

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905

Rev. Presbyter Dragan Vukovic

(814) 244-4063

The Sunday of Orthodoxy (03.05.2023.)

John 1:43-51

The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man (KJV)

Today is the Sunday of Orthodoxy, the First Sunday of Great Lent in the Holy Orthodox Church. The Church celebrates the Lord Jesus Christ taking on human flesh and being imaged in icons.

Each person is an icon before God, having been formed in the image and likeness of God. (Gen.1:26) We know from St. Matthew's Gospel that the Lord Jesus Christ is identified with each person. (Mt.25:31-46)

Great Lent is the opportunity for each person to become more like Jesus Christ. The Church increases the emphasis on repentance during Great Lent. Increased prayer, fasting and almsgiving are greatly encouraged.

The Church services, prayers and readings foster repentance and lead the believer away from sin and toward becoming more like Christ. Repentance, Confession and Communion are fundamental for the believer in Great Lent.

The Church addresses the believer's heart, mind and soul during Great Lent. The Lenten Journey is intended to transform the believer. The joyful celebration of Pascha awaits the believer at the conclusion of Great and Holy Week.

Each day during Great Lent challenges the believer to focus exclusively on Jesus Christ. Each moment sin is to be firmly rejected and repelled. Love for Jesus Christ is expected to become greater during Great Lent.

Experiencing joy in Jesus Christ is very much a part of Great Lent. While the Lenten Journey can be arduous when taken seriously, the Lord Jesus Christ is present with the believer every step of the way. (Mt. 28>20), Jn 14:18, Jn.14:27)

Participating in Great Lent is an investment in the Kingdom of God. Like all investments, great care is essential in the managing of time, efforts and resources. A great effort in prayer, fasting and almsgiving yields results beneficial to the soul.

The believer's goal is to lay up "...treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: " (Mt.6:20) Help from God is necessary throughout the Lenten Journey for beneficial results.

Evil is always present in earthly life. Perils to the soul and temptations abound wherever the believer happens to be located. Attacks on the believer to derail the believer from the journey to God's Kingdom are never-ending.

Pride can attack the believer when a great effort to honor Great Lent is put forth. Hardness of heart can sneak upon a believer in personal relationships or when dealing with difficult persons in daily life.

Tiredness can pollute the believer's will to engage in the Lenten journey. Societal attractions will attempt to draw the believer away from attending Church services.

Great discipline is necessary to faithfully follow the Lord Jesus Christ from the Baptismal font to the Kingdom of Heaven. The believer is challenged to guard all that enters the heart, mind and soul.

Today's Gospel details the calling of the Holy Apostles Philip and Nathaniel and mentions Andrew and Peter. Keeping the Holy Apostles in mind throughout life is inspiring and strengthening for the believer.

The believer cannot journey alone. The Church offers prayers, gives instruction and nourishment for the journey to God's Kingdom. The Church provides believers the Holy Mysteries, the lives of the saints and the holy martyrs

Holy icons are present in the Church to instruct, venerate and inspire believers. The Holy icons are visuals of realities. Believers benefit from the realities through prayer.

God's Holy Church is where best to experience the life in Jesus Christ. The Lenten journey is the time of the year to ensure the narrow path to the Kingdom of God is being followed in the most beneficial way.

The Church prescribes Great Lent each year for the benefit of believers. Honoring Great Lent is a totally voluntary undertaking. Faithful believers welcome the arrival of Great Lent and value the opportunity to make the Lenten journey.

Each believer is at a different level of growth in Jesus Christ. Each Lenten journey is new for the believer. The opportunity to become new in Jesus Christ is always present.

Thank God for Great Lent. Thank God for the Church's services, prayers and guidance. The lives of the saints, martyrs and holy icons facilitate the growth in Jesus Christ.

Today is the day to repent. Now is the time to increase prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Confession and Communion bring newness in Jesus Christ. The Lenten journey brings joy in Jesus Christ.

The First Sunday of Great Lent. The Sunday of Orthodoxy. St. Leo, Bishop of Catania. March 20/March 5, 2023. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.

Father Rodney Torbic

SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY

Archpriest Alexander Schmemmann

Rejoicing today in the triumph of Orthodoxy on this first Sunday of Lent, we joyfully commemorate three events: one event belonging to the past; one event to the present; and one event which still belongs to the future.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
Rejoicing today in the triumph of Orthodoxy on this first Sunday of Lent, we joyfully commemorate three events: one event belonging to the past; one event to the present; and one event which still belongs to the future.

Whenever we have any feast or joy in the Church, we Orthodox first of all look back — for in our present life we depend on what happened in the past. We depend first of all, of course, on the first and the ultimate triumph—that of Christ Himself. Our faith is rooted in that strange defeat which became the most glorious victory — the defeat of a man nailed to the cross, who rose again from the dead, who is the Lord and the Master of the world. This is the first triumph of Orthodoxy. This is the content of all our commemorations and of all our joy. This man selected and chose twelve men, gave them power to preach about that defeat and that victory, and sent them to the whole world saying preach and baptize, build up the Church, announce the Kingdom of God. And you know, my brothers and sisters, how those twelve men — very simple men indeed, simple fishermen — went out and preached. The world hated them, the Roman Empire persecuted them, and they were covered with blood. But that blood was another victory. The Church grew, the Church covered the universe with the true faith. After 300 years of the most unequal conflict between the powerful Roman Empire and the powerless Christian Church, the Roman Empire accepted Christ as Lord and Master. That was the second triumph of Orthodoxy. The Roman Empire recognized the one whom it crucified and those whom it persecuted as the bearers of truth, and their teaching as the teaching of life eternal. The Church triumphed. But then the second period of troubles began.

The following centuries saw many attempts to distort the faith, to adjust it to human needs, to fill it with human content. In each generation there were those who could not accept that message of the cross and resurrection and life eternal. They tried to change it, and those changes we call heresies. Again there were persecutions. Again, Orthodox bishops, monks and laymen defended their faith and were condemned and went into exile and were covered with blood. And after five centuries of those conflicts and persecutions and discussions, the day came which we commemorate today, the day of the final victory of Orthodoxy as the true faith over all the heresies. It happened on the first Sunday of Lent in the year 843 in Constantinople. After almost 100 years of persecution directed against the worship of the holy icons, the Church finally proclaimed that the truth had been defined, that the truth was fully in the possession of the Church. And since then all Orthodox people, wherever they live, have gathered on this Sunday to proclaim before the world their faith in that truth, their belief that their Church is truly apostolic, truly Orthodox, truly universal. This is the event of the past that we commemorate today.

But let us ask ourselves one question: Do all the triumphs of Orthodoxy, all the victories, belong to the past? Looking at the present today, we sometimes feel that our only consolation is to remember the past. Then Orthodoxy was glorious, then the Orthodox Church was powerful, then it dominated. But what about the present? My dear friends, if the triumph of Orthodoxy belongs to the past only, if there is nothing else for us to do but commemorate, to repeat to ourselves how glorious was the past, then Orthodoxy is dead. But we are here tonight to witness to the fact that Orthodoxy not only is not dead but also that it is once more and forever celebrating its own triumph — the triumph of Orthodoxy. We don't have to fight heresies among ourselves, but we have other things that once more challenge our Orthodox faith.

Today, gathered here together, Orthodox of various national backgrounds, we proclaim and we glorify first of all our unity in Orthodoxy. This is the triumph of Orthodoxy in the present. This is a most wonderful event: that all of us, with all our differences, with all our limitations, with all our weaknesses, can come together and say we belong to that Orthodox faith, that we are one in Christ and in Orthodoxy. We are living very far from the traditional centers of Orthodoxy. We call ourselves Eastern Orthodox, and yet we are here in the West, so far from those glorious cities which were centers of the Orthodox faith for centuries — Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Moscow. How far are those cities. And yet, don't we have the feeling that something of a miracle has happened, that God has sent us here, far into the West, not just in order to settle here, to increase our income, to build up a community. He also has sent us as apostles of Orthodoxy, so that this faith, which historically was limited to the East, now is becoming a faith which is truly and completely universal.

This is a thrilling moment in the history of Orthodoxy. That is why it is so important for us to be here tonight and to understand, to realize, to have that vision of what is going on. People were crossing the ocean, coming here, not thinking so much about their faith as about themselves, about their lives, about their future. They were usually poor people, they had a difficult life, and they built those little Orthodox churches everywhere in America not for other people but for themselves, just to remember their homes, to perpetuate their tradition. They didn't think of the future. And yet this is what happened: the Orthodox Church was sent here through and with those poor men. The truth itself, the fullness of the apostolic faith—all this came here, and here we are now, filling this hall and proclaiming this apostolic faith — the faith that has

strengthened the universe. And this leads us to the event which still belongs to the future.

If today we can only proclaim, if we can only pray for that coming triumph of Orthodoxy in this country and in the world, our Orthodox faith forces us to believe that it is not by accident but by divine providence that the Orthodox faith today has reached all countries, all cities, all continents of the universe. After that historic weakness of our religion, after the persecutions by the Roman Empire, by the Turks, by the godless atheists, after all the troubles that we had to go through, today a new day begins. Something new is going to happen. And it is this future of Orthodoxy that we have to rejoice about today.

We can already have a vision of that future when, in the West, a strong American Orthodox Church comes into existence. We can see how this faith, which for such a long time was an alien faith here, will become truly and completely universal in the sense that we will answer the questions of all men, and also all their questions. For if we believe in that word: “Orthodoxy,” “the true faith”; if for one moment we try to understand what it means: the true, the full Christianity, as it has been proclaimed by Christ and His disciples; if our Church has preserved for all ages the message of the apostles and of the fathers and of the saints in its purest form, then, my dear friends, here is the answer to the questions and to the problems and to the sufferings of our world. You know that our world today is so complex. It is changing all the time. And the more it changes, the more people fear, the more they are frightened by the future, the more they are preoccupied by what will happen to them. And this is where Orthodoxy must answer their problem; this is where Orthodoxy must accept the challenge of modern civilization and reveal to men of all nations, to all men in the whole world, that it has remained the force of God left in history for the transformation, for the deification, for the transfiguration of human life.

The past, the present, the future: At the beginning, one lonely man on the cross — the complete defeat. And if at that time we had been there with all our human calculations, we probably would have said: “That’s the end. Nothing else will happen.” The twelve left Him. There was no one, no one to hope. The world was in darkness. Everything seemed finished. And you know what happened three days later. Three days later He appeared. He appeared to His disciples, and their hearts were burning within them because they knew that He was the risen Lord. And since then, in every generation, there have been people with burning hearts, people who

have felt that this victory of Christ had to be carried again and again into this world, to be proclaimed in order to win new human souls and to be the transforming force in history.

Today this responsibility belongs to us. We feel that we are weak. We feel that we are limited, we are divided, we are still separated in so many groups, we have so many obstacles to overcome. But today, on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, we close our eyes for a second and we rejoice in that unity which is already here: priests of various national churches praying together, people of all backgrounds uniting in prayer for the triumph of Orthodoxy. We are already in a triumph, and may God help us keep that triumph in our hearts, so that we never give up hope in that future event in the history of orthodoxy when Orthodoxy will become the victory which eternally overcomes all the obstacles, because that victory is the victory of Christ Himself.

As we approach the most important moment of the Eucharist, the priest says, “Let us love one another, that with one mind we may confess...” What is the condition of the real triumph of Orthodoxy? What is the way leading to the real, the final, the ultimate victory of our faith? The answer comes from the Gospel. The answer comes from Christ Himself and from the whole tradition of Orthodoxy. It is love. Let us love one another, that with one mind we may confess . . . confess our faith, our Orthodoxy. Let us, from now on, feel responsible for each other. Let us understand that even if we are divided in small parishes, in small dioceses, we first of all belong to one another. We belong together, to Christ, to His Body, to the Church. Let us feel responsible for each other, and let us love one another. Let us put above everything else the interests of Orthodoxy in this country. Let us understand that each one of us today has to be the apostle of Orthodoxy in a country which is not yet Orthodox, in a society which is asking us: “What do you believe?” “What is your faith?” And let us, above everything else, keep the memory, keep the experience, keep the taste of that unity which we are anticipating tonight.

At the end of the first century — when the Church was still a very small group, a very small minority, in a society which was definitely anti-Christian when the persecution was beginning — St. John the Divine, the beloved disciple of Christ, wrote these words: “And this is the victory, our faith, this is the victory.” There was no victory at that time, and yet he knew that in his faith he had the victory that can be applied to us today. We have the promise of Christ, that the gates of hell will never prevail against the Church. We have the promise of Christ that if we have faith, all things are possible. We have the promise of the Holy Spirit, that He will fill all that which is

weak, that He will help us at the moment when we need help. In other words, we have all the possibilities, we have everything that we need, and therefore the victory is ours. It is not a human victory which can be defined in terms of money, of human success, of human achievements. What we are preaching tonight, what we are proclaiming tonight, what we are praying for tonight, is the victory of Christ in me, in us, in all of you in the Orthodox Church in America. And that victory of Christ in us, of the one who for us was crucified and rose again from the dead, that victory will be the victory of His Church.

Today is the triumph of Orthodoxy, and a hymn sung today states solemnly and simply: “This is the Apostolic faith, this is the Orthodox faith, this is the faith of the Fathers, this is the faith that is the foundation of the world.” My dear brothers and sisters, this is also our own faith. We are chosen. We are elected. We are the happy few that can say of our faith, “apostolic,” “universal,” “the faith of our fathers,” “Orthodoxy,” “the truth.” Having this wonderful treasure, let us preserve it, let us keep it, and let us also use it in such a way that this treasure becomes the victory of Christ in us and in His Church. Amen.

Archpriest Alexander Schmemmann
The Orthodox Church in America

Services this Week

- ❖ **THURSDAY (March 9th) 1st and 2nd Finding of the Honourable Head of St John the Baptist- 09:30 AM - Divine Liturgy**
- ❖ **SATURDAY (March 11th) - PARALYSIS - THE OFFICE OF SUPPLICATION TO SAINT NECTARIOS -05:00 PM – Confession**
- ❖ **2nd SUNDAY OF THE LENT (March 12th)- St Gregory Palamas - 10:00 AM - Divine Liturgy**

Donations February 26, 2023

Offering - \$ 1,078.00 Candles - \$101.00

Dues - \$50

Building Fund Donations

In Memory of Blaine Gjurich from Susanna Gjurich - \$160

Large Candles

In Memory of Charles Bulich from Olga Bulich

In Memory of Mildred Tumbas from Milica Knepp

In Memory of Vinny Czubak from Jeannette Czubak

In Memory of Mike & Mildred Tumbas from Kathleen McDowell

In Memory of Damenja & Lazo Gjurich from Diane and Dan Tomak

In Memory of Amelia & Joseph Kondas from Richard Kondas

Fish Fries have started and run through

Friday, April 7, 2023

Please see Donna or Suzette for the work schedule!

Don't forget to order your Easter Flowers!

The church is selling t-shirts and sweatshirts. Forms are available in the candle room (or see Carol McAllister). Make checks payable to American Eagle Printing. Deadline is Sunday, March 5, 2023. Return orders and payment to Carole McAllister. There will be no extra orders taken.

CHOIR NEWS

The choir will be selling homemade posno soup and pogaca throughout Lent every Sunday for \$10 (Quart of soup & a pogaca) Bowls of soup are also available following Divine Liturgy for a donation.

KOLO NEWS

We will be making nutrolls this Saturday, March 11th at 9:00 AM Your willing hands are needed!!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, March 5th – Sunday of Orthodoxy
Service to be held at St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Church
111 Alberta Ave – Johnstown, PA 15905 – 5:00 PM

Fish Fries – Every Friday Until April 7th

Sunday, March 26th – Lenten Vespers
We will be hosting vespers beginning at 5:00 PM

Sunday, April 9th – Palm Sunday

Sunday, April 16th – PASCHA!

Polka-Fest June 2-4, 2023

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

Taste of Serbia – August 12, 2023

Slavic Fest – September 15-16, 2023



FLOWERS FOR PASCHA



Provided by SEADS Garden Center

No.		Price	Total \$
	4 ½" - Bluebells	\$5.50	
	4 ½" - Mini Daffodils	\$6.50	
	5" - Gerber Daisy	\$7	
	6 ½" - Daffodils	\$12	
	6 ½ " - Hyacinths	\$12	
	6 ½ " - Tulips	\$12	
	6 ½ " - Martha Washington Geraniums	\$13	
	6 ½ " - Mums	\$14	
	6 ½ " - White Lily Single Stem	\$15	
	8 ½ " - Lily Double	\$28	
	8 ½ " - Hydrangea	\$24	
		Total	
		=	

Name: _____

In Memory of: _____

Paid _____ Check # _____

Please return to Suzette Gardenhour no later than Sunday, March 19th. If you are out of town - payment and completed form can be mailed to:

St. Nicholas Church
1001 St. Clair Road, Johnstown PA 15905

Or contact Suzette at 814-421-1276 or shliva16@gmail.com