

The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Matthew 9:1-8

And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city. And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men. (KJV)

The Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the First Six Ecumenical Councils

John 17:1-13

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word., Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. (KJV)

Each Divine Liturgy believers are blessed to hear the Holy Gospel. Attentive believers greatly value the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Believers hearing the Holy Gospel learn from and about the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel reaches into the depths of the receptive believer's mind, heart and soul. The receptive believer's life is enriched with each Gospel reading. The believer eagerly welcoming the Gospel has life changed for the better.

Each Divine Liturgy intends enrichment of the attending believers. The Divine Liturgy has a far-reaching effect on the local community and beyond. Churches celebrating the Divine Liturgy are community assets,

The Divine Liturgy stands as a beacon of light, faith and hope in the community. Where violence might rage and negativity might exist, the Divine Liturgy is an oasis of peace, comfort and provider of direction for a better future.

Today Orthodox believers hear two Gospel readings. The first reading tells of Jesus' power to forgive sins and to heal the sick. Communities and families are enriched by knowing Jesus has power to forgive and to heal.

Every person needs Jesus' forgiveness. We all do, say or think things which are harmful to our souls and to others. We are unburdened by Jesus's forgiveness and having the opportunity to begin life anew. Forgiveness heals personal relationships.

Jesus' love for each person is clear in St. John's Gospel reading. Jesus speaks about eternal life and the joy He desires for His followers. Eternal life and joy in Christ are the goals of each serious believer.

As Jesus' earthly life was drawing to a close, Jesus thought carefully about His followers. Jesus spoke of His teachings, prayer and care for His followers. Jesus' followers have a responsibility to think carefully about Jesus' care, love and teachings.

Eternal life and joy in Christ come only through Jesus Christ. The Gospel readings in the Divine Liturgy enrich and steadily guide the believer during the course of the year and the through the days of life.

Believers do well to be mindful of the Gospel readings during the year. Each believer is expected to connect the self with the Gospel readings and fashion life to conform to the Gospel teachings.

The Lord Jesus Christ makes the Gospel readings possible. The Lord is the Content and Purveyor of the Gospel. God's Holy Church maintains, protects and proclaims the Gospel through the centuries.

The Divine Liturgy enables believers to live, face and address life more abundantly. (Jn.10:10) The Divine Liturgy unites believers with Christ and offers a foretaste of God's Kingdom.

Believers are blessed to experience the Divine Liturgy. Learning from the Lord Jesus Christ continues throughout life. Life's limits are transcended in the Divine Liturgy.

Living and departed believers are united in the Divine Liturgy. The past, present and future are present in the Divine Liturgy. Believers "become" in Christ in the Divine Liturgy. Christ enters believers and believers enter Christ.

Unity in Christ becomes reality in the Divine Liturgy. The Holy Gospel fosters unity. Joy exists and is manifested in the Divine Liturgy. Saints and martyrs of past centuries are alive in the Divine Liturgy.

Learning never stops in the Divine Liturgy. Growing in Christ never stops in the Divine Liturgy. Boundaries are transcended in the Divine Liturgy. Christ is constantly present and experienced.

Thank God for the present Gospel readings and for each Divine Liturgy. Let us attend the Divine Liturgy as often as possible.. May growth in Jesus Christ and God's Kingdom always be our primary interest.

The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost. The Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the First Six Ecumenical Council. July 19/August 1, 2021. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.

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