

**Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church**  
*971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905*  
**Rev. Presbyter Dragan Vukovic**  
**(814) 244-4063**

**The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost**  
**(09.22.2024.)**

**(Mt. 21:33-42)**

Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? **(KJV)**

**Sunday before the Exaltation of the Precious Cross**  
**John 3:13-17**

And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth

in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. **(KJV)**

Yesterday God's Holy Church celebrated the Nativity of the Mother of God. This celebration of Mary's Nativity continues in the Church until Wednesday. Believers benefit by reflecting deeply on the birth of the Mother of God.

The birth of the Mother of God set in motion the events leading to the birth of the Christ Child. Believers enrich their lives when considering how highly honored the Mother of God is to be chosen from all women of all centuries.

The Virgin Mary was honored to give birth to the Christ-Child. She has a lasting presence in God's Holy Church. The Mother of God is ever accessible to believers in prayer. Miracles continue to be attributed to her.

There is a place for the Mother of God in the hearts and minds of all believers. Being conscious of the Mother of God enables believers to focus on her purity and the importance of purity in daily life.

The Mother of God is a fervent intercessor before the Lord for believers turning to her in prayer. Wise believers cherish their relationship with the Mother of God and keep her firmly in mind.

Today also is the Sunday before the Elevation of the Precious Life-giving Cross. The Feast of the Elevation of the Precious Life-giving Cross will be celebrated this coming Friday.

The Lord Jesus Christ's love for each person of each century was verified and validated when He voluntarily ascended the Cross. St. John's Gospel for today states believers in Jesus Christ experience eternal life.

God's Kingdom and eternal life are goals for believers established at Holy Baptism. Every thought and action in daily life are to be measured, weighed and considered as they apply to the goals of seeking the Kingdom and eternal life.

The world is filled with peril and confusion. Distortions, lies and violence abound. The threat of war exists in several areas. Jesus Christ provides vision, certainty and direction in the midst of today's uncertain world.

Jesus Christ offers hope. He offers eternal life. Believers are challenged to be resolute in focusing on Christ and following the narrow path to the Kingdom. Firmness of mind and intentions are necessary to navigate life's daily perils.

The Church brings the Gospel to believers throughout the year. The Gospel nourishes and strengthen believers in the journey from the baptismal font to the Kingdom of God. Each person chooses the degree to take the Gospel to heart.

The length of life's journey is uncertain. Jesus Christ provides certainty throughout life for the focused heart, mind and soul. Jesus Christ defeated death. Jesus Christ is the Light in the darkest moments of life.

Mary, the Mother of God, had the immeasurable joy to be the Birth-giver of the Christ-Child. She experienced the pain of seeing Jesus on the Cross, She was blessed to know the joy of Jesus' defeat of death and His Resurrection.

The Divine Liturgy today is a celebration of Jesus' Resurrection. Each Divine Liturgy is a time of great hope and joy. The Divine Liturgy is a certain preparation as the Church moves toward Jesus Christ's Second Coming.

Believers remaining vigilant and focused experience Christ's reassuring presence in the journey to the Kingdom. Jesus Christ's presence is manifested for believers with eyes to see.

The Cross is the sign of ultimate victory over death. The Cross revealed Jesus' power over death. Jesus' victory over death gives believers indomitable reason to cling to Jesus Christ and follow Him throughout life.

Through the prayers of the Mother of God whose Nativity is being celebrated at this time, may we focus on the power of the Life-giving Cross and Christ's Victory over death all the days of our lives.

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**The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost. Afterfeast of the Nativity of the Mother of God. Sunday before the Elevation of the Precious Cross. Holy and Righteous Ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna. Holy Martyr Severian. September 9/22, 2024. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.**

**Father Rodney Torbic**

## **The Prologue from Ochrid**

### **Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic**

#### **1. THE EXALTATION OF THE HONORABLE CROSS**

Two events in connection with the Honorable Cross of Christ are commemorated on this day: first, the finding of the Honorable Cross on Golgotha and second, the return of the Honorable Cross from Persia to Jerusalem. Visiting the Holy Land, the holy Empress Helena decided to find the Honorable Cross of Christ. An old Jewish man named Judah was the only one who knew where the Cross was located, and, constrained by the empress, he revealed that the Cross was buried under the temple of Venus that Emperor Hadrian had built on Golgotha. The empress ordered that this idolatrous temple be razed and, having dug deep below it, found three crosses. While the empress pondered on how to recognize which of these was the Cross of Christ, a funeral procession passed by. Patriarch Macarius told them to place the crosses, one by one, on the dead man. When they placed the first and second cross on the dead man, the dead man lay unchanged. When they placed the third cross on him, the dead man came back to life. By this they knew that this was the Precious and Life-giving Cross of Christ. They then placed the Cross on a sick woman, and she became well. The patriarch elevated the Cross for all the people to see, and the people sang with tears: "Lord, have mercy!" Empress Helena had a silver case made and set the Honorable Cross in it. Later, the Persian Emperor Chozroes conquered

Jerusalem, enslaved many people, and took the Lord's Cross to Persia. The Cross remained in Persia for fourteen years. In the year 628 A.D. the Greek Emperor Heraclius defeated Chozroes and, with much ceremony, returned the Cross to Jerusalem. As he entered the city Emperor Heraclius carried the Cross on his back, but suddenly was unable to take another step. Patriarch Zacharias saw an angel preventing the emperor from bearing the Cross on the same path that the Lord had walked barefoot and humiliated. The patriarch communicated this vision to the emperor. The emperor removed his raiment and, in ragged attire and barefoot, took up the Cross, carried it to Golgotha, and placed it in the Church of the Resurrection, to the joy and consolation of the whole Christian world.

## **2. SAINT PLACILLA, THE EMPRESS**

Placilla was the wife of Emperor Theodosius the Great. In mind and deed, she was a true Christian. She was especially distinguished for helping the needy and the sick. When some people told her that this was not consistent with imperial dignity, she replied: "It becomes the imperial calling to assist with money; however, in my personal efforts concerning the poor, I give to Him who deigned to give me this calling." She rested peacefully in about the year 400 A.D.

## **3. THE VENERABLE MARTYR MACARIUS OF THESSALONICA**

Macarius was a disciple of Patriarch Niphon when the latter was laboring in stillness at Vatopedi [on Mount Athos]. Macarius longed to be martyred for Christ the Lord, and begged St. Niphon for his blessing. The clairvoyant patriarch, seeing that this was the will of God, blessed his path to martyrdom. Macarius went to Thessalonica and, in a crowd of Turks, began to speak about Christ as the One True God. The Turks beat him and threw him into prison. When they brought him to trial, Macarius cried out to them: "Oh if you only knew the truth, and were baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit!" The Turks beheaded him in 1527 A.D. At that very moment, St. Niphon saw this in the spirit and told a monk of Macarius's death by martyrdom, saying: "Know this, my child, that today your brother Macarius died a martyr's death and is borne to heaven, celebrating and rejoicing in the Lord. May we, by his prayers, be made worthy of blessedness."

## **4. THE VENERABLE MARIA OF TARSUS**

She lived a life of total debauchery. Two monks traveling through Tarsus stayed at the inn where Maria plied her trade. When she approached the monks, they rebuked her and pushed her aside as unclean. She suddenly repented, and vowed never to sin again. The monks took her to a convent, where Maria lived a life of asceticism until old age. She was made worthy of working miracles even during her lifetime.

### **HYMN OF PRAISE** **THE HONORABLE CROSS**

Save, O God, Thy people!  
Save, O Lord--

By Thine Honorable Cross, Thou dost shine upon us,  
By the Cross, Thou dost lead us!  
The Cross is power and a sign;  
The Cross is salvation.

Save, O God, the Patriarch  
And the Assembly of Serbian Bishops;  
Grant them strength to serve  
Thine Honorable Cross!  
The Cross is power and a sign;  
The Cross is salvation.

Save, O God, all those  
Who are in authority;  
May the Most-holy Cross protect them  
From dark destruction!  
The Cross is power and a sign;  
The Cross is salvation.

Save, O God, all people  
Who pray to Thee.  
By Thy Cross, may they quickly overcome  
Every difficulty.  
The Cross is power and a sign;  
The Cross is salvation!

### REFLECTION

Just as a candle is lighted from another candle, so also a good work is born from a good work. A patrician wanted to donate a gold cross to a church. He summoned a young but experienced goldsmith, gave him a great deal of gold that he weighed out, and told him to fashion whatever sort of cross he desired. The poor goldsmith, seeing what a large donation this patrician was making for the sake of his soul, became inflamed with love for God in his own heart, and decided that he would add his own ten pieces of gold to the amount of the patrician's gold. When the cross was completed, the patrician weighed it, and discovered that it was heavier than the gold that he had given to the young man. He immediately began to scold the young man as a thief, suspecting that he had taken some of the gold and replaced it with some other heavy metal. When the young man saw the patrician so angry, he confessed his deed. He said: "I added from my gold, as the widow gave two mites, in order to receive Christ's reward with you." Hearing this, the patrician's heart was touched, and he said to the honorable young man: "From this day, I take you as my son, and the heir of all my goods."

## CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the transgression of Jeroboam and the punishment of God (I Kings 12, 13):

1. How Jeroboam cast two golden calves and ordered the people to worship them as gods;
2. How the prophet declared God's displeasure to Jeroboam, and miraculously broke the altar before the idols;
3. How Jeroboam raised his hand against the prophet, but his hand withered, and only after the prayers of the prophet was it made whole again.

## HOMILY

### on the truthfulness of Christ's witness

Though I bear record of Myself, yet My record is true (John 8:14).

The light witnesses truthfully when it witnesses to the existence of the sun, and it does not lie. In the same way, the Lord Jesus witnesses truthfully to all that He testifies. He descended among men as a heavenly witness, to affirm the existence of the Triune God, the existence of the angelic world and of men's souls, the love of God for men, God's providence toward men, the power of justice over injustice, the might of truth over falsehood, the blessed immortality of the righteous and the eternal torment of the sinners, the resurrection from the dead, the Judgment of God and many other things that men--under the veil of sin--only felt as a faint premonition, but did not know of or strongly believe in. Most of all, He witnessed that He is the Son of the Living God, equal to His Father in Essence, power and love, and equal to the Holy Spirit of God. For the Witness had to witness first to Himself, so that by His witnessing to other mysteries, He could be believed. From the point of view of a pure and immutable truth, every witness of Christ is true; but from the point of view of the darkened Jews, it was not true. For God, and the angels of God, and the righteous ones, and for eternity, and for all time--His witnessing is true, and that is why He also said: *My record is true*. But for the darkened minds of the hardened sinners, this witness is not true. That is why He said to the Jews earlier: *If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true* (John 5:31). In other words; "It is not true for you Jews, but in essence it is true in and of itself."

O Most-blessed Lord Jesus, Son of the Living God and our only Savior, deliver us from the weakness of a sinful mind, and the wickedness of a sinful heart. Illumine us with the light of Thy words, eternally true.

**To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.**

# Services this Week

- **Friday (09.27.2024.)**
  - **The Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross**
  - *Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM*
- **14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost (09.29.2024.)**
  - **Holy Great-Mart. Euphemia; Ven Hermit Dorotheus; St Gyprian of Kiev**
  - *Divine Liturgy starts at 10:00 AM*



## **Donations September 15, 2024**

**Offering - \$1,410.00**

**Candles - \$66.00**

### **Building Fund**

In Memory of Protinica Grgurevich

Eli Cvijanovich - \$100

Kathy Urban - \$10

### **Large Candles**

(5) For Health of Olga Lucas from Sharon & Jim Urban  
IMO Cecilia Gresh Shuman from Olga Bulich

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Many of you have inquired in regards as to where to send your sympathies and donations for our beloved +Protinica Dubravka Grgeruvich. We have spoken to her son Stefan Grgurevich and he has agreed to donate where you wish. Included below are Stefan and Svetozar's addresses to extend your sympathies or donations, as well as St. Luke Serbian Orthodox Church or our St. Nicholas Building Fund.

Stefan Grgurevich  
5904 Mount Eagle Drive  
C Apt. 315  
Alexandria, VA 22303-2536

Svetozar & Mary Grgurevich  
Luka, Marko & Maya  
107 Desimone Drive  
Marlborough, MA 01752

St. Luke Serbian Orthodox  
Church,  
10660 River Road,  
Potomac, MD, 20854

Please visit the site below to view Protinica's obituary and a few photos from the burial at Libertyville.

<https://svetagora.com/protinica-dubravka-grgurevich-1937-2024/>

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

**KOLO SLAVA CELEBRATION - Sunday, September 29th**

**FISH FRY - Friday, October 4th**

**BASKET PARTY**

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2024**

**DETAILS COMING SOON**

**St. Petka Slava Celebration - Sunday,**