

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905

Rev. Presbyter Dragan Vukovic

(814) 244-4063

The Second Sunday of Great Lent (03.12.2023.)

Mark 2:1-12

And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them. And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. But there was certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy, I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion. **(KJV)**

St. Gregory Palamas

John 10:9-16

I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. (KJV)

Great Lent is an opportunity to increase investments in the Kingdom of God. Increased prayer, fasting and almsgiving are wise and profitable investments in the Kingdom of God during Great Lent.

Prayer, fasting and almsgiving draw the believer closer to God. Prayer and fasting facilitate greater understanding of personal sin and spur the believer to repentance.

Repentance is consistently emphasized during Great Lent. St. Mark's Gospel for today verifies Jesus' ability to forgive sins. Jesus revealed His ability to forgive sins and His ability to enable the man with palsy to walk.

During Great Lent the Lord Jesus Christ wants believers to: "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal (Mt.6:20)

Repentance and forgiveness of sins through Confession in God's Holy Church provides the believer with greater freedom. The weight of sin restraining the believer is lifted through confession and forgiveness.

The believer's heart experiences wholeness when sins are forgiven. Healing occurs when the believer partakes of the Precious Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Great Lent is a time for joy in the Church. Receiving forgiveness of sins from Jesus Christ restores joy in the life of the believer. Forgiveness of sins brings joy likened to the joy occurring at the time of Holy Baptism.

The believer experiences newness in Christ through forgiveness of sins. The man in the Gospel became new in Christ when his sins were forgiven and Jesus gave him the ability to walk.

Great Lent is a time of welcome in God's Holy Church. Persons seeking newness and renewal in life find newness in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is ever-present. Newness and renewal in Christ come through repentance.

Today's Gospel of St. John describes Jesus as the Good Shepherd. Indeed, Jesus is the Good Shepherd. Jesus knows His sheep. Each believer is to heed the way of the Good Shepherd.

Great Lent instructs and encourages believers to follow the way of Jesus Christ. Joy occurs when believers adhere to the practices of Great Lent including increased prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Repentance is to take place each year during Great Lent. Repentance is purely voluntary. The rejection of sin in life and the commitment to follow Christ are firmly expected during Great Lent.

The content of the Divine services during Great Lent fosters repentance. The Church guides believers in repentance. Christ's forgiveness and love for each believer heals hurting hearts and cleanses guilty consciences.

Jesus Christ gives believers mobility through the forgiveness of sins. Sin restricts the believer. The Gospel states: "If the Son therefore shall make **you free**, ye shall be **free** indeed." (Jn/ 8:36)

Thank God for Great Lent taking place in the Church. Thank God for the ability to repent. Let us seek joy in the loving and forgiving Jesus Christ through repentance of sins.

The Second Sunday of Great Lent. St. Gregory Palamas. Venerable Procopius Decapolis, Venerable Talaleus. February 27/March 12, 2023. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic

SECOND SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT. ST. GREGORY PALAMAS. GOD IS LIGHT

St. Gregory Palamas, one of the pillars of Orthodoxy, was born in 1296, probably to a noble Anatolian family in Constantinople. He and his brother went to Mount

Athos in around 1318, and lived in Vatopedi and Esphigmenou Monasteries. Gregory also successfully persuaded his widowed mother, brothers and sisters to become take up the monastic life. With the encroachment of the Turks, he was forced to flee to Thessalonica, being ordained a priest there in 1326. Afterward, he took up the eremitic life at a mountain near Beroea, and eventually returned to Athos in 1331.

St. Gregory lived in very difficult times, for many heresies were creeping into the Church, and the Ottoman Empire was ever expanding, taking over Byzantine lands. In the early 1300's he wrote on the nature of the Holy Spirit, showing the errors of the Latin view while living at the hermitage of Saint Savvas on Mount Athos. He became known as a preeminent theologian early in life, due to his many writings and for his beliefs on hesychasm.

St. Gregory is known as one of the great defenders of Orthodoxy and is most well known for his defense against the heresies of Barlaam. Gregory was asked to defend the monastic ways of the Holy Mountain from the charges of Barlaam, a monk of Calabria. Barlaam, influenced by the Latin church, believed that philosophy and human thought were the way to know God. He stated the unknowability of God in an extreme form, having been influenced by a reductionist interpretation of the writings of St. Dionysius the Areopagite. Orthodoxy had always known, through the wisdom of the Holy Fathers, that prayer and fasting are the key to knowing God. Barlaam believed that the monks of Mount Athos were wasting their time in their prayers and fasting when they should be studying the great philosophers of mankind.

St. Gregory said that the Holy Fathers and the prophets had a greater knowledge of God, because they had actually seen or heard God Himself. He taught that modern ideas about human thought and reason had no place in the Church. When asked how it is possible to have knowledge of the unknowable God, he showed the difference between knowing God in His essence or person and knowing God in his energies or being. It became clear that one could not find God in the logic of this world. He taught the Orthodox knowledge that it remains impossible to know God in His essence or person. However, with sufficient prayer and fasting and turning oneself over to God, through purification of one's soul, anyone can come to know Him in His energies and being.

The Barlaam heresies spanned many years and two phases. Due to acts of political power struggles in Constantinople, Gregory was imprisoned to prevent him from speaking the Truth. As the political struggle increased, his accusers multiplied

because he would not yield to their heresies, and he opposed the new emperor due to the emperor's acceptance of the heresies.

When St. Gregory criticized Barlaam's rationalism, Barlaam replied with a vicious attack on the hesychastic life of the Athonite monks. Gregory's rebuttal was the Triads in defense of the Holy Hesychasts (c. 1338), a brilliant work whose teaching was affirmed by his fellow Hagiorites, who met together in a council during 1340-1341, issuing a statement known as the Hagioritic Tome, which supported Gregory's theology.

A synod held in Constantinople in 1341 also supported St. Gregory's views, condemning Barlaam. Later, in 1344, the opponents of hesychasm secured a condemnation for heresy and excommunication for Gregory, but the saint's theology was reaffirmed at two further synods held in Constantinople in 1347 and 1351. Collectively, these three synods in Constantinople are held by many Orthodox Christians and several prominent theologians to constitute the Ninth Ecumenical Council. Between the latter two synods, Gregory composed the One Hundred and Fifty Chapters, a concise exposition of his theology.

In 1347, he was consecrated Archbishop of Thessalonica, but the political climate made it impossible for him to take up his see until 1350. During a voyage to the Imperial capital, he was captured by the Turks and held in captivity for over a year. He reposed in 1359, and was glorified by the Orthodox Church in 1368.

The second Sunday of the Great Fast is called the Sunday of Gregory Palamas in all Orthodox Churches. A full service was composed for his feast day, November 14/27, by the Patriarch Philotheus in 1368. St. Gregory's holy relics are kept in the Cathedral of Thessalonica.

God is Light

On the Second Sunday of Great Lent, we celebrate the memory of St. Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica. On this day, the Holy Church speaks to us about the mystery of light, which we must come to know, if we want to behold the Resurrection of Christ. St. Gregory of Thessalonica and the theological arguments of the fourteenth century connected with his name taught that the light of the Transfiguration is uncreated light. Refuting the heresies of the western theologians, this teaching reminded Christians of the words of the Scripture stating that God is light. By confessing God the Father and God the Son, Light from Light, true God of

true God, we believe that God the Light created another light—the one described in the book of Genesis: “God said, let there be light.”

These dogmatic questions were not abstract or removed from the life of the Church. They should not be removed from us, either. It is wrong to look at them as simple theological or scholarly discussions that have no relation to our life. That would mean only one thing: that the light about which God speaks to us—the light in which there is no darkness—will remain unseen to us, and we do not regret or repent that we remain in darkness. All the problems in the Church are, in the final analysis, bound up with the fact that certain mysteries of faith become abstract. They cease to be living, essential questions that decide our fate; and we lose the depth of faith, and the fullness of our Christian calling, which we should be realizing in the Church.

Archpriest Alexander Shargunov

Services this Week

- ❖ **SATURDAY (March 18th) - PARALYSIS - THE OFFICE OF SUPPLICATION TO SAINT NEKTARIOS - 05:00 PM - Confession**
- ❖ **3rd SUNDAY OF THE LENT (March 19th) - Veneration of the Cross - 10:00 AM - Divine Liturgy**

Donations March 5, 2023

Offering - \$ 1,814.00 Candles - \$67.00
Dues - \$100

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!

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!!

You may place your order on the form located in the church hall (by the red box) or by talking to Donna Zimmerman

UPCOMING EVENTS

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