

The Second Sunday after Pentecost-
Matthew 4:18-23

And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him. And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. (KJV)

The Nativity of St. John the Baptist
Luke 1:1-25, 57-68,76,80

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed. There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless. And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men. ⁷ Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her. And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father. And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John. And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all. And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God. And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judaea. And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him. And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;

The Second Sunday after Pentecost-The Nativity of St. John the Baptist

The present Gospel of St Matthew gives a glimpse of the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter, Andrew, James and John immediately followed Jesus when He called them. The newly called Apostles readily left all to follow Jesus.

Peter, Andrew, James and John were convinced deep within themselves about the appeal of Jesus to leave their occupations and families. Jesus said He would transform them from fishermen to fishers of men.

Jesus' power to transform lives is further evident in the present Gospel, The Gospel states Jesus healed sickness and diseases ultimately changing the lives of those afflicted.

We know from the Epistle to the Hebrews that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and forever." (Heb.13:8) The Lord Jesus Christ calls each person to follow Him and experience transformation.

The Lord Jesus Christ calls believers willing to be healed of their sicknesses and diseases caused by personal sin and errors of judgment. The Lord Jesus Christ is within immediate reach of each person turning to Him in sincere faith.

God's Holy Church is where to turn to Jesus Christ in complete faith. God's Church nourishes the heart, mind and soul. The Church offers the narrow path to the Heavenly Kingdom and eternal life.

Parents do well to teach their children from an early age about the Lord Jesus Christ. The best way for parents to teach their sons and daughters is by living the life in Christ.

Jesus once said: "My mother and my brethren are those which hear the word of God and do it." (Luke 8:21) The word of God is proclaimed and preached in the Church. Attentive listeners incorporate the word of God in their daily lives.

Serious believers seek each day to live the life in Christ. The hunger in the soul yearns for Christ. The hunger in the soul is satisfied only by the authentic Christ. Worldly alternatives to Jesus Christ fail to bring peace to the heart, mind and soul.

Peter, Andrew, James and John personally heard Jesus preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. Peter, Andrew, James and John actually saw Jesus Christ heal the sick and the suffering.

Jesus' words about the Kingdom are proclaimed at each Divine Liturgy. Serious believers embrace Christ's words deep within their hearts, minds and souls. Serious believers allow Christ's words to transform their lives, Saints of the Church are proof of the power of the Gospel to change lives.

Each day is the beginning of the rest of a person's life. Each moment individuals decide if they are going to follow the narrow path of Jesus Christ. The world is full of temptations to pull persons away from following Christ.

Constantly receiving nourishment in the Church keeps believers strong. Prayer and fasting keep the believer committed to the path to the Heavenly Kingdom. The Holy Spirit is ever-present to guide believers in their journey.

Peter, Andrew, James and John are remembered today for the soundness of their decisions to follow Jesus Christ. Sound decision-making enables believers to travel the path to eternal life.

Jesus Christ provides the hope and the strength for believers to overcome obstacles in life preventing entry into the Heavenly Kingdom. Saints and martyrs have cleared the paths to follow to the Kingdom.

God's Holy Church illumines the path to the Kingdom. Parents bringing their sons and daughters to Church place them on the narrow path. Parents traveling the path to the Kingdom serve as living examples for their sons and daughters.

Each Gospel reading serves to nourish the heart, mind and soul. Each Gospel reading opens the path to the Kingdom. The Gospel unites the believer with Jesus Christ.

Life comes from and exists in Jesus Christ. The Church is where to nourish and live the life in Christ. The Church is the safe-haven against the assaults on the soul. Keeping the mind on Christ keeps the perils away.

Peter, Andrew, James and John are known through the centuries due to their willingness to completely follow Jesus Christ. Each person can follow Jesus Christ completely.

Jesus' teachings provide the instructions for following Him. Jesus' teachings are contained the Holy Scriptures. The Divine teachings are put in the proper context in God's Holy Church.

When the heart, mind and soul are filled with Christ's teachings, the person lives in ways pleasing to Christ. Today is the day to empty life of all that is not of Christ. Today and every day are the days to follow Christ completely.

Today the Church also celebrates the Nativity of St. John the Baptist. The Gospel states: "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; "(Mt. 11:11)

As we determine the course of our future lives, let us be mindful of St. John's preaching of repentance (Mt.3:1-3) and the honor bestowed upon him to Baptize the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's Holy Church is where we work out our salvation. We learn from the lives of the Holy Apostles and the life of St. John the Baptist how to honor and follow Jesus Christ. Let us follow Christ in earnest each day.

The Second Sunday after Pentecost. The Nativity of St. John the Baptist.
June 24/July 7, 2024. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic