

The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Matthew 8:28-9:1

And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told everything, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts. And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city. (KJV)

Holy Fathers of the First Six 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 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)

We come today to God's Holy Church to glorify and worship the Lord God. We come seeking peace and salvation of our souls. We need God's mercy and forgiveness because of our sinfulness.

The Church lifts our hearts, minds and souls to the greatness and glory of God. Partaking of Jesus Christ's Precious Body and Blood awaits us in the Divine Liturgy.

The Gospel is proclaimed for the nourishment of our hearts, minds and souls. We are to leave the Divine Liturgy as better Christians than when we entered. We are to leave our daily cares behind and focus clearly on the Lord God.

God calls us to the Church to work out our salvation. The Church is where we discern our purpose in life and the paths we are to travel. In the church we learn how we are to get along with each other and with our neighbor.

Forgiveness and love for each other are taught in the Church. We are expected to always practice love and forgiveness in the Church. We are all sinners. We all need God's forgiveness.

God's forgiveness for each of us depends on our own practice of forgiveness with each other. This is made clear in the Lord's Prayer. Christ's teachings challenge us to grow from the time of baptism until departure from this life.

Stagnancy, hardness of heart and negative thoughts toward others have no place in the Christian life. Jesus Christ offers growth and fulness in life for believers seeking to heed His word and do it.

Eternal life is possible for believers following the narrow path to the Kingdom. Today's Gospel of St. Matthew demonstrates that Jesus opens the path to the Kingdom when evil stands in the way.

St. John's Gospel for today verifies the possibility of eternal life in Jesus Christ. Choices and decisions in earthly life determine where a believer will experience eternity.

The Church encourages the believer to follow the narrow path to the Kingdom and eternal life. The Church offers the necessary teachings and nourishment for believers in life's journey.

The Church is filled with examples for believers to learn from and to follow to the Kingdom. God is ever-present to assist and guide believers. The Mother of God, the saints and martyrs are ready intercessors in our behalf.

Confessing belief in Jesus Christ and following Christ is completely voluntary. The hunger in the soul finds complete nourishment in Jesus Christ. Peace in the heart, mind and soul is experienced in Jesus Christ.

The Divine Liturgy gives the believer the opportunity to think carefully about his or her personal life. Believers assemble in the Divine Liturgy to celebrate the Lord God and to express collective joy.

The Divine Liturgy transforms the lives of active participants. Believers actively participate by opening the heart, mind and soul to God. God enters the welcoming hearts, minds and souls.

When the mind wanders, bring the mind consciously back to God. Focusing on God as much as possible during the Divine Liturgy and in daily life keeps the believer away from sin.

Today's Divine Liturgy is a source of strength for participating believers. May the Lord's love for each believer be deeply cherished. Each believer has a responsibility to be grateful to the Lord. Thanking God has a place throughout life.

The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost. The Holy Fathers of the First Six Councils. Holy Martyrs Cyricus and Julitta; St. Vladimir of Russia. July 15/28, 2024. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic