

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905

Rev. Presbyter Dragan Vukovic

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The Sunday of All Saints (06.11.2023.)

Matthew 10:32-33, 37-38, 19:27-30

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first. **(KJV)**

The Lord God is needed every minute of everyday of life. The Lord is the Creator, Giver and Sustainer of life. Believers learn best how to live an earthly life by seeking and being united with the Lord God.

The current Gospel expresses the value of confessing the Lord Jesus Christ in daily life. The person's words, thoughts and actions will reveal the depth of belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Turning to the Lord God for strength and direction in daily life is the way to confess and profess belief. Being repentant of sins and abiding in God's Holy Church reflects belief in the Lord.

The saints and martyrs of the Church are examples and intercessors of unwavering faith in the Lord. Today the Church celebrates all the saints and recognizes their lasting importance through the centuries.

Believers have opportunities throughout life to learn from the saints and martyrs and turn to them for intercessory prayer. The Church's liturgical calendar is rich in identifying saints and martyrs daily throughout the year.

The saints and martyrs offer attentive believers the ways to address the hunger of the soul in circumstances arising during earthly life. The saints and martyrs enlighten believers on the paths to follow for eternal life.

Adversity arises in life at various points and times. Families face challenges unexpectedly. Parents have great responsibilities requiring great wisdom in the raising of sons and daughters.

Wars and rumors of wars, violence, and evil temptations have existed in every century. The saints and martyrs show how to deal with the great struggles of life including the most severe illnesses and accidents.

Reading and studying the lives of the saints and martyrs is the way to strengthen personal faith. Celebrating the saints and martyrs on feast days in the Church is a way to express gratitude.

Believers in God's Holy Church always benefit from the saints and martyrs. The prayers and actions of the saints and martyrs through the centuries have contributed to the well-being of believers in ways not known to the human mind.

God knows the work and beliefs of the saints and martyrs. Saints and martyrs known only to God have contributed to the betterment of the world. Today is a day to be grateful to all saints and martyrs, known and unknown.

Joy is found in studying the lives of the saints and martyrs. Some saints and martyrs have been faithful to the Lord from the time of Holy Baptism until departure from this life.

Certain saints and martyrs were extreme and open sinners who radically changed their lives and repented. Repentance from some saints and martyrs came at the last moments of life and made a lasting difference.

Today is an important day in the Church and in each person's life. Today is a gift from God. Each day is a gift from God. Tomorrow is not promised to any person.

The time of life comes only once. The time of life is not repeated. Saints and martyrs have chosen to use the time of life in ways beneficial for life eternal. The Church celebrates the Sunday of All Saints to educate believers.

The Church desires for all believers to fully experience the life in Christ. The Church seeks for all to experience salvation of the soul and eternal life. Today is the day to avail the self of the nourishment found in God's saints and martyrs.

Today is the day to open the heart, mind and soul to the life-saving lessons found in the lives of the Church's saints and martyrs. The Church teaches about the lessons of the saints and martyrs throughout the year.

The iconography, liturgical hymns and writings of the Church about the saints and martyrs provides great instruction for nourishing the soul. Prayers of the Church reach out to the saints and martyrs.

Fervent believes know of the value of the saints and martyrs. Fervent believers turn to the saints and martyrs with regularity for nourishment, seeking inspiration and for intercession.

The first Sunday after Pentecost always commemorates all the saints. Thank God for the saints and martyrs known and unknown. Thank God for the opportunities to learn from and pray to the saints and martyrs.

Glory to God for the saints and martyrs. Glory to God for all things, May today's celebration of the Sunday of All Saints be of great benefit to believers everywhere.

May 29/June 11, 2023. Sunday of All Saints. Holy Virgin Martyr Theodosia. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic

WONDROUS IS GOD IN HIS SAINTS A Homily on the Sunday of All Saints

Wondrous is God in His Saints.
(Ps. 67:36)

Every time I ascend this sacred cathedra, there is much I would like to take from the Divine treasury for your edification and transmit it all to you at one time, but it's not possible. Today I want to draw your pious attention not to some particular subject of ecclesiastical or spiritual life, not to some specific dogmatic or moral teaching, or finally, to a specific person who could serve as an object of edification or veneration, but to the whole host of all the saints who have pleased God from time immemorial.

Today, the first Sunday after Pentecost of the holy Church, is dedicated to their memory.

Although the Church dedicates every day of the year to one, two, or three saints, offering the bloodless sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Lord God for them; magnifying, glorying, and blessing their eternal memory, labors, illnesses, sufferings and life in the Lord, fervently resorting to their intercession, entreating their intercession and help for all of us sinners who are still performing our earthly endeavors, it has determined to annually dedicate the first Sunday after Pentecost to the memory of all saints who have pleased God throughout the ages.

The holy Church firmly believes that there are many such saints who led their ascetic lives in solitude, in impenetrable centuries-old forests, deserts, mountains, far from the world and its vanity, where they reposed in silence, whose lives—labors, *podvigs*, days of repose, and names—remained unknown. Unable to dedicate a special day of the year to each, as the day of their repose is unknown, the holy Church chose this day for their common commemoration.

That's why in the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, celebrated only ten times a year, in one of the prayers after the Cherubic Hymn, the priest, standing before the altar of the Lord, prays that He might remember all those who labored in mountains, dens, and the abysses of the earth and remained unknown to the world.

Thus, today is the day of all saints who have pleased God throughout the ages. What a magnificent and wonderful day for all Christians! What a moving commemoration! The eyes of the earthly militant Church of Christ are turned to Heaven today, to the Church Triumphant, to the hosts of the saints who have pleased God from time immemorial, and only He knows their names!

These eyes are full of joyous and prayerful hope in those who are so solemnly glorified by millions of grace-filled Christian hearts throughout the whole world today.

Truly, *wondrous is God in His saints*. A whole host of saints: forefathers, patriarchs, prophets and apostles, holy hierarchs and martyrs, the venerable and the righteous, unmercenaries and fools for Christ, recluses and stylites of all ages who have lived righteously on earth, are now gratefully remembered by the Church, which sends up its veneration and praise to them.

Truly, *wondrous is God in His saints*. Do you think, perhaps, brothers, that the holy Church chose this day for the glorification of all the saints accidentally, for no reason?

No. It has a deep and very substantial reason for this.

We just celebrated the great day of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, the day of the Holy Trinity, and immediately after this great feast, the holy Church dedicates this day to all saints. Why?

Because all the saints of God were saved by their lives of asceticism according to their firm faith, but in no case could they receive salvation without the grace-filled help of the Holy Spirit, however strong and great their faith and however great their labors and *podvigs*. *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast* (Eph. 2:8-9), says Holy Scripture.

This is why man is incapable of fulfilling his earthly work in a manner worthy of his calling as a Christian without the grace-filled help of the Holy Spirit. Every day at Matins during the reading of the Six Psalms, the priest prays to God that His providence would guide Christians aright in life, for we must not only be saved, but also pray: “For we know not how to pray as we ought, lest Thou Thyself shouldst guide us by Thy Holy Spirit.” That means our salvation is closely connected with the work of God the Holy Spirit within us, and all the numerous saints whom the Church celebrates today were saved by the grace of God the Holy Spirit; therefore, when if not now should we commemorate all saints, when we all have the freshest memory of the great day of the Holy Trinity that has just passed, and by Whose grace all the saints we revere are saved? Truly great is the power of the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Brethren, let us learn today, on this day dedicated to all saints, to cherish and entreat grace-filled help from God the Holy Spirit, without Whom we can’t utter a good word, let alone perform some kind of pious *podvig* and gain salvation. There are none among Christians who could be saved solely by their own efforts without the grace-filled help of the Holy Spirit. A Christian may have a firm character, a strong will, and the intention to live piously and be saved, but all his efforts are in vain without the grace-filled help of the Holy Spirit.

Just remember the words of the Savior, which are still known to us now when the second millennium is already ending: *Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.*

Therefore, let us ever turn to the grace-filled help of God the Holy Spirit: “O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth... come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, save our souls, O Good One.”

On this great day, dedicated to all saints, let us pray, pious brethren, to the wonderful council of God’s chosen ones, that they might be our intercessors before God for us sinners. Although we have one Mediator for mankind—*the man Christ Jesus; Who gave Himself a ransom for all* (1 Tim. 2:5-6), God is pleased with His saints’ intercessions for us sinners. Without any doubt, let us ever fall down with fervent prayer for their help, and they will hear us and come to help us in difficult moments, heal us of our illnesses, comfort us in our sorrows and grief, and strengthen us in faintheartedness and despondency—for the prayer of the righteous availeth much.

Remembering all the saints today, may this feast not pass without our own edification. What can this feast teach us? Many useful and salvific things. Let us only recall what many saints were like for many years of their lives.

The history of the Church tells us that among the saints were many who were great sinners, only later becoming God-pleasers. Let’s take King David, for example. He was a murderer and adulterer, and later a great righteous one who left the wondrous book of the Psalter, in which he mourned his fall for all the world to hear, giving an example of how sinners of all ages should repent. And how many Christians find complete healing and consolation for their broken hearts in the Psalter!

And there are the harlots [Mary of Egypt](#), Pelagia of Palestine, and Eudoxia of Phoenicia, who later became the greatest ascetics, earthly angels. Are not these amazing examples of an extraordinary rebirth? For the greatest, well-known harlots to become chosen ones of God, to rise from the abyss of vice for the ascetic, angelic life is truly a matter worthy of amazement and reverence.

And the preeminent disciple of the Savior, Peter, a traitor and oath breaker who was then restored his apostolic dignity by tears and a threefold confession of love, gives us an example of firm faith. And there’s the cruel persecutor of the faith of Christ and His followers, Saul of Tarsus, later an ardent zealot of evangelical preaching: the Apostle Paul, who founded more Churches in various Asian and European countries than all the other Apostles. And there’s our Russian prince, the idolater and polygamist [Vladimir](#), later the baptized Christian Vasily, who enlightened the whole Russian land with the light of the Gospel teaching. And finally, we have the thief from the height of the cross, the greatest criminal and villain and then a worthy heir of Paradise. Do you see, beloved brethren, what kind of youth and early years these holy God-pleasers had? But what a power regenerated their sinful nature! How many of them, once servants of darkness, later became servants of light! *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men* (Tit. 2:11) and touched the feeble human heart, hitherto hardened, rude, unfaithful, and dark; and then, touched by grace, the human heart changed, rejecting the works of darkness and coming to love the true light.

Do not these few examples, brethren, show how powerful the effect of God’s grace is on the heart of man?

But the working of the grace of God was not so accessible to people before the death of the Son of God as after the offering of the redemptive Golgotha sacrifice.

As God's grace worked in those times, so it works now, for the Lord Jesus Christ is the same today, yesterday, and forever. Just as the greatest sinners were saved in the past, so now the Lord *will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth* (1 Tim. 2:4). Before this Sacrifice, all the righteous went to hades.

Now the grace of God cleanses and sanctifies hundreds and millions of Christian souls through the communion of the Holy Body and Blood of Christ and the reception of the other salvific Sacraments, which forgive and reconcile a man with God, purifying him and making him holy.

Therefore, you can judge, pious listeners, how fortunate we are that we live within the enclosure of the Orthodox Church, which provides us everything necessary for salvation! How fortunate you are, our children and descendants, protected from the treacherous, stormy sea of life by the saving ship—the holy Church! Should we not thank the Lord Who loves us for His great mercy shown to all who desire to be saved and live piously in Christ Jesus? But this life in Christ Jesus, the life of piety and salvation, is bound up with trials. It is a narrow and thorny path, which was traversed by all the saints we venerate today. It was through many sorrows that they entered the Heavenly Kingdom, and these sorrows are inevitable for us.

But dare I address this word of exhortation to you, brethren, who are groaning under the heavy burden of trials, that you might continue to bear this heavy burden? During these trials, the world preaches to you from all sides in the name of its philosophy to leave this path of trials, to forget the whole past and dream of a future that will know nothing of trials.

May the Lord God preserve you from such a rash and disastrous step! The world offers you an easy path full of consolation, but believe, brethren, that this path will poison your whole soul and grieving heart. It cannot bring you comfort—it will be a short-lived and false consolation, leading to destruction.

This path will lead you to a dejected, unspeakable grief; to despair. Beware of this deceptive and seductive path with all its dangers and abysses, which all the saints whom we glorify managed to avoid.

In those blows you suffer, in those constant trials, behold the wondrous love of the Savior, Who suffered all His life under the blows of superhuman trials. And when you are exhausted due to your natural human weakness, take your mind to the distant borders of the Palestinian Holy Land and stand upon the shore of that small lake where the Apostles, sailing in the middle of the night, were ready to lose heart in the horror of the heavy ordeal.

Stand reverently and wait, and your spiritual eyes will open, and you, like the Apostles, will hear the sweet voice of the Savior: *It is I; be not afraid*. (Jn. 6:20), and being so emboldened, continue upon the path of earthly trials.

I would like to talk to you forever today, magnifying every one of the saints we're commemorating today, praising their labors, *podvigs*, vigils, and difficult trials for our own edification. But there is such a multitude of them that it would take not an hour or two, not a day or two, but years to describe all their labors and illnesses by which they attained to the Heavenly Kingdom.

Let us recall just one who is especially close to my, and I think our hearts, who for thirty years faced a bottomless ocean of torments of the flesh, heart, and human spirit, whose life was a continuous struggle, full of bitterness, hatred, treason, sicknesses, dangers, and the contempt of this world.

I am talking about an ardent zealot of the Gospel of Christ, of the founder of numerous Christian communities and Churches in Asia and Europe, of the preeminent Apostle St. Paul. Look into his epistles, into this treasury of Christ's teaching, and you will see that he who had a greater right than any other to entreat God to end his cup of suffering begins all his numerous epistles with an expression of gratitude to his God and Savior. Take, brethren, his precious testament to all followers of Christ and learn patience and endurance of earthly trials from him, and the burden and yoke of Christ will not be so terrible and heavy for you. The blind world, seeing your Christian patience, will meet you with contempt, but you must remember the divine words: *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution* (2 Tim. 3:12).

And we who are faithful to the precepts of our Savior, fulfilling His commandments of love for our persecutors and enemies, and imitating the saints whom we now revere, will entreat the Lord that He might bless and touch with His life-giving grace the ungrateful, sinful human nature that crucified Him on the Cross, and turn it to the path of truth, that with one mouth and one heart all might glorify His thrice-holy name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

St. Mardarije (Uskoković)

Services this Week

- ❖ **Friday - 06.16.2023. - PARACLESIS - THE OFFICE OF SUPPLICATION TO SAINT NEGTARIOS -05:00 PM - Confession**
- ❖ **2nd Sunday after Pentecost - 06.18.2023. - 09:30 AM Divine Liturgy**

Donations June 11, 2023

Offering - \$ 1,166.00 Candles - \$181.25

Building Fund

In Memory of George Moncilovich

Lori & George Moncilovich – \$50 Gojko, Rose & Kristina Marinkovich – \$20

In Memory of Fr. William & Pani Patricia Ward

Irene Marinovich, Kathy & Ed Urban – \$100

In Memory of Fr. William & Pani Patricia Ward

Gojko, Rose & Kristina Marinkovich – \$20

Large Candles

In Memory of Linda Palmer from Rick Kondas

In Memory of Connie Bartis from Joe Bartis

In Memory of Mike & Mildred Tumbas from Milica Knepp

In Memory of Pani Patriica Ward from Dorothy Podolak

In Memory of Susan Krenisky from Dan & Dyne Tomask

The Malich Family

Please visit our St. Nicholas Web Page

<https://stnicholasjohnstown.org>

We have now added a “DONATE” button to make it easier for you to send your donations. Please take a look.

MEMORIAL SERVICES 2023

OLD ST. NICHOLAS CEMETERY - Saturday, June 17, 2023 – 9:30 AM

ST. PETKA CEMETERY - Saturday, June 17, 2023– 10:30 AM – (Begin at Bottom)

The Following is a letter from our Dear Father Rodney Torbic regarding our Anniversary Celebration:

Protopresbyter Stavrophor Dr. Rodney Torbic Box 4236

1804 Eagles Ridge Ct.
Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania 15502

May 22, 2023

Rev. Father Dragan Vukovic, Parish Priest Mr. Eli Cvijanovic, Parish Board
President St. Nicholas Parishioners
971-1001 St. Clair Road

Johnstown, Pennsylvania 15905

Dear Beloved in Christ:

Hristos Voskrese!

Thank God for the wonderful parish Slava celebration yesterday.

The St. Nicholas Choir sang inspiring responses to God's glory.

Kumovi Richard and Suzette were certainly deserving of the honor.

Congratulations to the graduates.

Joy filled the church and the hall as all your love for St. Nicholas, the Lord God and the parish church was manifested.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your loving kindness and the beautiful icon of St. Nicholas.

In Deepest Gratitude

Father Rodney

UPCOMING EVENTS

Band of Brothers – July 13–15 & 19–22, 2023



Taste of Serbia – August 12, 2023



Slavic Festival – September 15–16, 2023