

# A Voice in the Wilderness

The Newsletter of St. George Orthodox Christian Church

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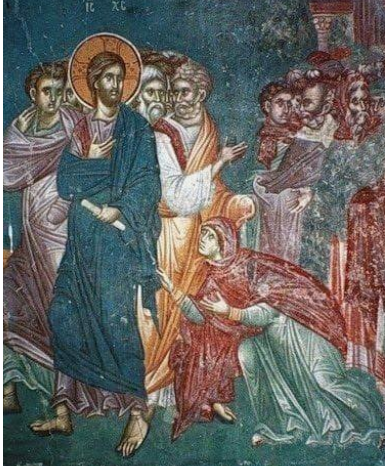
*Glory be to Jesus Christ! Glory be Forever!*



Volume 10 Issue 487

24<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost—Christ heal the Demoniac

November 7, 2021



Ask any particular person, “When do you pray?” Often the answer will be, “when I have a problem”. This is well and good for Jesus wants us to turn to God in prayer. However, often we miss out on many other opportunities to turn towards the Lord for help. This is due, on one hand, to our own ignorance and doubt or on the other

hand to the prodding influence of other people.

In today’s gospel reading, we have two excellent examples of how this works. First, there is Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue. His only daughter, a young girl at 12 years of age, was dying. Jairus falls down at the feet of Jesus and beseeches Him to come to his house. Second, there is the woman, we don’t know her name, with the hemorrhage of blood for twelve years who touches the hem of Jesus’ garment and is healed immediately.

Let us notice what Jairus and the woman had to overcome in order to experience the healing grace of God. During this account, Jairus’ daughter dies and people come from his house to tell him, “Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the teacher” (v.49). Later, when Jesus tells them she is not dead, *(continued p. 3)*

+ 24<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost +  
+++ 33 Martyrs of Metilene +++

Epistle: Ephesian 2: 14-22

Gospel: Luke 8: 41-56

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.*

## ***The Vision of Christ in the Life of Saint Silouan by Fr. Zacharou***

Through the word He addressed to His servant, God revealed to him the weapon wherewith the enemy is vanquished. He made known unto him the means for healing the wounded body of humanity.

Hell is part of the created world. It is a state, to which the Lord Himself descended in order to fill every inch of creation with His creative and saving energy. Even during His earthly life, each time He was glorified, we see the Lord turn His mind and the mind of His

disciples to His shameful death.

If this is the way – first of descent and then of ascent – through which Christ reconciled man with God, it ensues that man must follow it too. Indeed, for man to become the likeness of Christ, he must stretch himself both downwards and upwards: first downwards through humility and self-condemnation.

Man humbles himself before God, lowering his mind and psychology to the limit, *but* he does not despair. He also stretches

upwards, because he has thrown an anchor in Heaven and places all hope in the search for the mercy of God. Through self-condemnation his arrogance is crushed, his whole heart is crushed. However, as the Fathers give witness, there is nothing more brave than a crushed heart.

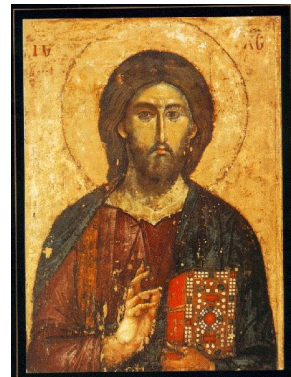
The enemy has the tendency to go upwards, aiming to bypass even God. When the worker of godliness condemns himself and goes downwards, the enemy is by nature *(continued on p.2)*

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

### **News and Notes**

We welcome all who are worshiping with us today. We are also happy to announce that coffee social has resumed 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, Susan, Jenny, Deb, Dan, Bob, Skip, Doug, Heidi, Laura, Elizabeth, Matthew, Corella, Ron, Daniel, Frankie, Pat, Bill, Loretta, Carol, Pam, Gladys, Anthony, the homeless, the hungry, victims of abuse and violence, & those persecuted for their faith in Christ

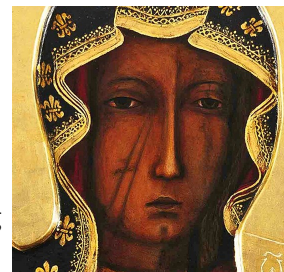
### ***Beauty to Behold***

Did you know everyone is like an icon, an image of God? This we often forget and do not give others their worth. Sadly, we cannot see in another an icon, a sacred image. No icon needs to be beautiful in every respect. Admittedly, any beautiful thing is vulnerable to defilement. Any magnificent object can become its oppo-

site through lack of care, bitterness, or the play of chance. But faced with the work of a grand master, partly defiled and disfigured, we may either notice its impairment or the surviving beauty. Looking at this image with wonder and love, we see only beauty; the rest we regard with grieving and regret.

Sometimes, we dedicate our life to restoring a distorted image to its original beauty. To us, it becomes a labor of love. We celebrate others' quintessential grace while grieving over what life has done to them.

Ultimately, to love is to grieve over someone's imperfections, while rejoicing in his goodness and beauty. When we regard others in this way, love at first sight becomes possible. It is a love that disregards the faults and weaknesses visible to others. People are beautiful to those who love; others only see impairments. Let us remember that.



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

unable to follow him. Thus man is no longer 'captive by the enemy at his will' and begins to taste the freedom 'wherewith Christ hath made us free'.

The humility required by self-reproach attracts grace which heals infirmities and makes up for any lack. God does not judge twice. When we condemn ourselves voluntarily as worthy of hell, the Lord delivers us from future judgment. Surely, Saint Silouan experienced this state in its charismatic form. At a more ordinary level, however, it is attainable, even necessary for every Christian, by accepting afflictions with patience and hope in the mercy of God, rendering glory to His Name and reproaching only ourselves.

For Saint Silouan, the word of the Lord, 'keep thy mind in hell and despair not,' became an ascetic method. It was for him the Great Science in which he delighted and which he indicated as the way that leads to the calm haven of dispassion, and finally to eternal life.

#### **f) Personhood**

The person is not a psychological individual, but a man made in the image of God who strives to attain to likeness to God. Each Hypostasis of the Holy Trinity is perfect God, bearing the fulness of divine Essence and of divine Energy. Likewise, man becomes a hypostasis when he embraces in his heart the whole human existence from the beginning to the end and brings it before God in his prayer of intercession.

At the moment of the blessed vision, the young novice stood before Christ face to Face. He beheld His peaceful gaze and thus tasted of eternity. The state of Christ was imparted to him, and the divine will, which is the salvation of all, became his own. 'The Staretz began to understand the commandment, "Love thy neighbor as thyself" as something more than an ethical imperative. In the word "as" he saw an indication, not of a required degree of love but of an ontological community of being.

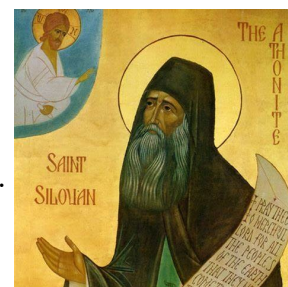
#### **g) Prayer for the world**

After the vision, Saint Silouan began

to intercede for the salvation of all in prayer to God face to Face. He now saw those around him with the eyes of God and not with the blind eyes of human logic. He had compassion on every creature and interceded for the salvation of the whole Adam. For him, love for neighbor was the criterion which verified the authenticity of love for God.

#### **h) Love for enemies**

In essence, the holy Staretz did not separate people into friends and enemies, but into those that know God and those that do not. Being aware that humanity forms one body, he could no longer reject any of the members of this body, nor cease to desire its salvation. He believed that, 'Those who dislike and reject their fellow-man are impoverished in their being.



*(continued p.4)*



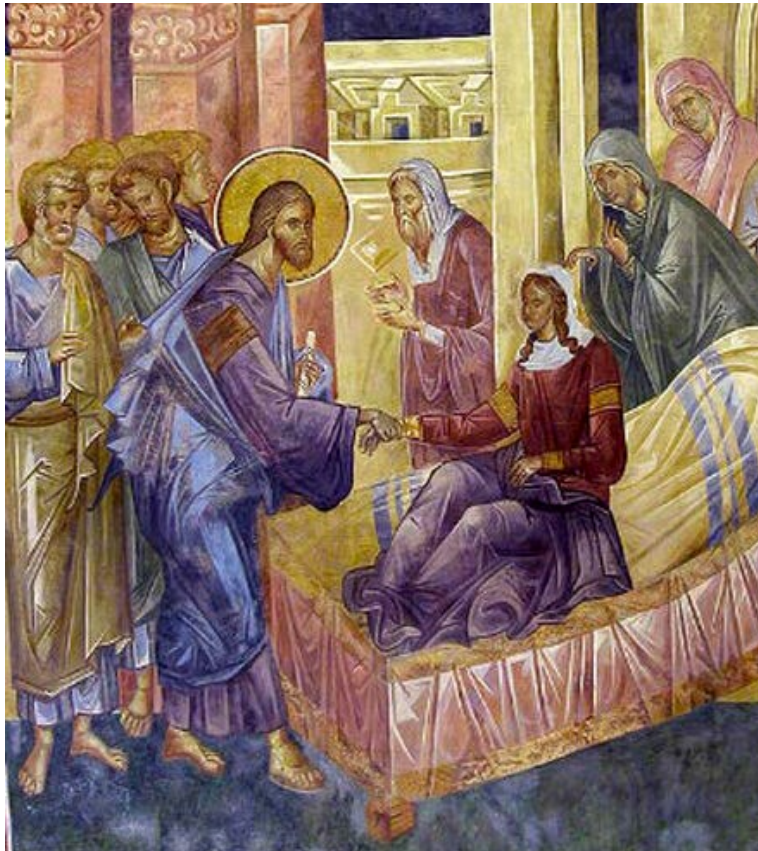
*(Homily on Christ healing Jairus' daughter, cont'd from p.1)*

but sleeping, they ridiculed Him (v.52-53). The woman, because of her flow of blood was considered ritually unclean, and outcast of sorts. Unlike the prestigious Jairus who ruled the synagogue, she needed to fight through the multitude of other people who were surrounding Jesus and could only get close enough to reach out and touch the hem of His garment.

These are classic examples of barriers that can get in our way of approaching Jesus with our problems and our needs. The message is 'Don't bother Jesus. Your problem is unsolvable. It's too big. Others are more important. You're unworthy of His help.' Let me explain further. When we have a problem, whether it's a physical illness of our own or someone we love and care about, we probably/hopefully pray to God for healing. Yet, there are many other avenues to approach the help of Jesus.

Have we ever gone in and out of the hospital without calling a priest to let him know so he can pray and anoint us with the healing oil of unction? Perhaps, we've had a legal issue, a family quarrel, a nagging/chronic illness, an addiction and we've approached a lawyer or counsellor but we have not approached a priest for guidance. Perhaps, a loved one has died and we decided to stay away from church, our family of faith, because we did not want people to see us grieving. Perhaps we have read a self-help, pop-psychology book, a horoscope, our palm, our coffee grounds as opposed to reading the scripture and the lives of the saints or going to bible study. These are all expressions of 'Don't bother Jesus,' either stemming from doubt of self or doubt of God's power and care.

Some of these things or people we turn to are not inherently bad/wrong and some of them are. However, anything used in place of God becomes an idol and then it becomes a problem. We cannot conceive of physical death and dying apart from spiritual death and dying which is separation from God, the source of life and truth. The physical and the spiritual are intimately connected. If we think otherwise, we deny the incarnation and become dualists.



Sometimes, we ignore a spiritual problem so long that it festers and turns into an illness of the mind and/or the body where the intervention of a psychiatrist/psychologist is required. With their help, the person is healed but the underlying spiritual crisis remains that will eventually manifest again in another symptom. It's somewhat like the woman with the hemorrhage. It says she 'had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any (v.43).

What is Jesus' response to the doubters: To the woman He says, 'Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace' (v.48). To Jairus He says, 'Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well' (v.50). Thus, it is our faith, our belief and trust in God, that makes us well. This faith cannot merely be an intellectual assent to a statement but it must be a deep, abiding, self-abandoning trust and total dependence on

God that is lived out each day in our thoughts, words and actions.

The Devil and his demons constantly are telling us, 'Don't bother Jesus. He can't help you. He doesn't want to help you. He's too busy. Your cares are too small. They're too big. You're not worthy. It's too late. You're too sinful.' Do not listen to all these lies. Listen to what Jesus says, 'The hair on our head is numbered' (Mt. 10:30; Lk. 12:7). 'The things which are impossible with men are possible with God' (Luke 18:27). 'If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.' (Mark 9:23). Even on the way to the Cross, Jesus shows this deep, abiding trust when He says, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible

for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will' (Mark 14:36).

So please, bother Jesus. Trouble Him with our many issues and problems and requests. Push through the crowd. Don't listen to the doubters and skeptics and complainers. Let us use the many resources that He has provided in His Body, the Church. Contact a priest, receive the sacraments, read the scriptures and the lives of the Saints. Share your burdens with other faithful Christians so they may help you. As we do this, our will conforms to God's will. Eventually, we learn to ask for the very things that God already wants to give to us. Amen.

## *Frequent Communion by St. Nicholas of Mt. Athos (part 2)*

Do you see this unfathomable gift? The Lord not only died for us, but he also offers himself on the altar so that we may commune with him. If, then, we do as the holy Fathers instruct us to do, and take communion frequently, we shall have divine grace as an ally and aid in this short life. Also assisting us will be the angels of God and even the Lord of the angels himself. Moreover, we will drive the hostile demons far from us as Saint John Chrysostom says. We shall leave that spiritual Table of the Sacraments like lions breathing fire. We ignite fear in the devil, because we have Christ with us as our head and we also have his love for us. This Blood burnishes the royal image of our soul, that is the mind, reason and spirit. This Blood begets beauty and the most amazing beauty, at that. It prevents the nobility and brilliance of the soul from waning and is its constant nourishment.

When this Blood is taken worthily, it banishes the demons and drives them far from us, but also draws to us the angels and the Lord of the angels. This is because the demons flee whenever they see the Lord's Blood, but the angels are attracted and come to our aid. This Blood is the salvation of our souls. Through it, the soul is gladdened, adorned and warmed. This Blood makes our mind brighter than fire and our soul more beautiful

than gold. Those who partake of this Blood stand with the angels, archangels and the powers on high, since they are clad in royal raiment and have spiritual weaponry with them. But I have not yet told you the greatest gift: those who take communion put on the King himself.

Have you heard of the disasters which befall those who do not take communion regularly and withdraw from the sacraments? Have you heard how they are demonized and become some kind of irrational animal, like King Nebuchadnezzar, who was transformed into an ox? And it is right that they suffer, because, whereas they could progress from being human people to being gods by grace, through frequent communion, they choose not to. Estranged from Holy Communion, they lose the human form they have and are transformed into irrational beasts. They are delivered into the power of Satan, as the psalmist says: 'Behold, those who depart from you will be lost' (Ps. 72, 27).

I should probably say that, if death comes suddenly to those who have been negligent in taking communion and finds them unprepared, without the sacrament, what will

become of those poor people? How will they pass through the ethereal toll-gates manned by demons? What fear and trembling their souls will experience, when they could have been spared all of it with frequent communion, as Saint John Chrysostom says. Mercy, Lord.

Because of the grace of Holy Communion, when the soul departs from the body of those who have partaken with a clean conscience just before their death, they are surrounded by angels and taken up into heaven. We don't know when death will come: today, tomorrow, this instant. You should always have taken communion and be prepared. If it is God's will that you live longer, through the grace of Holy Communion, you will spend your life

full of joy, peace and love, accompanied by all the other virtues. If, on the other hand, it is God's will that you die, then, with Holy Communion, you will pass freely through the toll-gates of the demons in the air and you will dwell in inexpressible joy in the eternal mansions. Since, through Holy Communion, you are always united with our sweet Jesus Christ, the almighty King, you will live a blessed life here on earth. And, when you die, the demons will depart from you at the speed of light, while the holy angels will open the door of heaven for you and will send you, with a retinue, to the throne of the blessed Trinity.

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### *The Vision of Christ in St. Silouan (continued from p.2)*

They do not know the true God, Who is all-embracing love. They have not found the way to Him.'

The commandment of love for enemies is the summit of the commandments, because it reflects God's mode of existence. He offers His holy and endless life to His enemy, to sinful man. Undoubtedly, this commandment surpasses man's strength; it is unattainable without the grace of the Holy Spirit. This is why for Saint Silouan, the existence of this love was a token of the presence of the Holy Spirit, on a both personal and ecclesiastical level.

His teaching thus contains the unerring and trustworthy criterion for the One True Church, which can only be the Church bearing in her bosom souls that are habitations of the Holy Spirit, bearers of 'Christ-like love for our enemies and Christ-like humility'. Besides the effects that we have mentioned, the authenticity of the vision of Christ by Saint Silouan is demonstrated precisely by the simplicity of his writings. The wealth of life that God imparts to his elect cannot be described with the mind. It is not the fruit of human imagination and does not stir up imagination in any way.

