

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905

Rev. Presbyter Dragan Vukovic

(814) 244-4063

The Sunday before the Nativity The Sunday of the Holy Fathers (01.01.2023.)

Matthew 1:25

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias; And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa; And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias; And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias; And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias; And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon: And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel; And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David,

fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS. (KJV)

The Sunday before the Feast of the Nativity

The present Gospel brings believers to the threshold of the celebration of the Feast of the Nativity of Jesus Christ. The Gospel inspires believers to reflect on Joseph's experience with the angel in a dream.

The virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ was revealed to Joseph. The action of the Holy Spirit is verified. Joseph learned Jesus' name and was encouraged to take Mary as his wife. Jesus was to save His people from their sins.

During the remaining days of the Nativity Fast believers have the opportunity to search deep within their hearts and minds on Jesus' virgin birth and His purpose in saving His people from their sins.

Believers benefit by considering the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives in creating new life. Jesus' saving His people from their sins continues to the present day.

The birth of Jesus Christ is considered to be contemporary, taking place in the present. The Church proclaims "God is with us" on the Feast of the Nativity. Jesus Christ is present to save every person as a sinner.

Considering personal sinfulness during this week can lead to repentance and embracing the New Born Christ Child. Each Feast of the Nativity is New! Each experience with Jesus Christ is New!

Believers embracing Christ on the Feast of the Nativity become New in Christ. The Church provides believers with the opportunity to experience repentance of sins and newness in Jesus Christ.

The hunger in the soul draws believers to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ satisfies the hunger in the soul. Peace comes upon the believer when repentance occurs and Christ fills the soul.

Barriers arise during the course of life. Jesus Christ helps believers find ways to overcome the barriers and experience peace. Newness in Christ can arise from tragedies and unexpected hardships.

Jesus Christ's love transcends barriers and tragedies in life. Jesus Christ's birth changed the course of history. Believers benefit from focusing exclusively on Jesus Christ in the remaining days of the Nativity Fast.

Personal self-examination benefits believers looking deep with the heart, mind and soul to ensure Jesus Christ is first and foremost. Joy abounds in believers' lives when Jesus Christ is foremost in life.

The Feast the Nativity is at hand. Let us ready ourselves to greet the New Born Chris Child. Anticipate the joy that comes from knowing “God is with us”
Newness in Christ is here!

The Sunday of the Holy Fathers. St. Boniface. Serbian Fathers’ Day. December 19/January 1, 2022. Father Rodney Torbic

The Prologue from Ochrid St Nikolai of Zhicha

1. THE HIEROMARTYR IGNATIUS THE GOD-BEARER

This holy man is called "the God-bearer" because he constantly bore the name of the Living God in his heart and on his lips. According to tradition, he was thus named because he was held in the arms of God Incarnate, Jesus Christ. On a day when the Lord was teaching His disciples humility, He took a child and placed him among them, saying: *Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven* (Matthew 18:4). This child was Ignatius. Later, Ignatius was a disciple of St. John the Theologian, together with Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna. As Bishop of Antioch, Ignatius governed the Church of God as a good shepherd and was the first to introduce antiphonal chanting in the Church, in which two choirs alternate the chanting. This manner of chanting was revealed to St. Ignatius by the angels in heaven. When Emperor Trajan was passing through Antioch on his way to do battle with the Persians, he heard of Ignatius, summoned him and counseled him to offer sacrifice to the idols. If Ignatius would do so, Trajan would bestow upon him the rank of senator. As the counsels and threats of the emperor were in vain, St. Ignatius was shackled in irons and sent to Rome in the company of ten merciless soldiers, to be thrown to the wild beasts. Ignatius rejoiced in suffering for his Lord, only praying to God that the wild beasts would become the tomb for his body and that no one would prevent him from this death. After a long and difficult journey from Asia through Thrace, Macedonia and Epirus, Ignatius arrived in Rome, where he was thrown to the lions in the circus. The lions tore him to pieces and devoured him, leaving only several of the larger bones and his heart. This glorious lover of the Lord Christ suffered in the year 106 A.D. in Rome at the time of the Christ-hating Emperor Trajan. Ignatius has appeared many times from the other world and worked miracles, even to this day helping all who call upon him for help.

2. SAINT DANILO, ARCHBISHOP OF SERBIA

Danilo was the son of wealthy and God-loving parents. In his youth he was given a good upbringing. King Milutin took him to his court, but out of great love for God he fled and was tonsured a monk in the Monastery of Končulsk near the Ibar. Later, he was the abbot of the Monastery of Hilandar [Mount Athos] and suffered much from the plundering Latin Crusaders. He was the Bishop of Banja, then of Hum, and finally the Archbishop of Serbia. From

beginning to end, he was a strict ascetic and had the special gift of tears. He made peace between Kings Dragutin and Milutin, and later between Milutin and Stefan of Dečani. He fought fervently against the Latins as well as the Bogomils. Under his supervision, the Monasteries of Banja and Dečani were built, and he restored and built many other churches. He wrote the genealogy of the Serbian kings and saints. Untiring in his service to God to the end of his life, he entered peacefully into rest on the night between the nineteenth and twentieth of December, 1338 A.D., during the reign of Tsar Dušan. Danilo was a great hierarch, a great ascetic, a great laborer and a great patriot.

HYMN OF PRAISE

THE HIEROMARTYR IGNATIUS THE GOD-BEARER

O Hierarch of Christ, wonderful and exemplary,
O gracious Hierarch, not an adversary of God,
Not from among the opponents of God, who killed Christ,
But from among the God-bearers, who loved Christ--
Holy Ignatius, God-bearing man,
You do we glorify; of you we are proud.

Emperor Trajan offered you titles and honors,
If only you would bow down before the idols.
You amazed the emperor, for you did not consent
To betray the Lord, not for the entire kingdom.
Instead, you went joyfully to death, O God-bearing Father;
For that we glorify you; of you we are proud.

Thrown before wild beasts, quietly you wait.
Rome seeks amusement; they toy with you!
"I am God's wheat!" you exclaimed there.
"The beasts shall grind me, to become good bread!"
And now, where is Trajan? But you are an inhabitant of heaven.
You are a hymn to the angels, and to us a teacher.

Holy Ignatius, you who bore God,
Entreat God to grant us the Bread of Life!

REFLECTION

The holy martyrs, seized with the love of Christ, were like unquenchable flames. This love eased their sufferings and made their deaths sweet. St. Chrysostom says of St. Ignatius: "He put off his body with as much ease as one takes off his clothes." Traveling to Rome to his death,

Ignatius feared only one thing: that Christians would somehow prevent his martyrdom for Christ, by their prayers to God or in some outward manner. Therefore he continually implored them, in writing and in speech, not to do this. "Forgive me," he said. "I know what is for my benefit. I but begin to be a disciple of Christ when I desire nothing, either visible or invisible, save to attain Christ. May every diabolical torture come upon me: fire, crucifixion, wild beasts, the sword, tearing asunder, the crushing of my bones, and the dismemberment of my whole body--only that I may receive Jesus Christ. It is better for me to die for Christ than to reign to the ends of the earth.... My love is nailed to the Cross, and there is no fire of love in me for any earthly thing." When he was brought to the circus, he turned to the people with these words: "Citizens of Rome, know that I am not being punished for any crime, neither have I been condemned to death for any transgression, but rather for the sake of my God, by Whose love I am overcome and Whom I insatiably desire. I am His wheat, and the teeth of the wild beasts will grind me to be His pure bread." When he had been devoured by the wild beasts, by God's providence his heart remained among the bones. When the unbelievers cut open the saint's heart, they saw inside, inscribed in golden letters, the name Jesus Christ.

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the courage of Joshua the son of Nun:

1. How Joshua held unswervingly to all the Lord's commandments;
2. How, with faith in God's help, he courageously entered into every battle against the enemies of his people;
3. How he was victorious everywhere and ascribed all his victories to God.

HOMILY

on David

And David said to Nathan: I have sinned against the Lord (II Samuel 12:13).

My tears have been my food day and night (Psalm 42:3).

King David sinned against God and repented, and God forgave him. The king's sin was great, but greater still was his repentance. He was guilty before God of two grave sins: adultery and murder. But when Nathan the prophet of God denounced him, he cried out in anguish: *I have sinned against the Lord!* Thus he confessed his sin and repented bitterly, most bitterly. Grief-stricken, he prayed to God, weeping, fasting, lying on the ground, and enduring meekly the terrible blows that God sent upon him, his house and his people because of his sins. In his penitential Psalms he says: *I am a worm and not a man* (Psalm 22:6); *Because of the sound of my groaning, my bones cling to my flesh* (Psalm 102:5); *I lie awake ... for I have eaten ashes like bread and mingled my drink with weeping* (Psalm 102:7, 9); *My knees are grown weak through fasting* (Psalm 109:24). Here is true repentance; here is a true penitent! He did not become hardened in sin nor did he fall into despair, but, hoping in the mercy of God, he

repented unceasingly. And God, Who loves the penitent, showed mercy upon this model of penitence. God forgave him and glorified him above all the kings of Israel; He gave him the great grace to compose the most beautiful penitential prayers and to prophesy the coming into the world of the Holy Savior, Who would be of his seed. Brethren, do you see how wonderful is God's mercy toward penitents? So much mercy did God have on this repentant David that He was not ashamed to take upon Himself flesh from David's seed. Blessed are they who do not become hardened in sin and who do not fall into despair because of sin. Repentance saves both the one and the other from evil.

O Merciful Lord, soften our hearts with tears of repentance.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Services this Week

- ❖ *Monday (January 2nd) – St. Ignatius the God-bearer - Divine Liturgy 09:30 AM*
- ❖ *Friday (January 6th) - Holy Nun-martyr Eugenia - Christmas Eve :*
 - 9:30 AM - Vespers and Divine Liturgy (of St. Basil the Great)
 - 7:00 PM - Vigil and Blessing of the Yule Log (Badnjak) followed by blessing of Leshica with Golden Goin and Holy Fathers' message for everyone
- ❖ **SATURDAY (January 7th) - The Nativity of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ -BOZIG - 10:00 AM - Divine Liturg**
- ❖ **SUNDAY (January 8th) - Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos 10:00 AM - Divine Liturgy**

Donations December 25, 2022

Offering - \$ 625.00 Candles - \$56.00 Dues - \$50

GOLD COIN FOR CESNICA

Please see Richard Gardenhour if you would like to contribute to the purchase of the Gold Coin for the Christmas Cesnica.

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

VISIT OUR WEBSITE!!!!

<https://stnicholasjohnstown.org>