

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

**The Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost**  
**(09.29.2024.)**

**Matthew 22:1-14**

And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen. *(KJV)*

**Sunday after the Exaltation of the Precious Life-giving Cross**  
**Mark 8:34-9:1**

When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For

whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. And He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power. (KJV)

God's Holy Church is celebrating the Feast of the Exaltation of the Precious Life-giving Cross. This celebration will continue until Friday. The Cross deserves to be in the forefront of each believer's heart, mind and soul.

Jesus' love for each person of each century was demonstrated and validated when He voluntary went to the Cross. Jesus defeated death and rose from the Tomb. His Resurrection is the enduring hope for all circumstances in life.

Each person is expected to follow Jesus Christ in picking up his or her personal cross in life. Each person is to responsibly meet the difficulties in life with the help and strength of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ died voluntarily on the Cross. He defeated death. He gave believers reason to place their hope and trust in Him. Jesus Christ points the way to the Kingdom and eternal life.

Each person is invited to the feast at each Divine Liturgy. At the Divine Liturgy, believers unite with and experience Jesus Christ by partaking of His Precious Body and Blood.

Many individuals decline the invitation to participate in the feast at each Divine Liturgy. Excuses are often rendered as to why church is not attended. Reasons are fabricated to not participate in Communion.

Jesus' love and patience are immeasurable and enduring. Jesus continues to invite individuals in each century. Jesus Christ continues to be alive in God's Holy Church.

Jesus welcomes individuals seeking to repent of their sins. Believers that once opposed the Church are welcome to repent and return. The Church is not only for people facing an emergency in their personal circumstances.

The Church is for life, all of life, from conception to eternal life. Life's meaning is defined and understood within Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the way to the Divine Kingdom and eternal life.

The passing centuries has not resulted in the cancelling of the invitation to draw near to Jesus Christ. Jesus' arms are outstretched to welcome each person courageous enough to answer "yes" to the invitation to draw near.

The hunger in the soul is authentically nourished in Christ. The Gospel and the Precious Body and Blood of Christ nourish the heart, mind and soul. The Church offers each person all that is needed in life.

Efforts to feed the soul on other than Christ leads to dissatisfaction. Worldly efforts to feed the soul are artificial substitutes. They are inadequate and are soon exposed.

In Christ believers find certainty and peace. In Christ believers experience love and hope. In Christ believers realize they are at home. The Church welcomes each life from conception. The Church celebrates and honors the life in Christ forever.

Be thankful today for Christ's invitation to draw near and participate in the feast offered at each Divine Liturgy. Thank God for always having a standing invitation to draw near.

Show gratitude by saying "yes" to Christ at every moment of life. Say 'no' to the perils to the soul. Embrace Jesus Christ with all the strength of the heart, mind and soul.

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**The Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost. Afterfeast of the Elevation of the Exaltation of the Precious Life-giving Cross. Holy Great martyr Euphemia. Venerable Hermit Dorotheus. St. Gyprian of Kiev. September 16/29, 2024. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic**

## **The Prologue from Ochrid**

### **Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic**

#### **1. THE HOLY MARTYRS VERA, NADA AND LYUBOV (FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE) AND THEIR MOTHER SOPHIA (WISDOM)**

They all lived and suffered in Rome during the reign of Emperor Hadrian. Sophia was wise, as her name implies. She was left a widow, and had established herself and her daughters well in the Christian Faith. When the persecuting hand of Hadrian extended even over the virtuous home of Sophia, Vera was only twelve years old; Nada, ten years old; and Lyubov, nine years old. Brought before the emperor, these four held each other's hands "like a woven wreath," humbly but steadfastly confessed their faith in Christ the Lord and refused to offer sacrifices to the pagan idol Artemis. Before their suffering, the mother encouraged her daughters to endure to the end: "Your heavenly Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, is eternal health, inexpressible beauty and eternal life. When your bodies are slain by torture, He will clothe you in incorruption and the wounds on your bodies will shine in the heavens as stars." One by one the torturers inflicted cruel torments, first on Vera, then on Nada, and then on Lyubov. They beat them, slashed them, cast them into fire and boiling pitch, and finally beheaded them with the sword one after another. Sophia took the dead bodies of her daughters outside the town and honorably buried them. She remained at their grave for three days and three nights, praying to God. Then she gave her spirit to God, flying off to Paradise, where the blessed souls of her glorious daughters awaited her.

#### **2. THE HOLY FEMALE MARTYR AGATHOCLEIA**

Agathocleia was a servant of a certain Nicholas and his wife Paulina, who had been Christians but turned back from the Faith to worship idols. Holy Agathocleia refused to follow the error of her masters and was subsequently tortured cruelly by them, and by the pagan judges. Her mistress killed her by pouring hot coals on her neck, but this handmaiden of God was glorified

in His Heavenly Kingdom.

### **3. THE HOLY 156 MARTYRS OF EGYPT**

They suffered for Christ the Lord in the year 310 A.D.--some by sword and others by fire. Among them were two old bishops, Peleus and Nilus; a priest, Zeno; and two prominent men, Paternuthius and Elias. Bishop Silvanus and John, an eminent, blind elder (who knew the Holy Scriptures by heart and recited them at the gatherings of Christians), were also with them. All were crowned with martyr's wreaths and took up their habitation in the Eternal Kingdom of Christ.

### **4. THE HOLY FEMALE MARTYR THEODOTA**

Theodota endured eight years of cruel torture for Christ. Her torturer was the eparch Simplicius, who later went insane. Theodota was beheaded in about the year 230 A.D., during the reign of Emperor Alexander Severus.

#### **HYMN OF PRAISE**

#### **THE HOLY MARTYRS VERA, NADA AND LYUBOV, AND THEIR MOTHER, SOPHIA**

Sophia, all-wise, glorified the Lord;  
As a sacrifice to Him, she offered three most-beautiful daughters.  
To her daughters she said: "Be not afraid, my daughters;  
Strengthen yourselves in Christ; endure in the Faith;  
And be not afraid of torture or bitter misfortunes.  
Do not grieve over your bodies--it is better in heaven:  
God will give you wonderful bodies in heaven.  
Do not grieve over your beauty--with divine beauty  
You will shine among the angels in the Kingdom of God,  
As the daughters of the King of kings!  
Do not grieve over life--what is this earthly life worth?  
Its span is at most a hundred years.  
In heaven, life without end awaits you:  
Life without end, life without beginning.  
Do not grieve for the company of earthly friends,  
For the company of wonderful saints awaits you there.  
Nor should the company of worldly kinsmen cause you grief--  
For your kin in the heavens are the glorious martyrs."  
Thus the saintly mother instructed her holy daughters,  
As, one by one, they flew off to heaven:  
Three white doves, innocent and pure,  
Flew swiftly to the bosom of Christ.  
And with her soul uplifted, their mother flew after them,

And joined her glorious daughters in Paradise;  
And our merciful God receives their prayers.

### REFLECTION

A faithful and God-fearing ruler is a true blessing for all people. King Vatslav of the Czechs was such a ruler. His zeal for the sanctity of the Faith and his steadfastness remind us of the ancient ascetics. During the day he devoted himself to the affairs of the state, and at night to prayer. In winter, he often walked barefoot to the church for Matins with his old servant Podivoi. He often prepared and baked proshpora himself, especially when he desired to receive Holy Communion. Because of his care for the Faith, many churches were built, in which daily services to God were celebrated. He especially concerned himself with the poor and needy. He was a lover of peace, yet also a great and fearless hero. When the neighboring Prince Radislav attacked the Czech lands, Vatslav sent him a letter asking why he was waging war. The proud Radislav replied that he wanted Vatslav to cede all the Czech lands, and his throne, to him. Vatslav promptly amassed a large army and confronted his enemy. Yet, pondering on the two powerful armies, he mourned that so many men would die, and sent a message to Radislav: "The quarrel is between you and me; you desire to rule the land of the Czechs and I will not yield. Agree to resolve this matter with a duel between the two of us. Why shed so much blood in a battle between two armies?" Prince Radislav agreed to this duel, and was defeated by Vatslav. On his knees, he begged him for forgiveness.

### CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the transgressions of Judah, and God's punishment of those transgressions (I Kings 14):

1. How the people and King Rehoboam did that which is evil in the sight of the Lord;
2. How they erected idols in the temples, and how there were many sodomites in the land;
3. How the king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem and plundered all the gold of the Temple.

### HOMILY

**on the unity of Essence of the Father and the Son**

I and My Father are one (John 10:30).

The more miracles that the Lord Jesus performed, and the closer He came to His death, the more openly He spoke of Himself. The numerous miracles and the increasing length of time to contemplate them worked changes in both the good and the wicked. The good became receptive to the revelation of God's lofty mysteries. The wicked, clinging to evil, darkened themselves all the more, and became incapable of receiving these mysteries. That is why the wicked *took up stones ... to kill Him* (John 10:31).

*I and My Father are one.* The Father and the Son are one in Essence, but are not one in Person (hypostasis). Otherwise, one could not call them by two names: Father and Son. Both the Son and the Holy Spirit have all the attributes of the Father's Essence. However, the attributes of the Person of the Father belong only to the Father, the attributes of the Person of the Son belong only to the Son and the attributes of the Person of the Holy Spirit belong only to

the Holy Spirit. But when the discourse is about the Divine Essence, the Son can say, "I and My Father are one," and the Father can say, "I and the Son are one," and the Holy Spirit can say, "I and the Father and the Son are one."

The Lord Jesus Christ expressed the unity of His Being with the Father in the following words: *The Father is in Me and I in Him* (John 10:38). Can the divinity of the Son be expressed more clearly? Can the human tongue convey the unity of the Triune God in stronger terms? The dogma of the divinity of the Son of God, as well as the dogma of the unity of the Being of God, was revealed and laid out by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Therefore, let no one give credence to the deceits of certain unbelievers and heretics--who pretend that the Lord Jesus did not reveal His divinity, and allege that this dogma was introduced to the Church much later. If Christ had not proclaimed His divinity, why would the Jews have said to Him: *Thou ... makest Thyself God* (John 10:33)? And why would they take up stones against Him?

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, one in Essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit, have mercy on us and save us by the power and goodness of Thy divinity, almighty and all-righteous. **To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.**

## Services this Week

- **Monday (09.30.2024.)**
  - Holy and Righteous Ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna
  - *Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM*
- **15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost (10.06.2024.)**
  - The Conception of Glorious Prophet and Baptist John
  - *Divine Liturgy starts at 10:00 AM*

## Donations September 22, 2024

Offering - \$820.00

Candles - \$24.00

### Building Fund

In Memory of Protinica Grgurevich - Helene Gleason - \$50  
In Memory of Shawn Novotny - Peter & Barbara Anzalone - \$50  
In Memory of Irene Martinovich - Olga Buluch - \$25

### 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 22308-2536

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/>

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**Please join our dear Kolo in celebrating their Slava today!  
Blessing of the Slavski kolac and Zito will be celebrated  
followed by a Serbian Steak Dinner!**

**Honored Kuma is Danielle Ribaric**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

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

**BASKET PARTY**

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2024**

**DETAILS COMING SOON**

**St. Petka Slava Celebration - Sunday, October 27th**