

# **Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church**

*971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905*

**Rev. Presbyter Dragan Vukovic**

**(814) 244-4063**

## **The Sunday of the Prodigal Son (02.12.2023.)**

### **Luke 15:11-32**

And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father

hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found. **(KJV)**

God's Holy Church is moving with certainty toward the beginning of Great Lent. The Sunday of the Prodigal Son reminds each of us that God desires our return to His welcoming embrace.

Regardless of how far we have departed from God's desired path, God awaits and welcomes our return. We may have departed from God's ways intentionally. We may have moved away without thinking clearly.

Returning to God's loving embrace is encouraged in the present Gospel. Jesus said: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."(Lk. 5:32) The father welcomed the returning son with great joy.

St. Luke's Gospel is very clear: "...**joy** shall be **in heaven** over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. :(Lk.15:7)

Persons hesitant and reluctant to return to God can draw courage from the present Gospel. God is good, merciful and forgiving. God's love heals and restores wholeness to the person wanting to put sin behind and to begin anew in Christ.

The Church is where new beginnings in Jesus Christ begin and continue. The Church welcomes believers desiring to begin anew. The Church nourishes the believer in the renewed journey in Christ.

Every believer to some degree departs from the path to God's Kingdom begun at Holy Baptism. Repentance and return enable renewal and new beginnings. The Sunday of the Prodigal Son reassures believers that returning to God is beneficial.

The Church stands in contrast to the world. The Church is a foretaste of God's Eternal Kingdom. Perils exist abundantly in the world. Believers too often fall prey to the perils of the world.

The Prodigal Son came to himself and returned to his father. The returning son experienced the embracing love of the father. The Church calls all believers to take the steps to return today on this Sunday of the Prodigal Son.

Great Lent is on the horizon in God's Holy Church. The time for full unity with the Lord God is at hand. Putting away life in sin is to begin now and continue. God is present to welcome the believer in the effort of renewal.

The heart, mind and soul benefit when the believer returns from the far country. Family life, work and community life improve when the believer returns to the Lord God.

God strengthens, nourishes and leads the believer to the eternal kingdom when the believer rejects the way of sin in the far country. Trust in God is well-placed. Trust in God yields desirable results.

The hunger in the soul seeks the satisfying nourishment found only in the Lord God. The Prodigal Son found the nourishment he sought when he returned to his father.

God gives each person life. It is fitting the person acknowledges God as the Source of Life and turns to God for life and life eternal. The Church is ever-present for the attentive believer to follow the path to the Heavenly Kingdom.

The Prodigal Son knew the home where his life originated. His life was renewed when he returned home. God's doors are always open for returning sons and daughters seeking renewal.

The love of God is inexhaustible. God's welcoming arms are all encompassing. Every Prodigal Son and Daughter is welcome. In God's House there is always room for everyone choosing to sincerely enter.

Thank God for the Church setting forth this Sunday of the Prodigal Son each year. Thank God for the Heavenly Father welcoming Prodigal Sons and Daughters. Thank God for the opportunity to be renewed in Christ.

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**The Sunday of the Prodigal Son. Synaxis of the Three Holy Hierarchs. January 30/February 12, 2023. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic**

## The Prologue from Ochrid St Nicholai of Zhicha

### **1. SAINT SIMEON THE GOD-RECEIVER**

During the reign of the Egyptian Emperor Ptolemy Philadelphus, Simeon was chosen as one of the famous Seventy, to whom was entrusted the task of translating the Bible from Hebrew into Greek [The Septuagint]. Simeon was performing his task conscientiously, but in the process of translating the book of the Prophet Isaiah

he came upon the prophecy: *Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son* (Isaiah 7:14). He became confused and took a knife to remove the word "virgin" and replace it with the words "young woman," and thus to translate it into Greek. At that moment, however, an angel of God appeared to Simeon and restrained him from his intention, explaining to him that the prophecy is true, that it was correctly written. The messenger of God also said that Simeon would become convinced of it personally, for, according to the will of God, he would not die until he saw the Messiah born of the Virgin. The righteous Simeon rejoiced to hear such a voice from heaven, left the prophecy unchanged and thanked God, Who made him worthy to live and see the Promised One. When the young Child Jesus was presented in the Temple in Jerusalem by the Virgin Mary, the Spirit of God revealed this to Simeon, who was very old and "as white as a swan." Simeon quickly entered the Temple and there recognized both the Virgin and the young Child by the light that shone around their heads like a halo. The joyful Simeon took Christ into his hands and prayed to God to release him from this life: *Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation* (Luke 2:29-30). Anna the Prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, was also there; she too recognized the Messiah, and she proclaimed Him to the people. At that time Anna was eighty-four years old. St. Simeon died shortly thereafter. This righteous Elder Simeon is considered to be a protector of young children.

## **2. THE HOLY MARTYRS ADRIAN AND EUBULUS**

These two holy souls came from their home in Baneas in Caesarea of Cappadocia to visit, console and encourage the Christians imprisoned in the dungeon. However, they too were arrested and sentenced to death. Adrian was beheaded, and Eubulus was thrown to wild beasts, in the year 309 A.D. Thus, not grieving over this life, they honorably and joyfully entered into life eternal.

### **HYMN OF PRAISE**

#### **A PRAYER FOR A SMALL CHILD**

O Powerful Lord, have mercy and save--

Do not extinguish this small flame with death!

This child is like the small flame of a candle,

And the winds of the world are terrible, even to the stars.

A weak fire is extinguished beneath the ashes,

As can be a human soul beneath Thy hand.  
When the water rises and reaches the throat,  
And the flame wanes and the fire becomes dampened,  
O Lord, save, have mercy, and console us!  
Thus, David the Prophet prayed to Thee.  
Even though he was a great torch,  
At the foot of heaven he was a weak child,  
And from malicious desires he wavered in pain,  
And from malicious thoughts his head began to ache;  
Every wind of malice weakened him.

He would have been extinguished quickly from the turbulent winds,  
If Thou hadst not saved him. O speedy Helper.  
O Lord, have mercy and save us even now,  
And do not extinguish this small flame with death!  
Through the prayers, O God, of Thy beloved elder,  
Holy St. Simeon, the wondrous God-receiver.

## REFLECTION

How great a glory in heaven was attained by St. Simeon the God-receiver, who held the Savior of the world in his hands! The following incident, as related in the life of St. Peter the Athonite (June 12), clearly shows this. As a commander during a battle, Peter was enslaved, chained and cast into prison in the town of Samara on the shores of the Euphrates River. Languishing in prison for a long time, Peter begged St. Nicholas with tears to pray to God for him, that he might be freed from prison, vowing that he would completely dedicate himself to God. St. Nicholas appeared to him in a dream, saying that although he [St. Nicholas] had prayed to God for him, God was delaying his deliverance because he [Peter] had earlier made a similar vow to God and had not keep it. And St. Nicholas further counseled Peter that he ought to pray to St. Simeon the God-receiver, "who is very mighty before God and stands close to the throne of God, together with the All-holy Virgin and St.

John the Forerunner." Peter heeded the counsel of St. Nicholas and proceeded to pray to St. Simeon. Again St. Nicholas appeared to him with St. Simeon, not in a dream but in reality. Peter saw Simeon, glorious in appearance with light shining from his countenance. He was attired in the vestments of an Old Testament priest and bore a golden staff in his hand. St. Simeon said to Peter: "Do you want to fulfill the vow and become a monk?" To this Peter replied: "Yes, master, with God's help." Simeon then touched Peter's chains with his staff, and the chains melted like wax. Opening the doors of the dungeon, the saint led Peter from prison.

## CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the Lord Jesus as the Cornerstone:

1. As the Cornerstone in building personal character;
2. As the Cornerstone in building the family and the nation;
3. As the Cornerstone of every good-intentioned social transformation and inspiration of mankind.

## HOMILY

**on the Spirit of God, Who speaks through the Spirit-bearers**

"Take no thought how or what ye shall speak ... For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you" (Matthew 10:19-20).

These are the words of Him Who knows all and Who declared to the world knowledge which was unknown before He visited mankind. If someone is filled with the Spirit of God, he does not speak from the spirit of man. Instead, the Spirit of God speaks from him and through him. He is only an instrument or a lyre of God's Spirit, through which God the Spirit speaks. When that kind of man speaks, he speaks infallibly and no one can find falsehood in his speech except those who, because of the perversion of their minds, consider truth as falsehood. How men speak when filled with the Spirit of God was clearly shown by the example of the prophets, and more clearly by the example of the apostles. So miraculous and unbelievable did the words of the apostles seem to strangers--that is, to those who bereft of the Spirit of God in themselves and who were only able to speak of the earth--that they considered the apostles to be intoxicated. In reality, all those people who were the first to speak about the hidden miracles of this physical world--the power of steam, magnetism, electricity, wireless telegraphy, and conversation at a distance--appeared intoxicated and foolish to the ignorant. How can spiritual men, when led by the Spirit of God and speaking about countless hidden mysteries of the

spiritual kingdom, not seem intoxicated and foolish? Whoever humbles himself before God, him God makes powerful. The Spirit of God settles in a contrite heart and from there speaks through the mouth of man. This is confirmed not only by the prophets and apostles, but also by God's innumerable sons and daughters. O Good Lord, do not refuse us Thy Holy Spirit. To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

## Services this Week

- ❖ **TUESDAY (February 14<sup>th</sup>) Holy Martyr Tryphon (Forefeast of the Meeting of our Lord) 09:30 AM - Divine Liturgy**
- ❖ **WEDNESDAY (February 15<sup>th</sup>) The Meeting of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ in the Temple 09:30 AM - Divine Liturgy**
- ❖ **SUNDAY (February 19<sup>th</sup>) - Meatfare Sunday - SAINT BUGOLUS, BISHOP OF SMYRNA, THE HOLY FEMALE MARTYR FAUSTA, THE HOLY FEMALE MARTYR DOROTHEA, SAINT PHOTIUS, PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE, THE VENERABLE SAINTS BARSANUPIUS AND JOHN, THE HOLY FEMALE MARTYRS MARTHA AND MARY, AND THEIR BROTHER LYGARION 10:00 AM - Divine Liturgy**

**Donations February 5, 2023**

Offering - \$ 1,393.00 Candles - \$66.00 Dues - \$150

**Building Fund Donations**

In Memory of Mildred Tumbas from Milica Knepp - \$25

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**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

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**Fish Fries begin Friday, February 24, 2023  
And run through Friday, April 7, 2023  
Please see Donna or Suzette to secure your  
work schedule!**

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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.

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**Don't forget to order your Easter Flowers!**



# **UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Sunday, February 19, 2023 – Kolo Meeting**

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

**Sunday, March 26<sup>th</sup> – Lenten Vespers  
We will be hosting vespers beginning at 5:00 PM**

**Sunday, April 9<sup>th</sup> – Palm Sunday**

**Sunday, April 16<sup>th</sup> – PASCHA!**



# 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 19<sup>th</sup>. 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