

A Voice in the Wilderness

The Newsletter of St. George Orthodox Christian Church

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Glory be to Jesus Christ! Glory be Forever!



Volume 10 Issue 483

20th Sunday after Pentecost— Christ raises the Widow's Son

October 10, 2021



We recently heard the powerful account of Jesus raising from the dead the widow's son at Nain (Luke 7:11-16). This particular event is unique to Saint Luke's Gospel. The biblical scholar Carroll Stuhlmueller summarized the over-all impression left by this extraordinary event in the following manner:

This incident, only in Luke, shows the Evangelist's special delight in portraying Jesus not only overwhelmed with pity at the sight of tragedy but also turning with kindly regard toward women (cf. 7:36-50; 10:38-42) ... This narrative possesses the charm, color, and pathos of an excellent story: two large crowds meet, approaching from different directions; the silence with which Jesus touches the bier and stops the funeral procession; the thundering message, calmly spoken, bringing the dead back to life.

Truly, our Lord proclaims an amazing command, "Young man, I say to you arise!" And when the young man "sat up and began to speak," we can understand, however dimly, the reaction of the crowd: "Fear seized them, and they glorified God" (7:16). The pathos of this story is further increased
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+ 20th Sunday after Pentecost +

Epistle: Galatians 1: 11-19

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 living out Christ's commandment to, *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.*

St Silouan-Spiritual Giant of the 20th Century (part 2)

Divine love spread through the whole of his existence and caught up his spirit in the contemplation of God. For the next forty-five years of his monastic life, he constantly confessed that, through the Holy Spirit, he had known Christ Himself, Who had appeared to him and had revealed His Grace in all its fullness.

The vision altered his soul, to the extent that his insatiable spirit, focused night and day on his beloved Lord, cried: 'My soul thirsts for the Lord

and I seek Him with tears. How can I not seek You? You sought me first and gave me a taste of the sweetness of the Holy Spirit. And my soul loved You completely'.

Simeon concentrated all his powers on the struggle for pure prayer, and on battling with demonic thoughts of pride. Occasionally he was comforted by brief visitations of Grace, but when this left him and he was faced with the demons, the pain in his soul was indescribable.

In order to keep Grace

within him all the time, without withdrawing, he began a long and exceptionally painful struggle, which often exceeded normal human powers.

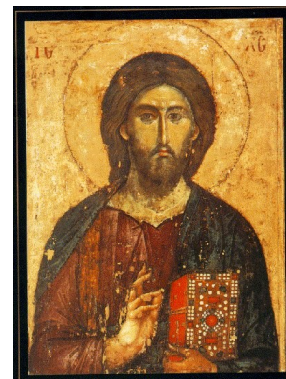
In 1896, he was tonsured a monk of the Lesser Habit and given the name Silouan. Fifteen years of harsh struggle followed the day when the Lord had appeared to him, and one night, as he rose from his stool to do prostrations, a demon appeared before the icon of Christ, expecting Silouan to prostrate himself
(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.





Troparion to St. George

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
for our souls
salvation.

News and Notes

We welcome all who are worshipping with us today. We are also happy to announce that coffee social has resumed out on the church lawn following the Divine Liturgy.

Pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5.17)

Please keep the following in your prayers: Esther, Clement John, Mother Onufria, Meg, Larissa, Jack, Stephen, Louise, George, Evan, Ryan, Sandy, Samuel, Anatoly, Alexey, Abraham, Susan, Jenny, Deb, Dan, Bob, Catherine, Skip, Doug, Heidi, Laura, Elizabeth, Matthew, Corella, Ron, Daniel, Frankie, Pat, Joan, Bill, Terena, Loretta, Mike, Carol, Pam, John, Gladys, Anthony, the homeless, the hungry, victims of abuse and violence, & those persecuted for their faith in Christ

St. Paisios on Spirituality

In spiritual life, the higher someone exalts in his pride, the worse his spiritual fall will be. The degree of "personal injury" in this case will depend on the extent of personal pride. Thus, a proud man rises, reaches a certain limit and then falls and breaks his face. "All who exalt themselves

will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted." (Matt. 23:12). This is a spiritual law.

There is however a significant difference between physical and spiritual laws. Physical laws are relentless and cannot be changed, while spiritual laws come from the All-Merciful God and therefore they can be altered by His mercy. That is to say, if a person immediately notices himself becoming proud and says, "God, nothing that I have is truly mine, but I am proud, forgive me!" he is spared from damage, because his fall is preceded by contrition of heart and repentance.

The same applies to the Gospel phrase "all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (see: Matt. 26: 52). It means essentially that if I "take the sword", it would be fair for me to "perish by the sword". But if I realize my mistake, and my conscience cuts me like a knife, and I ask God for forgiveness, then spiritual laws cease to operate and I receive the remedy of God's love. In other words, we see that God changes His inscrutable ways when He sees people change.

St. Silouan of Mt. Athos continued from p.1

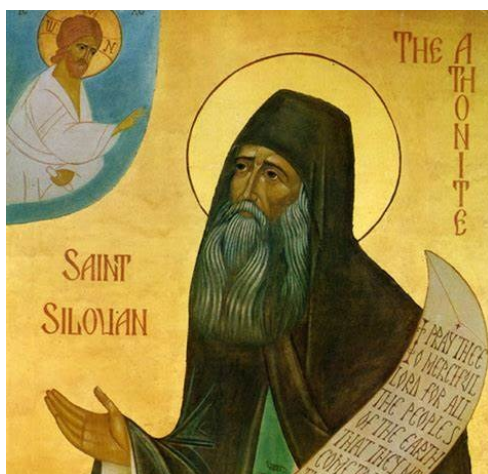
before him. With pain in his heart, Silouan sought the assistance of the Lord and in his soul heard the answer: 'Proud people always suffer thus from the demons. 'Lord', said Silouan, 'teach me what I should do to humble my soul'. And he received the answer: 'Keep your mind in hell and don't despair'.

In this way, God revealed to him that the aim of every ascetic effort is the acquisition of the humility of Christ, which leads to pure prayer and a passionless state. He used to say that as soon as his mind strayed from the recollection of the fire of hell, his bad thoughts once again gained ground.

Another fifteen years were spent in intense struggle, until he gained complete control over every movement of his heart. And so he entered the last fifteen years of his life on earth in a state of complete freedom from the passions.

In 1911, he was tonsured a monk of the Great Habit. At about this time, in order to avoid distraction from his

constant prayer, he asked a blessing from the abbot to be released from the obedience of steward and to withdraw to the Old Russian monastery, where strict ascetics lived because of the quietude of the location. Here he



was afflicted with Bell's palsy and until his death suffered from terrible headaches, which he considered to be a corrective punishment for following his own will.

A year and a half later, the monastery recalled him to the obedience of

steward, which he continued to perform until his death. Once he returned to his obedience, his prayer became more fervent than it had been at the Old Russian monastery. Every day he'd do the rounds of the workshops to assign the tasks for the day and then would return to his cell, where he'd pray with tears for the workers and their families, 'for God's people'.

Having received from the Holy Spirit the Grace of actively experiencing Christ's love for the world, he would pray all the time, with burning tears, for the whole of humankind, particularly the departed. He used to say: 'Praying for people means shedding blood'. And he taught that the criterion for true faith is love for your enemies.

Supporting the world with his prayers and entreating the Lord that, through the Holy Spirit, all the peoples on earth would come to know Him, he finished his earthly course on September 24, 1938.

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(Homily on Christ raising the Widow of Nain's son, cont'd from p.1)

by the fact that the young man was “the only son of his mother, and she was a widow” (7:12).

There was no existing social safety net within first century Israel that would provide support for this woman. Without a son who could help provide for her, this widow would have been totally dependent upon the good will and the charity of her neighbors in the small village that Nain was known to have been. Hence, the power of the simple statement that accompanies the young man's restoration to life—“And he gave him to his mother” (7:15). What a reunion that must have been!

Now Saint Luke makes it clear just who it was who encountered this funeral procession and dramatically brought it to a halt: “And when the Lord who saw her he had compassion on her” (7:13). It was “the Lord.” This was the first of many times throughout his Gospel that the Evangelist Luke will use this exalted title for Jesus. The Greek *ho Kyrios* - the Lord - is the translation found in the Septuagint of the divine name *Yahweh*. Ascribed to Jesus in the New Testament, this title reveals that as the Lord, Jesus has power over both life and death. Anticipating His own resurrection from the dead, the Lord Jesus Christ brings this young man back to life, revealing that even death is not beyond His authority and capacity to give life.

We are not told how this young man died. But as Christians, we certainly understand death in a way that moves far beyond its current clinical definition and determination. That is because we understand life in such a way that the clinical is transcended

by the mysterious: “What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?” (Psalm 8:4). Conversant with a biblical anthropology that refuses to limit a human person to his or hers biological functions, we perceive ourselves in a more complex and meaningful manner.

The Church Fathers will speak of the human person as a psychosomatic union of soul and body. Or, following the Apostle Paul, of a union of spirit, soul and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Because of some of the Greek philosophical connotations - primarily dualism - of using the terminology of soul and body, there has been a concerted movement within theological circles today to use

the more biblically based terms of “spirit and flesh” to describe the mystery of human personhood. Whatever the exact terminology employed to describe the fullness of human existence, the essential point being made is that the human person is more - *much more* - than “what meets the eye.”

We are even greater than the angels according to some of the Fathers, because we unite in our person the “spiritual” and the “material” as the pinnacle of God's creative acts. We have our biological limitations, but we can still know the living God! Even though we are so frail in our humanity, the psalmist can still exclaim in wonder, “Yet you have made him little less than the angels, and you have crowned him with glory and honor” (Psalm 8:5).

“When you take away their spirit, they die and return to their dust” (Psalm 104:29). This is what happened to

the young man from Nain, regardless of whatever may have been the immediate cause of his death. Something had happened that could not be fully described as merely brain death. His “spirit” had been taken away and his flesh was destined to return to the dust. Another expression that became almost classical as a theological description of death - and which essentially means the same thing - is that of the “separation of soul and body.” When the Lord brought this only son of his mother to life again, the spirit of the young man returned to his flesh - or the soul to his body - and he began to live again in the full meaning of that word. Christ restored the young man back to life. He lived - and died - again, to then await the resurrection of the

dead at the end of time, a resurrection prefigured and promised by the Lord's resurrection and victory over death. The same can be said of the synagogue elder Jairus' daughter and, of course Lazarus, the friend of Christ who had been dead for four days.

To hear the Gospel is to fill us with the faith, hope and love that can only come from the living God. We too can cry out together with the crowd at Nain, “A great prophet has arisen among us!” and “God has visited his people!” (7:16). And living within the Church we know that this is the Lord Who “shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; Whose Kingdom shall have no end.”



St. Paisios Velichkovsky on Demonic Activity (part 2)

They are constantly occupied with us. Like watchmen they notice our inclinations and our desires, what we are thinking about and what we love, what we are occupied with besides these. Whatever passion they notice in us, they arouse this in us, and thus they place their nets for us. In this way, we ourselves, first of all, arouse against ourselves every passion, being ourselves the cause of it. Therefore the demons seek in us occasion that through our own inclination and desire we might the sooner be caught. They do not compel us to do what we do not desire, to do that from which our mind inclines away and our will does not agree, knowing that we will not obey them.

Rather, they test us some, whether we will accept some passion or other, And according to our desire and fervor they tighten their traps, for the occasion to sin belongs to us ourselves, our attachment, weakness, and negligence. We do not cut off the beginning of every passion, but the final cause of every evil is the demons. Through the demons we fall into every sin, and no kind of evil comes to us apart from them.

Thus the demons cast us into every passion. They compel us to fall to every sin, and we are tangled in every net. By nets I mean the first thought of desires and various foul thoughts through which we bind ourselves with every passion, and fall into every sin. This is the door of demons and passions, by which they enter into us and rob our spiritual treasury. Immoderate sleep, laziness, eating not at the proper time are a cause of the entrance of demons.

And having come, they first of all knock on the doors of the heart secretly, like thieves. They introduce a thought, and they notice whether there is a watchman or not, that is, they see if the thought will be received or not. If it will be received, then they begin to cause passion and arouse us to it, and they steal our spiritual treasure. If they find a watchman at the doors of the heart who is accustomed to belittle and banish their suggestions, if one turns away in mind from the first mental impulse and has one's mind deaf and dumb to their barking and directed towards the depths of the heart and so does not at all agree with them, then to such a one they cannot do any evil, since his mind is sober.

Then they begin to scheme and place various nets to catch us in passion, for example: forgetfulness, anger,

foolishness, self-love, pride, love of glory, love of pleasure, overeating, gluttony, fornication, unmercifulness, anger, remembrance of wrongs, blasphemy, sorrow, brazenness, vainglory, much speaking, despondency, fearfulness, sleep, laziness, heaviness, fright, jealousy, envy, hatred, hypocrisy, deception, murmuring, unbelief, disobedience, covetousness, love of things, egotism, faintheartedness, duplicity, bitterness, ambition, and laughter. then they arouse a great storm of thoughts of fornication and blasphemy so that the ascetic might become frightened and despondent, or so that he might leave off his struggle and prayer.

But if the enemies after raising all this cannot hold and take away from his struggle a firm soul and an unwavering soldier of Christ who, like a passion-bearer, has placed his foundation on the rock of faith, so that the rivers of sorrows do not cause him to waver, then they try to rob him by some seeming good, considering it more convenient under the appearance of good to introduce something of their own and in this way to deprive one of perfect virtue and struggle.

Thus they try to compel us to make spiritual conversations for the sake of love, to teach men, or to sweeten the food a little for the sake of a friend or for the Feast, for they know, the deceptive ones, that Adam fell for the love of sweet things. First they begin to darken the purity of the mind and heedfulness to oneself, and by this path

they suddenly throw us into the pit of sexual sins or into some other passion. If even by this way they do not cause one to waver who is sober in mind, then they arm themselves with false visions and offend and disturb him by various afflictions. A most skillful warrior lets all this go by him and regards it as nothing, as if it has no relation to him, for he knows that all this is the device of the devil.

If even thus they do not conquer, then they battle by means of high-mindedness. They introduce they thought that the man is holy, saying to him secretly, "How many afflictions you have endured!" The demons, like a clever hunter, when their first means turns out to be powerless, abandon it, go away, hide themselves, and pretend to be conquered. But beware, O man, pay heed, do not be lax, for they will not depart from you until the grave. But they will prepare a great sedge and will look attentively by what means they can again begin to rise up against you, for they do not rest.

(continued next issue)

