

The Eight Sunday after Pentecost Matthew 14:14-22

And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick. And when it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. And they say unto Him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. He said, Bring them hither to Me. And He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children. And straightway Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a ship, and to go before Him unto the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.
(KJV)

Believers are expected to continue to grow in Christ from Holy Baptism until departure from this life. The Holy Gospel read at each Divine Liturgy nourishes believers during the periods of intended growth.

The Holy Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ serve to further nourish and unite believers with Christ. Just as Jesus provided for the multitude in the current Gospel, Jesus nourishes believers of every century.

Just as the multitude that drew near to Jesus in the current Gospel experienced healing and were fed, believers drawing near to Christ in every century experience healing and are nourished.

Jesus always has sufficient nourishment at hand for those desiring to be fed and nourished by Him. Believers seeking to grow in Christ, need only to draw near in faith and love with open hearts, minds and souls.

The nourishment Jesus Christ provides through the Holy Gospel and Precious Body and Blood of Christ changes lives. Unity with Christ is experienced when the Gospel is taken to heart and believers partake of the Body and Blood.

The Divine Liturgy is life-transforming, always the same and always new. Believers place confidence in the transforming power of the Divine Liturgy. Jesus Christ is experienced in the Divine Liturgy.

The open heart, mind and soul experience God in action in the Divine Liturgy. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are addressed, revered and celebrated. Believers entering the Divine Liturgy depart as being different and better.

Becoming an Orthodox Christian and remaining an Orthodox Christian throughout life are completely voluntary undertakings. The Lord God enables faithful believers to address and overcome the challenges of life.

Life is enriched as the believer grows in Christ. The believer is renewed and changes in the growth process. Ideally, the believer takes on qualities taught and demonstrated by Christ as the believer grows and matures.

Evil lurks in the world and the believer must constantly be cautious and vigilant. When a believer falls into sin, immediate repentance is beneficial. The Lord Jesus Christ preached about repentance.

The Lord welcomes the repentant of heart. Courage is necessary to repent of sin. Trust in the Lord's forgiveness, mercy and love are required for true repentance.

The Church offers opportunities for repentance through Holy Confession. Unity with Christ is experienced through Confession and Communion. Healing takes place when repentance occurs.

Christ's great love was manifested when He healed those in the multitude in the present Gospel and then had them fed. Christ's great love is always present in the Church.

The world can be hostile and threatening. The world can be unsettling. The Church offers peace and unending love. The Church offers Christ's constant presence.

The saints and martyrs show the possibilities that exist for people of all types of backgrounds to live, die and be renewed in Christ. Believers taking time to learn extensively about Christ in the Church never exhaust the learning possibilities.

The Church is much more than the Sunday morning Divine Liturgy. The Church offers the presence of Jesus Christ, twenty-four hours a day, everyday until the glorious Second Coming and Final Judgment.

The life in Christ includes the present life and the possibility of life eternal. Choices made in earthly life determine the way eternity will be experienced. God's Holy Church helps guide the believer's decision-making.

Now is the time to be renewed in Christ. Now is the time to repent and be united with Christ. Now is the time to love Christ completely. The present moment is the only certain moment in life.

Each moment of life lived is to be lived in Christ. Life is at the fullest when lived in Christ. Jesus Christ makes unity with Him possible and desirable. The saints and martyrs offer examples of unity with and fulness in Christ.

Cherish the present Gospel reading and dwell upon it to learn more about Christ. Cherish the Divine Liturgy and partake of the Precious Body and Blood of Christ when the opportunity exists.

Today thank God for unending love, goodness and mercy. Be grateful for the opportunity to worship the Lord God and hear the Holy Gospel. Give thanks to God continuously for all the blessings experienced each day.

The Eighth Sunday after Pentecost. Dormition of the Righteous Anna.

July 25/August 7, 2022. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.

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