



HOLY TRINITY

ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



723 N BODINE ST PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123

CHURCH BULLETIN

Vol. 14 No. 44 * Sunday October 31, 2021 * Editor: V. Rev. Fr. Nicolai Buga

The 22nd Sunday after Pentecost

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Gospel Reading Luke 16: 19 - 31

The Lord said this parable: "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in

your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.' Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"

Apostle Reading Galatians 6: 11 - 18

Brethren, See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand! As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus

Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.



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Synaxarion. Sunday October 31, 2021
(The 22nd Sunday after Pentecost: Holy Apostles Apelles, Stachys, Amplias, Urban, Aristobulus and Narcissus of the 70; Holy Martyr Epimachus of Alexandria, Egypt)

Lazarus and the Rich Man

I bet that every one of us can name some famous people who seem to be famous mostly because they are famous. Some people make the news simply by being who they are for reasons that are beyond us. For whatever reason, the names of celebrities are always well known.

But it's not the same for the humble and poor, for people who live on the streets or in shacks and who do not know where their next meal will come from. Hundreds of millions of children in the developing world today do not have safe drinking water, adequate shelter, or health services. Many of them end up like the poor man in today's gospel lesson, begging desperately outside the home of a wealthy person, only to be ignored and to die without any human comfort. The names of those who live such lives are rarely known or recorded. The names, like the people, are usually thought to be unimportant and rarely make the news.

How completely shocking it is, then, that our gospel text gives us the name of the poor beggar Lazarus, but leaves out the name of the rich man. This detail shows us that God's kingdom is not like worldly kingdoms, not like human society as we know it. For the kind of wealth that makes people famous in this life counts for nothing in the next. And the kind of humility, the kind of complete trust in God that the poorest of the poor are in the best position to have, counts for little in today's world; yet, it is only by that kind of humble trust that anyone will enter the kingdom of God.

No, the point is not that the rich will be damned and the poor will be blessed. Instead, it is that there are strong and deep temptations associated with wealth, possessions, and success in this world. For if we love ourselves, our riches, and our status more than God and neighbor, no matter how much or little we have, we will shut ourselves out of the kingdom. The name Lazarus means "One who has been helped," and those whose miserable life circumstances do not encourage them to trust in money, power, or success are in a good position to learn that their help is in the Lord, in His mercy and love.

The rich man never learned that lesson, however. He wore only outrageously expensive clothes and had a great



feast every day. He must have known about the poor beggar Lazarus. He probably stepped over or around him every time he went in or out of his house. Here was a desperately poor man, lying on the ground, whose only comfort was the stray dogs who would lick his open sores. All that Lazarus wanted were the crumbs that fell from the man's table, you might say his garbage. But the rich man

was so greedy and thoughtless that he apparently denied him even that. Our Lord is quite clear about the consequences of such a life. This man showed no mercy; he demonstrated no love for his wretched neighbor. Consequently, he cut himself off from the mercy and love of God.

Quite different from this selfish man were the saints we commemorated on Thursday, the Holy Unmercenary Healers Cosmas and Damian. They used the money they inherited from their parents to provide medical care without charge to the sick and needy. Imagine that: doctors who refused payment. God worked many miracles through them, for they became channels of the Lord's mercy and love to those with whom the Lord identified Himself: the sick, the weak, the stranger, "the least of these my brethren."

St. Paul's famous words about love in 1 Corinthians 13 were lived out by these great saints. We remember them precisely because of their love. The Lord said that the greatest commandments are to love God all our heart, soul, and strength and our neighbors as ourselves. And what greater sign of love is there than patiently and selflessly to ease the pain of others, to lighten their burdens, to heal their bodies, and restore them to health. No, these men did not take credit for their work or think that they healed by their own power. Instead, their lives were transformed by the healing energies of the Holy Spirit; they became channels of God's mercy to suffering, desperate people.

Saints Cosmas and Damian were completely different from the rich man who disregarded Lazarus. They would have provided him their best care free of charge and done everything possible to nurse him back to health.

Their selfless love for Lazarus would have been an icon of the Kingdom of God in which those who wait humbly upon the Lord will not be disappointed.

But we have to go beyond merely praising the memory of Sts. Cosmas and Damian. We must venerate them not only with our words, but also with our deeds; namely, by following in their footsteps for the Lazaruses of our world and of our lives. No, we are not all called to become physicians; we are not all called to give everything away to the poor. But we are all called

to live out the selfless love that Jesus Christ has brought to the world, the love that is patient and kind and free of envy; that rejoices in the truth and endures all things for the salvation of the world. That kind of love never fails, for it has conquered death through our Lord's crucifixion and glorious resurrection.

Such love is not a feeling, an emotion, or a sentiment. It is a commitment, a sacrifice, an offering of ourselves to God in the service of the living icons of Christ whom we encounter every day, namely every human being with whom we come in contact. Unlike the rich man in the parable, we are not to be so fixated on ourselves that we ignore the needs of others. None of us is rich and famous in the world, but we all have the opportunity, at the very least, to share the crumbs that fall from our tables with those who are hungry for them.

As we prepare for the Nativity or Advent fast, we should plan on giving the money that we save by eating a humble diet to those who do not have the basic necessities of life. That's what we do as a parish through the "Food for Hungry People" collection during Lent. Stay tuned for details on a food drive for Thanksgiving and for our plans to help a needy family at Christmas. Think also of the crumbs, the small bits of time and energy, that we are all able to give: to the sick and lonely who need visitors or at least a note or a phone call; to neglected children who need tutors and mentors; to pregnant women in difficult situations who need our support to help them welcome

their babies; and to the countless other people in our own neighborhoods who need God's blessing in their lives in a tangible, practical way.

The hard truth is that, if we are not sharing our lives and blessings with others in some way, we will become just like the rich man who was too caught up with his own pleasure to worry about poor Lazarus. We know where that path leads. The good news is that Saints Cosmas and Damien have shown us a better way, the way of our Lord, which is open to us in every generation, in

every walk of life, no matter how rich or poor we are. For the money and power of the world will fade away; they do not last. Only one thing lasts, and that is the selfless love of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ Who has conquered sin and death. And we all have gifts and abilities that may become channels of His blessing and mercy to a world of people like Lazarus, whether their wounds are physical or spiritual or emotional.

Of course, we do not have to save the world; Christ has already done that. We just have to be faithful: to trust, believe, and follow our Savior in how we treat others. He turned no one away empty-handed and neither should we. If we claim His mercy and love for ourselves, we must show them to all who bear His image and likeness. Let us be Christians not merely in name, but also in how we live, even when it is inconvenient. Then we will become living icons of the salvation that Jesus Christ has brought to a world of sin and death, and the Lazaruses of the world will know that they too are the children of God. And together with them, we will all share in the mercy of a Lord Who raises the dead, heals the sick, feeds the hungry, and makes even the most miserable people His blessed sons and daughters.

Fr. Philip LeMasters



Autumn Soul Saturday

The Church calls the dead ones "asleep," using a term taken from the Gospel of Luke, where the miracle of resurrection from dead daughter of Jairus, who was aged barely 12, is rendered. When our Savior reaches Jairus' house, his daughter had just died. Then, Jesus tells the parents and the audience: "Do not weep; she is not dead, but asleep" (Luke 8: 52). When Christ uses the word "asleep, He gave it a meaning that is associated with the resurrection. This is the reason we, Orthodox Christians, believe in the resurrection of the dead, and pray for the salvation of their souls.



South-eastern Europe. It may be precisely this historical fact that could explain why the tradition of commemorating ancestors has become so important precisely to this cultural area inhabited today by Orthodox Christian nations (Greeks, Romanians, Bulgarians, Serbs). Church historians and liturgists speak about the

existence of the Soul Saturday tradition as early as the 9th century (at the Studion Monastery in Constantinople) as well as from the 17th century Greece. Russian Church also celebrates this Autumn souls' day, namely the Saturday before the feast of St Demetrius, as an important moment of remembrance of the departed ones.

In the Orthodox Church, Saturday is a traditional day for praying for the dead. Why on Saturday? Because Saturday is the day when the Lord's body was laid in the grave and His soul descended to hell, to release all righteous dead before His coming. Thus, the Holy Apostles and Holy Fathers - moved by their love for humanity - have instituted such Soul Saturdays when the Church calls to remembrance all those known and unknown ancestors who have died through various mishaps or accidents, and consequently could not enjoy the necessary spiritual care, and did not benefit of either proper funeral prayers and rituals or normal memorial services.

Without having a fixed date, this memorial day always falls on a Saturday. This year "All Souls' Day" falls on November 2. On this day, we bring to the church wine, *coliva* and/or *colaci* (round knot-shaped bread) for memorial service. *Coliva* is wheat cooked with honey or sugar and mixed with walnuts and sometimes with raisins. Prepared from grain, it expresses the faith of the living in the resurrection of the dead. Thus, if the honey or sugar is a symbol of the joyous and blessed life in the Heavenly Kingdom, the grain signifies that the dead will truly rise again from the grave, just as that seed which is sown in the earth, decays first and afterwards brings forth abundant ripe, whole fruit (See John 12: 24 "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain").

Although we generally remember the souls of the dead on Saturdays, within the liturgical year of the Eastern Orthodox Church there are special memorial days. Thus, every year in early November, we commemorate those faithful departed to the Lord. Also known as "All Souls' Day," this memorial day is called in Romanian "Moşii de Toamnă" (the Fall "All Souls' Day"). The term "Moş" [pronounced *mosh*] (singular) designates an elderly man and often precedes a given name, "Moş Ion", "Moş Toader" (Uncle John or Old John; Uncle Theodor or Old Theodore) etc. In many regions of Romania, such as Bucovina, my native province, the word also means "grandpa". Some believe that the plural "moşi" – referring to persons that are passed away – comes from "strămoşi", i.e. forefathers, great-grandfathers, ancestors. We must add that Romanians have a Soul Saturday (a "Moşi"-celebration) every season of the year, including the so-called "Moşii de Toamnă".

We give the priest the "pomelnic" (the diptych, i.e. a list with the first names of our departed ones), in order to be called during the Divine Liturgy and the memorial service that follows afterwards. We also offer him a prosphora and a candle. It is good that we come to church before the beginning of the Divine Liturgy, thus giving the priest the opportunity to mention their names at the Proskomedie, while taking small particles from the prosphora, and to pray for them. Those particles, called *miride* in Romanian, are placed on the holy tray (discos) near the *Agneţ* [Agnus (Latin for lamb) - a cubical piece of bread, holding the seal -- IC, XC, NI-KA, Jesus Christ is Victorious -- representing Christ, the Lamb of God]. I have to add that the priest does the same for the living, as well. During the Divine Liturgy, those particles for both, the living and the dead, are placed into the Blood of the Lord with the words, "Through the prayers of Thy saints, wash away, O Lord, with Thy precious Blood, the sins of those commemorated here."

Regarding the origin of this ancient Romanian tradition, ethnologists believe that it is reminiscent of the Dacians' cult of ancestors. As we know, in Antiquity, Thracians, including their brunch of Getae-Dacians, were among the largest nations in the world after the Indians. The area inhabited by them stretched across Central and

We, Orthodox faithful, pray for those who have departed, because we believe that, through our prayers, their souls will reach upon the Last Judgment a better state than that one they had when being separated from their bodies. It is customary that believers pray especially (but not exclusively) for all their relatives who have fallen asleep in the Lord and for others among the faithful who might not be commemorated by anybody.

Of course, one may ask, "What is the point of these memorials?" In the words of St. Paisius the Athonite, "*prayers and memorials from those who are still alive on behalf of the reposed are the last opportunity that the Lord gives to help them before the Last Judgment.*"

It is our strong conviction that we can do nothing greater, nothing better for the departed than to pray for them, offering their names for commemoration at the Divine Liturgy. The following story reveals the importance of the prayers for the dead. There was this Father Alexei, a humble Hieromonk of the Kiev Lavra, who was in charge of taking care of the relics of St Theodosius of Chernigov, located in the monastery. One day, while he was re-vesting the holy relics, before having completed the job, being tired, the old father dozed off near the relics coffin. As he was sleeping, St Theodosius appeared to him and said, "*Thank you for toiling on my behalf. But I also ask you to commemorate my parents, when serving the Divine Liturgy,*" – and he gave father Alexei their names, Nikita, the priest, and presbytera Maria. "*But how is it that you, a holy hierarch, are asking for my prayers, when you stand at the throne of Heaven and intercede God's mercy in behalf of people?*" – asked the humble priest. "*That is true,*" replied the Saint, "*but the offering at the Divine Liturgy have more power than my prayers.*"

St. Paisius the Athonite says that the memorial prayers are wonderful lawyers that speak on behalf of the dead ones. Indeed, the prayers of the memorial services are the most sensitive and persuasive pleading for the reposed to the Throne of the Judgement. The Church is the best lawyer possible, that utters this pleading to the Lord, through us, her members - priests and faithful.

Love is therefore the miraculous power to unite with beloved ones. The ancient Orthodox tradition of praying and giving almonds for the memory of the dead is a further proof that, as St Paul says, "love never dies" (I Cor. 13: 8). It is the glue that unites us, the living, with the dead, as members of the same Church. "Therefore we must do in remembrance of the dead and the saints to mention that, rejoicing them, to make them praying and happy for us to God", St. Simeon the New Theologian says (St. Simeon of Thessalonica, VI, 375).

V. Rev. Fr. Nicolai Buga

HOLY TRINITY'S Liturgical Schedule from October 30 to November 8, 2021

Saturday October 30 - Soul Saturday:

9:00 am - Matins
9:30 am - Divine Liturgy
11:00 am - Memorial Service

Sunday October 31 (22nd Sunday after Pentecost) :

9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy
11:00 am - Sunday School
12:00 pm - Coffee Hour

Sunday November 7 (24th Sunday after Pentecost) :

9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy
11:00 am - Sunday School
12:00 pm - Coffee Hour

Monday November 8 - Synaxis of the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel:

9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy
11:00 am - Sunday School
12:00 pm - Coffee Hour

