

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

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The Sunday of the Holy Forefathers (12.25.2022.)

Luke 14:16-24

Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper. **(KJV)**

God's Holy Church is moving with certainty toward the Feast of the Nativity. The Lord Jesus Christ desires all to participate in His Life. The Lord invites individuals at every moment of time to be united with Him.

Each Divine Liturgy is the Banquet of Life. At every Divine Liturgy, believers have the opportunity to be united with Life. Jesus Christ is Life and offers Life Eternal.

The Precious Body and Blood of Christ are available at each Divine Liturgy. The invitation goes out to all believers to partake. The Lord's invitation to come to the Divine Liturgy comes to mind in today's Gospel.

Only a small number of individuals baptized into Christ attend the Divine Liturgy regularly. A smaller amount of persons attending the Divine Liturgy actually partake of the Precious Body and Blood.

The Lord Jesus Christ said.” Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” Jesus Christ offers life. He offers life eternal. (Jn.6:53-54)

Today’s Gospel has a compelling message for attentive believers. Accepting the invitation to partake of the Precious Body and Blood of Christ is a step toward life eternal.

Believers begin the journey to life eternal at Holy Baptism. Partaking of the Precious Body and Blood of Christ nourishes and keeps the believer on the path to the Kingdom of God and life eternal.

Believers unite with Christ when partaking of the Precious Body and Blood of Christ. Christ enters the believer and the believer is in Christ when partaking occurs.

The Nativity Fast is part of each Liturgical Year in order for believers to remain on the path to God’s Kingdom and life eternal. Believers are encouraged to honestly assess their lives and repent as necessary to ensure unity with Christ.

The Feast of Christ’s Nativity inspires believers to ensure their relationship with Jesus Christ is consistent with the commitment made a Holy Baptism. Repentance is necessary to be rid of life’s aspects not pleasing to Christ.

Fasting, repentance and Holy Confession restore unity with Christ. Holy Communion solidifies the unity with Christ. The present Gospel is a firm lesson for believers to partake of the Precious Body and Blood of Christ.

Believers are expected to continuously grow in Christ from the time of Baptism. While the mind functions well and faith exists, growth in Christ is possible.

Today is the day to take the step for growth in Christ. Now is the time to focus on repentance, God’s Kingdom and life eternal. The invitation to partake of Jesus’ Body and Blood is proclaimed at each Divine Liturgy.

The earthly time of life comes only once and is to be used wisely. Believers are blessed with the opportunity to realize the fullness of life in Christ. Eternal life is possible.

Remaining totally focused on Christ in each aspect of life keeps the believer on the narrow path of life. Guarding the heart, mind and soul ensures living in Christ-pleasing ways.

Accepting Christ’s invitations is possible. Christ is ever-present to assist, guide and strengthen the believer on life’s journey. God’s Holy Church offers the wisdom and direction for believers to follow.

The saints and martyrs through the centuries have defined the roads to follow to God’s Kingdom and eternal life. The Church offers the road map and the nourishment for life’s journey.

Declining Christ’s invitations puts the soul in peril and eternal life can become out of reach. The Holy Gospel offers the wisdom and words of Christ for the benefit of those willing to follow Christ and say “yes” to Christ.

Each person makes decisions daily. Saying “yes” to Jesus Christ’s invitations to follow Him offers peace and joy in the heart, mind and soul. Avoiding earthly perils and temptations is possible with Christ.

Be grateful for Christ's constant invitations as evidence of His love for each person. Give thanks to Christ for His patience with each person struggling with daily decision-making.

The opportunity to repent and say "yes" to Christ is now. The joy of the life in Christ is here today. Thank God for the constant opportunity to say "yes." Thank God for the opportunity to repent and be renewed in Christ.

**The Twenty Eighth Sunday after Pentecost. The Sunday of the Holy Forefathers. St. Spyridon. Serbian Mothers' Day. December 12/25, 2022. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.
Father Rodney Torbic**

The Prologue from Ochrid St Nikolai of Zhicha

1. SAINT SPYRIDON THE WONDERWORKER, BISHOP OF TREMITHUS

The island of Cyprus was both the birthplace and the place where this glorious saint served the Church. Spyridon was born of simple parents, farmers, and he remained simple and humble until his death. He married in his youth and had children, but when his wife died he devoted himself completely to the service of God. Because of his exceptional piety, he was chosen as bishop of the city of Tremithus. Yet even as a bishop he did not change his simple way of living, handling his livestock and cultivating his land himself. He used very little of the fruits of his labor for himself; instead, he distributed a greater share to the needy. He manifested great miracles by God's power: he brought down rain in time of drought, stopped the flow of a river, raised several people from the dead, healed Emperor Constantius of a grave illness, saw and heard angels of God, foresaw future events, discerned the secrets of men's hearts, converted many to the true Faith, and did much else. He took part in the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea [325 A.D.], and he brought many heretics back to Orthodoxy by his simple and clear expositions of the Faith as well as by his mighty miracles. He was so simply dressed that once, when he wanted to enter the imperial court at the invitation of the emperor, a soldier, thinking that he was a beggar, struck him on the face. Meek and guileless, Spyridon turned the other cheek to him. He glorified God through many miracles, and was of benefit, not only to many individuals but also to the whole Church of God. He entered into rest in the Lord in the year 348 A.D. His miracle-working relics rest on the island of Corfu, and even today they glorify God with many miracles.

2. THE HOLY HIEROMARTYR ALEXANDER, PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM

At first Alexander was the Bishop of Cappadocia, but during the persecution under Severus in the year 203 A.D. he was cast into prison and then exiled. Afterward he accepted the patriarchal throne of Jerusalem. He founded the famous Jerusalem Library, which Eusebius used when he wrote his Ecclesiastical History. He was tortured in various ways during the reign of Decius and

thrown to wild beasts. Remaining alive and untouched by the beasts, he was cast into prison, where he ended his earthly life and went to the Lord in the year 251 A.D.

3. THE HOLY MARTYR SYNESIUS

As a young reader in Rome, he boldly preached the truth of Christ and denounced idolaters. For this, he was tortured and beheaded during the reign of Emperor Aurelian.

HYMN OF PRAISE

SAINT SPYRIDON THE WONDERWORKER, BISHOP OF TREMITHUS

Star of Cyprus and luminary of the Church,
Holy Spyridon, defender of the Faith,
Simple as a child, innocent as a child--
By his simplicity, he shines on the world.
What need is there for many words when speaking the truth?
Utterly simple is God's truth:
The Creator is One, in the Holy Trinity,
In the Trinity, Father, Son and Spirit.
The Son descended to the sinful earth
And received flesh from the Pure Virgin
In order to save men, because He is the Lover of Mankind.
He performed many miracles
By divine power, for He is Almighty.
To mankind He gave a new rule,
The rule of love and the rule of faith.
Glorified, He now sits in heaven,
And gathers the fruit of His labor.
The sweet fruits of His labor
Are holy men and holy women.
He is the Rock of mankind's salvation;
Outside this Rock there is no salvation.
O Spyridon, O illuminator,
O soldier of Christ, pray for us.

REFLECTION

Absolutely nothing will help us if we are not lenient toward the weaknesses of men and forgive them. For how can we hope that God will forgive us if we do not forgive others? St. Spyridon once sold a hundred goats to a merchant at an agreed price, and the saint told the buyer to lay down the money. The buyer, knowing that Spyridon himself never counted money, handed over enough money for ninety-nine goats and hid the money for one. Spyridon then counted out a hundred goats for him. But when the merchant and his servants drove off the goats, one of them returned bleating. He drove it off, but it returned again. And so the goat continually returned to the enclosure, not wanting to go with the other goats. The saint then whispered into the

merchant's ear: "Observe, my son: this animal is not doing this in vain. Did you perhaps withhold her price?" The merchant became ashamed and acknowledged his sin. As soon as he paid the amount he had concealed, the goat immediately joined the other goats. On another occasion, some thieves entered Spyridon's sheepfold. When they had seized as many sheep as they wanted, they tried to leave the sheepfold, but an invisible force nailed them to the ground, and they were unable to move. At dawn, the bishop came to his sheepfold. Seeing the thieves, he reproached them mildly and instructed them to strive in the future to live by their own labors and not by thievery. He then took a sheep and gave it to them, saying, "Take this for your trouble, so that your all-night vigil not be in vain," and he dismissed them in peace.

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate Noah's blessing upon two of his children [Japheth and Shem] and a curse upon the third [Ham] (Genesis 9):

1. How Ham disclosed his father's nakedness, but Shem and Japheth covered it;
2. How Noah pronounced a blessing upon Shem and Japheth, but a curse upon the descendants of Ham.

HOMILY

on Melchisedek

Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedek (Psalm 110:4, Hebrews 7:17, 21). Oh, how many hidden and faithful servants does the Lord have who serve Him day and night! Oh, how many shining comets are seen by men to cross the starry heavens, which appear unexpectedly, glistening, and then are lost in the vastness of the universe, leaving only tales about them! The righteous Abraham, with his descendants, is known to us like the starry heavens over our heads, but Melchisedek is known to us like a shining comet, which suddenly appeared, was bowed down to us by the starry heavens, and was again hidden in the unknown. Who is this Melchisedek? *The King of Salem ... the priest of the Most-high God* (Genesis 14:18). He brought bread and wine to Abraham; he blessed Abraham, and Abraham gave him one-tenth of all that was his. When Abraham was so greatly blessed by God, how much more blessed was he who blessed Abraham? Oh, how unfathomable are the depths of God's providence! A man's thought extends from today until tomorrow, but the thought of God extends to the very end of time. According to the words of the Holy Apostle Paul, Melchisedek prefigures the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (Hebrews 7:10). For while the forefather Abraham was a wonderful and God-pleasing peasant, this Melchisedek was both a king and priest, as our Lord is King and Priest. Melchisedek offered Abraham bread and wine, and our Lord offered His Body and Blood to the entire human race. Abraham bowed down to Melchisedek and gave him a willing tribute. Abraham's true descendants, the Christians, bow down to the Lord Jesus and offer Him their willing sacrifice, a gift in return for a gift, the gift of His Body and Blood on the Cross. *And who shall declare His generation?* (Isaiah 53:8). This refers to both Christ and Melchisedek. *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it and was glad* (John 8:56). Thus spoke the Lord to the Jews. How did Abraham see it? He saw it in the spirit. God revealed it to him, and he also saw the prefiguration of Christ in this glorious and wonderful Melchisedek, king, priest and servant of the Most-high God.

O Lord Jesus, bless us also as Thou didst bless Thy faithful servants, Melchisedek and Abraham.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

About Serbian Children's Day, Mother's Day, and Father's Day

The following is from the book, "Divine Liturgy, Prayers, Catechism," St. Sava Seminary Fund, 1979. To purchase a copy of this book, please call the St. Sava Church Office at 219-736-9191. Among many national customs, the Serbs have a special one in which we REMEMBER and TIE as well as give gifts on Children's, Mother's, and Father's Day.

The Church Books dedicate the two Sundays preceding Christmas to the Forefathers and Fathers, the Righteous Ones and the Prophets of the Old Testament, who awaited the coming of the Saviour, symbolically depicted Him and prophesied His Advent, but did not live to see Him. Why did the Church choose to institute this commemoration of the Old Testament Fathers just before Christmas, the day we celebrate the Birth of the Creator of the New Testament? The Church felt it obligatory to portray to its adherents the connection between the old and the new, to teach us to see the history of mankind as a whole, and to show us that God's plan is a continuous one.

The Serbian people willingly adopted this tradition from the Apostolic Church, and through the years have faithfully kept its teaching. However, being of a very practical intellect, the Serbian people have applied this ancient custom to enhance their lives in the way most beneficial to them.

They divided this commemoration of the Fathers so that one Sunday was dedicated to Children, one to Mothers and one to Fathers. Why? Because Serbs put a strong emphasis on the importance of unity and sharing in family life.

Enlightened by Orthodox Christianity, and realizing that family observances are a priceless tool in preserving family unity, the Serbs guard and nurture their family observances with unparalleled zeal.

Knowing that the Birth of Christ is a fulfillment of the past, a reality of the present and promise of the future, the Serbs, in their preparation for the solemn celebration of the Christmas Holiday want the entire family to participate in demonstratively incorporating itself for the most important and climactic day – the Christmas Feast.

Just as the blood relationship between parents and children is indissoluble, the religious tie between true Christians and Christmas is inseparable. This is the reason why our calendar proposes three holidays before Christmas: Children's, Mother's, and Father's Day. In doing so, we remember the holy children, the holy mothers, and the holy fathers: we link children with parents and parents with children. All three of these observances have one and the same purpose: REMEMBRANCE and TYING.

In celebrating CHILDREN'S DAY we remember all the holy children of God, those innocent creatures of God who Christ Cites as the prime example to those of us who want to enter the kingdom of heaven. For He said: "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 18, 3).

Then he continued: "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come to me: for such is the Kingdom of Heaven " (Matthew 19, 4). And He concluded: "Whosoever offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a milestone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matthew 18,6).

When we cease to be children physically, we lose the receptiveness, naturalness, and candor characteristic of children, which, if properly nurtured, may inspire divine feelings of happiness, ecstasy, and charity. Through proper education the children learn to respect their parents, and concomitantly, earn the reputation of being good children and good Christians.

In our celebration of MOTHER'S DAY we dearly remember all the holy mothers from the past history of the Christian Church plus those from our own Serbian Orthodox Church. If there were no holy mothers, many of the Saints would not have been pious, virtuous people, nor would they be commemorated in our calendar today. "Mother" is a holy Name. She suffers much for children both spiritually and physically. Like Christ, her love is inexhaustible. Why did Christ give Himself to be crucified for the sinners? Because He saw in every sinner some good under the shadow of evil. In like manner, only the mother can see something good in her most corrupt son or immoral daughter. And it is very hard to understand Christ's Love for mankind if we do not properly understand the love of a mother for her children.

In celebrating FATHER'S DAY we remember with esteem all the holy fathers from both the old and new Church. We also remember all the Serbian fathers who gave their lives for "the Holy Cross and golden freedom."

Psychology and Religion agree that a child receives its first idea about God from its parents. And the role of the father is vital in developing that idea. Traditionally, one of the first things we teach our children is to cross themselves and pray, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Consequently, the word "Father" is tied to God from the very beginning. Also, the first prayer we teach our children is the Lord's Prayer which begins with "Our Father..." Again, here is a tremendous responsibility imposed upon the father since the word "Father" is tied directly to God. With this concept we are telling our children that God is like our Father. And this puts a heavy load on the father for he must be an example of everything good, moral, and charitable. Perhaps we should mention here also that children can get a totally opposite conception of God if their earthly father is a drunkard, or without love, understanding or forgiveness – or if he doesn't care for his children. But in such cases, the mother comes to the rescue. By showing her devotion and inexhaustible love for her offspring, she overshadows the father's weakness and molds a beautiful picture of God on their children.

In addition to REMEMBERING, TYING is a representative factor in celebrating these holy days. On Children's Day parents tie their children, on Mother's Day children tie their mothers, and on Father's Day children tie their fathers. The loosing is done with an exchange of gifts. And giving gifts represent devotion and love.

The custom of tying symbolically connects the past with the present: we link them with mutual respect. The two generations are tied with mutual symbolize the love for God. So we see the Serbian people following the Lord's words, "The wise father brings out of his household the old and the new." This entire action of tying children with their parents vividly expresses a mutual bond of love between the generations.

A clear picture is exposed of one people, how should they go through their history and living a life of wholeness, combining the priceless treasures of the past with the new adornments of the present and the future.

This moral practice is greatly needed today when there is less and less attention given to the family and unity. Atheistic and other dark powers of this world are increasingly cutting the trunk of the family tree from its roots and creating animosity and divisiveness between the generations. Therefore, we should preserve and perpetuate this important Serbian tradition, one of our many beautiful customs, in celebrating Children's, Mother's, and Father's day. it is imperative because the family observances complement the church and its effort to preserve family unity. Proper observance of these three holidays prior to Christmas, augmented with our diligent preparation for the Holy Day, will inspire a more meaningful and solemn Feast of the Nativity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Services this Week

- ❖ **Friday – 12.30.'22. – PARACLESIS - THE OFFICE OF SUPPLICATION TO SAINT NEGTARIOS -05:00 PM – Confession**
- ❖ ***The 29th Sunday after Pentecost – Holy Fathers – January 01th – Serbian Father's Day (BRING YOUR CHILDREN) Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM***

Donations December 18, 2022

Offering - \$ 1,137.00 Candles - \$130.00

Building Fund

Slava Donation - \$100 - Eli Cvijanovich

Slava Donations

Kumovi Gojko, Rose & Kristina Marinkovich - \$300

Kolo Srpska Sestra - \$1000

Adam Lichvar - \$500

Dianna Dunnington - \$200

Joe Bartis, In Memory of Connie Bartis - \$100

Steve Purich - \$100

Danica Wess - \$100

Natalie & John Ofsanko - \$50

Pete & Joanne Todorich - \$25

Dan & Dyne Tomak - \$25

Richard & Suzette Gardenhour - \$20

Lazo Gjurich - \$20

Sylvester Gjurich - \$20

George Kohan - \$20

Patricia Niel - \$10

Rick Kondas - \$5

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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<https://stnicholasjohnstown.org>