, according to the words of the prophet Isaiah: 'The ox knows its master, the



donkey its owner's manger'.

Tell me, brother, what material below the heavens isn't witness to God? I'll give you a hundred years to wear yourself out over this pointless effort and you won't find a single blade of grass that doesn't testify to the majesty of its Maker. But to cut down your

time and to help you to see what isn't evidence of God, I'll tell you myself: in the whole wide world, only those, and those alone, who are perverted people.

The order, the proportions, the number, and the divine harmony of the whole of creation is evidence. The mind and conscience of all the holy and righteous people is evidence. But, above all things and all people, there's the evidence of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in whom our great and eternal God was manifested in the human body, visited the human race, declared the mysteries, showed us the way and opened Paradise. If you want to see God with your eyes and hear him with your ears- which God made possible for us to do- look at Jesus Christ. And you'll see, you'll hear, and you'll come alive with a new life.

This is a way in which you can respond to that poor soul who is thirstily seeking after God and wanting to see and to hear him. But that isn't all  
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## Homily on Christ Raising the Widow's Son, (cont'd from p.1)

his body to the place of burial. Can you imagine her predicament? We learn from today's Gospel reading (Third Sunday of Luke 7:11-16) that she previously lost her husband (v.12) and that this was her only child or at least her only son (v.12).

Can you imagine her pain? And Jesus says to her "Do not weep" (v.13). It reminds me of adults who say to crying children, "Knock it off, stop crying." Now we know this was not Jesus' intent, for the gospel also tells us that "He had compassion upon her" (v.13), and we know He had something in mind when He said, "Do not weep." We'll get to that later.

Unfortunately, some people do say to those who are grieving things like "Do not weep" as in "Stop crying, knock it off." Or perhaps, even if they don't say it, they are thinking, "Why won't this person stop crying?" We may want to put limits on other people's grief because it makes us uncomfortable or we do not know how to handle it.

And even though we don't say it, our body language still communicates the same message, "Do not weep, stop crying." It begs the question, how do we handle grief and loss?

First of all, we need recognize that the death of a loved one is not the only type of loss that involves grieving. Fr. Anthony Coniaris, in his sermon on this passage (Widow of Nain – How to Handle Grief in Gems from Sunday Gospels vol.2, p.28), relates the following, "It is not only death that brings pain through loss.

There are many other losses in life that bring similar pain. The loss of a job; the failure to receive an expected promotion; having to move from a place you love and leave behind dear friends; separation and/or divorce from a spouse; retirement from work that has been a vital part of your life for many years; having child grow up and go away to college or serve in the armed forces and eventually get married; an debilitating injury or illness; a financial loss through plunging stock market or swindle. All these experiences cause grief. They are like amputations; they destroy part of us; they bring death to a part of our lives."

In response to the experience of loss, Fr. Coniaris adds, "Some people say that the greatest cure for grief is time. Yet, by itself time will not heal grief completely.

Time can also make grief worse. Time can turn grief into bitter resentment that can poison the body and the mind. In order for grief properly and heal the pain of loss, we must cooperate with time in ways that are constructive... Medical experts tell us that the mismanagement of grief causes all sorts of illness from ulcers, to diabetes to mental and emotional health problems." Grief is hard work. It doesn't just happen. It requires effort, sometimes it requires tremendous effort.

What are some constructive ways to grieve? How can we move through the process of grief? First of all, express it! Emotions must be expressed and shared with others. Repressed emotion is one of the leading causes of psychosomatic illnesses. Whatever is related to our grief—sadness, anger, fear, etc.—must be expressed. Hopefully, we have good, close friends and family who

will listen but not everyone does, so seeking out a priest, a counselor, and a grief support group are also very helpful. Even if we feel all alone in our grief, we are never truly alone. God is always present ready to hear us and listen. Thus, prayer is also a necessary part of expressing our grief. The Psalms of the Old Testament are full of words and phrases that express sorrow, pain, sadness, anger and fear – 'Be angry but do not sin' (Psalm, Proverbs).

The second way to constructively grieve is to cry. As Fr. Coniaris says, "Let

the tears flow!" Jesus said, Blessed are they who mourn for they shall be comforted (Matt.5:4). When His friend Lazarus died, "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). In the Epistle reading of the Orthodox Funeral Service, we hear St. Paul say, 13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope (1Thessalonians 4:13).

St. Paul is not saying, "Do not grieve!" Rather, he is telling Christians to grieve, but to grieve with hope, hope in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is why Jesus tells the widow of Nain, "Do not weep," because He is about to demonstrate His divine power over physical death by raising her son from the dead (Lk.11:15). The Orthodox Funeral Service, with its specialized music, is meant to evoke the wide range and depth of human emotion to facilitate the grieving process. We perform these

(continued p.4, column 1)



Memorial Services several times in the subsequent days, weeks, months and years in order to continue the grieving process. There is no time-table for grief. Everyone is different and every situation is unique.

Thirdly, when we suffer a grievous loss, especially someone we truly love, it is common to become aware of many things left undone, things not said, and unkind or insensitive acts that we committed towards them. In response to this awareness, we often feel embarrassed, guilty, or ashamed. Sometimes these feelings can become very debilitating and we don't know how to make things right because the person is now and forever absent from our life.

Thankfully, we can seek forgiveness from God in the Sacrament of Repentance. Talking with the priest can help sort out what is healthy guilt from what is unhealthy shame. The priest can help facilitate our confession in order to reconcile with God and our departed loved one. In the communion and Church of Christ there is no separation between the living and the dead. We can still talk to our loved one who left this world. The difference is instead of using cell phones, email and texting, we use a different type of wireless communication—prayer. Talk to God, talk to your love ones in prayer. Tell them everything you left unsaid in this life.

Finally, self-pity is a common response to loss. If not checked this self-pity can become all-consuming and very self-centered. In order to prevent this we must, at some point, begin to turn that focus from ourselves towards other people. We must use the pain of loss as a way to help others. Our own loss gives us a unique perspective into the loss of others and also gives us the ability to help them in a unique way. We know how they feel. We know what they are experiencing.

In conclusion, Fr. Coniaris asks us to consider the widow of Nain in today's gospel and how all her hopes, dreams and aspirations for her son were being buried with him in his coffin. With each and every loss in our own life, there is a little funeral that must take place. The question is, which funeral procession are we ultimately participating in? Is it the procession lead by a corpse that symbolizes despair, grief, sorrow, helplessness, and hopelessness of mankind? Or is it the procession lead by Christ, the Eternal One, the Savior, sent to offer us salvation, hope, and life eternal.

that can be said. That's just one sheaf in God's huge field, in which whatever grows is testimony to the Creator. And it grows for no other reason but to give its testimony, and then is gone forever!

For your part, my daughter, continue to grow in virtue. Look neither left nor right; just follow the path of salvation. Soon we'll have to die. And after death, God's judgment awaits us regarding how we, as the closest to God, bore witness to him. And at the judgment, there'll be two ranks of people: the one, on the right of the Lord of glory, will be those who weren't ashamed of Christ; and, on his left, there'll be those who, in this life, 'in this sinful and adulterous generation (Mk. 8, 38), were ashamed of Christ. Amen

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Can we who live today, after two thousand years,



meet Christ in the same way as those who lived during that time? The Church officially answers with a firm "yes." Those of us who believe in Christ as God, are baptized, and naturally remain united with Christ and His Church will have the same opportunity as those who lived back then. This is truly amazing! How can this be so?

It is impossible with our limited human reason to comprehend how such an event might take place. It is beyond reason, and enters the realm of Mystery. When something in our daily lives is inexplicable, we call it a mystery. There are many things human logic cannot explain, such as supernatural events related to Divine actions. These are the Mysteries of God, and in order for us to approach them and receive benefit, we must go

beyond our five senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch). Our senses can only relate to material things. To touch the Mysteries of God requires faith (another sense). However, this faith is not something from the human imagination, which is undefined, hypothetical and dark. The Christian faith is based on a real person, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who revealed to us everything we need to know in order to reach our final destination. The 2000 year history of the Church confirming the truths of Christ are verified in our daily lives. Indeed, what the Lord said is true: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (Matt. 24:35). And what did Christ tell us while he was still on earth? "I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:20).