

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church
971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905
Rev. Presbyter Dragan Vukovic
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The Sunday of the Holy Forefathers (12.24.2023.)

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)**

The invitation to participate in the Great Supper exists at each Divine Liturgy. The Divine Liturgy is celebrated in parish churches each Sunday and feast days during the week. Attendance at the Divine Liturgy is completely voluntary.

Nourishment for soul comes from the contents of the Divine Liturgy. The Gospel and the Precious Body and Blood provide for complete unity with Jesus Christ.

Only a small number of Baptized believers attend all the Divine Liturgies during the year. Just as in the current Gospel, reasons are given not to attend the great supper.

The Lord desires for all persons to experience nourishment for the soul. The journey to the Lord's Kingdom can be long and arduous. The Divine Liturgy offers the nourishment and strength for the journey.

The Divine Liturgy offers wisdom for the heart, mind and soul. Unity with Jesus Christ is possible through the Divine Liturgy. Active participants in the Divine Liturgy have their lives renewed and strengthened.

The hunger in the soul is fully addressed with active participation in the Divine Liturgy. Earthly cares are set aside. Joy and thanksgiving abound in Jesus Christ. Believers enter and experience God's Kingdom during the Divine Liturgy.

Participating in the Divine Liturgy is an investment in God's Kingdom. Wise believers faithfully answer the invitation to be in the Divine Liturgy. When circumstances prevent attendance, absence from the Liturgy is keenly felt.

Earthly life requires choices at every moment. Choosing to say "yes" to the Lord God keeps the believer on the path to the Kingdom. Perils and temptations are everywhere to take the believer away from the Lord God.

Saying "no" to God's invitations puts the soul in peril. Saying "no" denies the soul of the needed nourishment and strength. Joy is absent in life without the Divine Liturgy.

Without the unity in Christ experienced in the Divine Liturgy, the Christian life fails to mature. God's Holy Church constantly offers the opportunity for believers to repent.

Believers go through stages in life from birth to departure from earthly life. The Divine Liturgy provides the roadway to the Kingdom of Heaven which begins at Holy Baptism.

The Holy Mysteries of the Church keep the believer focused and traveling on the narrow path to the Kingdom. The present Gospel serves for believers to personally examine their responses to the Lord and make any corrections required.

Saying "no" to the Lord is dangerous to the soul. Parents set examples for their sons and daughters by saying "yes" to Christ's invitations. Husbands and wives strengthen their marriage by saying "yes" to Christ's teachings and invitations.

Sons and daughters saying "yes" to Christ please their parents. Daily life improves when the family says "yes" to Christ on a collective basis. Parishes are stronger when the Divine Liturgy is well attended.

Communities are enriched when parish churches have well-attended Divine Liturgies. Neighborhoods improve when the parish church celebrates the Divine Liturgy.

Darkness in the world recedes with each celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Hope eradicates despair when the Divine Liturgy is celebrated. The Divine Liturgy is the best place to be during earthly life.

Thank God for the Divine Liturgy. Thank God for the martyrs, saints and faithful through the centuries celebrating the Divine Liturgy during periods of persecution and hardships.

The Divine Liturgy is not to be taken for granted. The Divine Liturgy is to be cherished and honored to the depths of the soul. The Lord God is alive in the Divine Liturgy.

Believers constantly learn and come to know God through the Divine Liturgy. Grateful believers give thanks to God for the Divine Liturgy.

Today is the day to thank God and be in the Divine Liturgy. Saying “yes” to God’s invitations leads to the Heavenly Kingdom and eternal life. Saying “no” results in a life without joy. Thank God for the freedom to choose and to say “yes”.

The Sunday of the Holy Forefathers. Venerable Daniel the Stylite. Serbian Mothers’ Day. December 11/24, 2023. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic.

ACCUSTOMING OURSELVES TO FASTING On Fasting and Prayer. Part 3

How, beloveds, can we accustom ourselves to fasting? First of all, it requires gradual acclimation. Some rashly and hastily jump in and start fasting beyond their strength. Such a fast is not tenable, not useful, but rather harmful. They either harm their health or become impatient and irritable from hunger—they get mad at everyone and everything to no avail, or their fasting soon becomes unbearable and they give it up. To make our disposition towards fasting firm, we have to accustom ourselves to fasting slowly, carefully, not all at once, but gradually—little by little.

Here’s how experienced fasters did it. [Venerable Dorotheos](#) thus accustomed his disciple Dositheos to moderation (temperance in food). First, he asked him how much bread he eats a day. He replied: one and a half pieces. The teacher commanded him to eat one and a quarter. After some time, he asked him again whether he was satisfied or hungry. The disciple answered: It seems a bit meager, but I’m satisfied; I’m not hungry. The teacher then ordered him to eat just one piece. In this way, he led his disciple to the furthest limit, when he ate little but felt healthy, well-fed, light, and ready to work. The teacher didn’t permit his disciple to reduce the amount any further, so as not to become weak and incapable of fulfilling his obediences.

The main thing here is gradualness, with which a man can easily acquaint himself to anything good—even difficult things; but by grasping at this and that without order, hardly anyone can accustom themselves to anything decent. Thus, following this example, let everyone pay heed to his stomach and determine how much food and drink he requires in a day. Then gradually reduce the amount of food you consume, to the point where it’s no longer possible to reduce it any further, so as not to become weak and exhausted and incapable of working. Here is the main rule given by the Lord Himself: Do not burden your hearts with overeating and [drunkenness](#). This is about the amount of food—how much you consume.

And as for quality, or in other words, what precise kind of food we should eat, our loving mother the Holy Church has decreed wisely. It didn’t prescribe continuous fasting for us, as many of us prescribe ourselves continuous meat eating. No, the Holy Church knows the ways of our nourishment better than us. It has appointed four fasting periods a year and two days a week. Why has the Church arranged its fasts this way? In addition to the moral aims—to weaken the body and make it a more obedient instrument of the spirit and thereby cleanse it from all sinful filth—the Holy Church also had healing goals in mind when arranging fasting days and times. If our

body were to be nourished throughout the year with the same kind of food—either non-fasting or fasting, then our stomach could easily either fatten or become weak or get obstructed. Therefore, it must be cleansed from time to time, or set in order, as doctors do and advise to do. With this in mind, the Church has arranged its fasts so they might be healing for us: After prolonged consumption of non-fasting food, it gives us a fast to cleanse and restore the activity of the stomach; and having done this, the Church again permits non-fasting food.

The time for eating during fasts is set as no earlier than noon. You also need to accustom yourself to this gradually. After acclimating yourself to the amount of food, this won't be hard to do. But bodily fasting alone isn't enough; spiritual fasting is inextricably linked with it.

Amen.

St. Justin (Polyansky) of Ufa and Menzelinsk

Services this Week

- **30th Sunday after Pentecost (12.31.2023) - Holy God-bearing Fathers (Serbian Father's Day) – Holy Martyr Sebastian; St Modestus, Patriarch of Jerusalem and others with him - *Divine Liturgy starts at 10:00 AM***

Donations December 17, 2023

Offering - \$ 1,693.00 Candles - \$97.00
Dues - \$250.00

Slava Donations

Peter & Anna Vuckovich - \$1500
Mens Club - \$250
Kolo Serpska Sestra - \$200
Kumovi Richard & Suzette Gardenhour - \$200
St. Nicholas Choir - \$200
Danica Wess - \$100
Eli Cvijanovich - \$100 to the Cemetery Fund IMO Fr. Purich &
Fr. Grgurevich
Gojko, Rose & Kristina Marinkovich - \$50
Nick & Emma Saula - \$25
Sylvester Gjurich - \$20
Lazo Gjurich - \$20
George Kohan - \$15
Pat Niel - \$10
Joe Golden - \$5

Large Candles

IMO Mary Ellen Locher-Byrd from Helene Gleason
IMO Mike & Mildred Tumbas from Milica Knepp
IMO Grandparents Amelia & Pete Mastovich from Rick Kondas
IMO brother Joseph Kondas from Rick Kondas

**Donations are now being taken for the Gold coin for our
Christmas Cesnica. Please see Richard Gardenhour.**

DONATION ENVELOPES

**Please be aware that there is a mistake for the
Palm Sunday Envelope - It is marked as March
31st. Our Palm Sunday is Sunday, April 28th.
Sorry for any inconvenience.**

UPCOMING EVENTS

**Serbian Mother's Day – Sunday,
December 24, 2023**

**Serbian Father's Day – Sunday
December 31, 2023**

St. Sava Celebration

Sunday, January 28, 2023

Men's Club Pork Chop Dinner

Sunday, February 4, 2024