

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905

Rev. Presbyter Dragan Vukovic

(814) 244-4063

Forgiveness Sunday (02.26.2023)

Matthew 6:14-21

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. **(KJV)**

We have come to Forgiveness Sunday in God's Holy Church. The beginning of Great Lent is at hand. Now is the time to seek forgiveness from God and from each other. Now is the time for complete forgiveness.

Forgiveness has a primary place in the Christian life. Healthy relationships depend on believers forgiving each other. Husbands and wives in healthy marriages will forgive readily.

Parents are expected to love and forgive their sons and daughters. Our forgiveness in daily personal relationships affects the forgiveness we hope to receive from God. The Lord's Prayer is very clear on this.

The Church provides Confession for the believer to repent of sinful behavior and to seek God's forgiveness. The relationships we have in daily life depend upon our willingness to forgive in order for the relationships to blossom and mature.

If we are to grow in Jesus Christ throughout life, we learn to repent and seek forgiveness in order to begin anew. Forgiveness in personal relationships enables the relationships to be renewed and strengthened.

When we are recipients of hurtful actions in word or deed, we need to practice the mercy, goodness and example of Jesus Christ to be forgiving. Too often we have been hurtful to Christ in the ways we have thought, spoken or acted.

Great Lent is a time for new beginnings in Christ. We are to focus on care of the soul in Great Lent. The Gospel encourages believers to lay up treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not consume and thieves cannot steal. (Mt.6:20)

The opportunity to make a joyful new beginning exists at this time in God's Holy Church. Believers are strongly encouraged to sharpen their focus on the life and relationship with Jesus Christ.

Increased fasting and prayer are expected. The Church offers specific Lenten services to strengthen and enrich the believer in the Lenten journey. When the believer falls down in sin, he or she is to repent and begin again anew in Christ.

Every believer is at a different state of growth in Christ. Each Great Lent is new for the believer. The life in Jesus Christ is the opportunity for continual renewal and growth.

Experiencing Jesus Christ is unlimited throughout life. The life in Christ extends beyond departure from earthly life. Entry into God's Kingdom and Eternal life are the goals established from the time of Holy Baptism.

Forgiveness from God is an act and expression of the deepest Divine love. Forgiveness frees the believer from the burden of sin that restricts growth in Christ. Jesus Christ forgives and sets the example for believers to be forgiving of others.

The life in Christ offers peace, love and joy. Living in Christ-pleasing ways is necessary to experience the peace, love and joy. Great Lent enables believers to consciously live anew in Christ.

Great Lent is an intense period to focus on Jesus Christ. The Church gathers abundant resources and applies them for the benefit of believers during Great Lent. The Lenten journey is well-structured and documented for the attentive believer.

As believers grow in Christ, awareness increases about the value and benefits of Great Lent. Serious believers welcome the arrival of Great Lent. Love for Christ increases in Great Lent as believers actively participate.

The relationship with Jesus Christ becomes stronger during Great Lent for the active participant. Great Lent is a time to invest heavily in the Kingdom of God. The Church offers instruction on how to make the soundest investments.

Holy Week and Pascha may seem a long way off at the beginning point of the Lenten journey. When treated seriously, a certain tiredness will be felt as the Lenten journey continues.

The Lord is ever-present to nourish the believer in the journey to Holy Week and Pascha. The Lord Jesus Christ established the example of endurance when He experienced arrest, trial, and suffering on the Cross.

Christian saints and martyrs through the centuries are witnesses to the value of following Christ. God's Holy Church draws from the rich history through the ages to maintain the period of Great Lent as part of the Liturgical year.

This is a time to look deep within the heart, mind and soul and seek forgiveness from God. Today is the day to consider the relationships in daily life and initiate forgiveness.

God's forgiveness verifies love for each person. Each person has the opportunity to demonstrate love for others in daily life through forgiveness. God's Holy Church is where to experience Christ's love and to practice love for others.

**Forgiveness Sunday. Gheesefare Sunday. Venerable Simeon the Myrrgusher (Stephen Nemanja) February 12.26, 2023. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.
Father Rodney Torbic**

HOW TO GOPE WITH BAD THOUGHTS AND FAILURES IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

Our spiritual state is rarely even, calm, and serene for any long period of time. Circumstances, thoughts, even the weather—all of this can easily darken the soul or, conversely, unexpectedly gladden it. How can we lead a spiritual life when man is so volatile? [Metropolitan Athanasios of Limassol](#) of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus spoke about this at a meeting with young people.

All the [thoughts](#) that affect the state of the soul come either from God (good changes), or from the devil (bad changes), or from a man himself (both good and bad). We know the good thoughts by their fruits. If we become more humble, more prayerful,

meeker, more patient, warmer, nobler, more sensitive, this is the result of a good thought. But what should we do if not all of our changes are good?

A bad thought prevents us from thinking logically

A man himself also influences his spiritual world, producing good or bad thoughts depending on whether his internal “mechanism” is attuned correctly or not.

I’ll give you an example from the Gospels. When the harlot came into the house and anointed Christ’s feet with myrrh, many of the Disciples were indignant, especially Judas, who was a lover of money. He began to say: “Why is this woman wasting such expensive myrrh in vain to anoint the feet of Christ?” The bad thought was that she was wasting the myrrh. But further on in the Gospel it says that he wasn’t concerned for the poor, but was simply avaricious and wanted to get money for this myrrh, put it in the money bag, and then use it for his own purposes.

People often ask me why we have so much luxury in the Church? But show me what we have that’s luxurious? If you want, cut yourself a piece of a candle stand and take it home, sell it, and get the money. Can’t you see that it’s bronze? You see, a bad thought doesn’t even let a man think logically.

Or someone gives [alms](#). He gives five euros and starts thinking: “Maybe it’s not necessary? What’s five euros? Will a beggar get rich from this? It’s probably a scam.” Perhaps that’s so, but he immediately turns on a bad thought that inclines the soul towards evil, making it stubborn and opposed to grace.

It happens that bad thoughts come from demons. However, there are also purely physiological changes. You think differently in the morning, day, evening, and after midnight; differently in the dark and in the light; when it’s a dreary day, when the south wind blows, or when it’s sunny. Many note that people are in a better mood on sunny days, and when you’re around happy and grateful people, you rejoice with them.

What to do if the soul is clouded?

Why did the Holy Fathers study all of this? To know when there’s a true spiritual battle going on, and when it’s possible to ignore internal changes. They tell us one main thing: We have to learn how to manage what happens to us.

If my soul is clouded, it's important not to allow myself to become downcast, not to start talking harshly, offensively, and nervously, or to turn away and not accept another person.

Whatever changes occur in our soul, we must maintain the routine of the spiritual life and be even in our communication with other people.

Man is created according to the image of God, "very good," and called to become like our Father. And the rest of what happens to us—bad behavior, nerves, words, nastiness—they aren't our true self.

What does it take to change for the better?

It's important to learn to behave in such a way as to not hurt other people, not to speak out disparagingly, not to be lazy, to maintain your way of life, no matter what happens. Precision in fulfilling our prayer rule helps with this.

Let's not say on Sunday morning: "I'm not in the mood for some reason. I'm not going to church today." Go, whether you're in the mood or not. Even if our mind starts reasoning: "Where are you going? You're just going to fall asleep there. You're full of thoughts, bad thoughts inside of yourself. Don't go!"—we shouldn't step back and change our rule because of a change in our disposition.

How to deal with bad thoughts, and should we scold ourselves for them?

It's better to immediately cut off bad thoughts and not engage with them. It's like a bag of trash: It's better to throw it out right away so you don't get soiled.

As for the question of whether we need to reproach ourselves for bad thoughts—we need discernment. If you can endure it, then good—the Holy Fathers did it. But for the young, it's better to maintain yourself in love and gratitude. And we need good discernment, a good spiritual father, otherwise it's easy to fall into despair.

If we're oversensitive and we condemn and berate ourselves, then we can start to despond or despair. Since in our time we can easily despair, it's better not to bring ourselves to this.

The gift of tearful repentance, which the saints had, comes from spiritual labor, not from self-reproach. Tears of repentance are the first stage—then they become tears of love!

Spiritual work and self-reproach are important, but it's the healthy man who can do it. But if a man is spiritually and mentally weak, has a weak nervous system, then he won't be able to stand it—he'll become despondent and hopeless.

Therefore, Christ told St. Silouan: "Keep your mind in hell and despair not!"

Metropolitan Athanasios of Limassol
Translation by Jesse Dominick

Services this Week

- ❖ **THURSDAY (March 2nd)** Great-martyr Theodore the Tyro - 09:30 AM - Divine Liturgy
- ❖ **SATURDAY (March 4th)** – Holy Ap. Archippus, Philemon Apphia; Theodore of Komogovina – Theodore's Saturday - 09:30 AM - Divine Liturgy
- ❖ **SUNDAY (March 5th)** - 1st Sunday of Lent- of Orthodoxy- 10:00 AM - Divine Liturgy

Donations February 19, 2023

Offering - \$ 708.00 Candles - \$33.00
Dues - \$50 Donations - \$194.50

Building Fund Donations

In Memory of Andrew Grisin from Cameron Palmer - \$90

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!
Huge shout-out to our wonderful parish workers on a VERY
successful first Fish Fry! It takes each and every one of us,
working as a team to succeed.

We received many compliments on how efficient, polite and
helpful our younger helpers were. Thank you, Sam Ribaric,
Quinn Komar, Jonathan Gleason, Nikki Ribaric, Meara
Gleason, Madison Zahurak and Millie Ribaric, for making us
proud! Mnogaja Ljeta! May God Grant you many years!

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.

Join us today, Cheesefare Sunday (Forgiveness Sunday, for a Luncheon following Divine Liturgy.

At the onset of Great Lent and a period of intense fasting, this Sunday reminds us of our need for God’s forgiveness and guides our hearts, minds, and spiritual efforts on returning to Him in repentance.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, February 26, 2023 – Cheesefare Sunday Luncheon

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

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