

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church
971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905
Rev. Presbyterian Dragan Vukovic
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The Sunday after the Nativity **(01.12.2025.)**

Matthew 2:13-23

And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not. But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene. **(KJV)**

Peace of God! Christ is Born!

The current Gospel reflects the animosity Herod maintained against the New Born Christ Child and his interest in killing Him. Herod's animosity materialized in the killing of all children under two years of old.

The killing of young children is horrific and occurs all too often up to the present days. The killing of unborn children is an all too often practice in the world.

Fortunately, the Lord Jesus Christ's life was spared during His Infancy and until Adulthood. When later in Life the Lord Jesus was Crucified, He defeated death and rose from the Tomb.

During this time of the Feast of the Nativity, it is extremely beneficial to consider the Birth of the Lord Jesus deep within the heart, mind and soul.

This is the time for Jesus Christ to dwell and fully live deep within each of us.

Each person's soul hungers for the authenticity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is deep within each person. The Church helps believers to recognize the presence of Jesus Christ in our lives.

Jesus Christ manifests Himself in the Church and enriches the lives of believers through the Holy Mysteries. Jesus Christ's Peace, Love and Joy radiate throughout God's Holy Church through the centuries and throughout the world.

The celebration of the Feast of the Nativity in God's Holy Church enables believers to be educated about Christ's Birth. Believers experience the Birth of Jesus Christ on a personal and collective basis in the Church.

Open hearts, minds and souls personally experience Christ's Birth. The Mystery of Christ's Birth exceeds human understanding yet is realized each year in the celebration of the Feast of the Nativity.

Christ's Peace, Love and Joy come alive in God's Holy Church on the Feast of the Nativity. Christ's Peace, Love and Joy live within the hearts, minds and souls of all fervent believers.

The Herod of old exists in different forms in the present world and with different identities. Forces against Christ always exist. Evil is always present. The Triumphant and Resurrected Christ is present to dispel and overcome evil.

God's Church provides the nourishment for believers to deal with evil. The Church enables believers to experience the Resurrected Christ in the Divine Liturgy.

Jesus Christ keeps believers strong against the forces of evil. The Church provides the pathway to the Kingdom of God and eternal life. The Feasts of the Church open and are integral to the narrow path to the Kingdom for the believer.

The hunger of the soul is nourished with each Feast of the Church. Believers' lives are enriched with the celebrations of the Church's feasts. The Life of Christ is made known to the world through the Feasts.

Believers grow in Christ with each festal celebration. Jesus Christ becomes better known to each believer attentive to the meaning of the feasts. The Church's celebrations are instructive and educational in additions to being joyful.

Give abundant thanks to the Lord for the Feast of the Nativity. Be grateful for the opportunity to celebrate the Feast in peace and freedom. Be increasingly attentive to the content of the Divine services to be better educated.

Let each Feast be a time of personal renewal and growth in Jesus Christ. Prepare daily for Jesus Christ's glorious Second Coming. Constantly repent of sins and be vigilant against the forces of evil.

God's Holy Church is a blessing beyond measure. Do not take the Church for granted. Do not be lukewarm in celebrating Jesus' Birth. Fervent belief in Christ transforms personal life.

Fervent belief in Jesus Christ brings Christ's Peace, Love and Joy alive in the believer. God's Holy Church makes possible the celebrating of the Birth of Jesus Christ. Be ever thankful! Peace of God! Christ is Born!

The Twenty Ninth Sunday after Pentecost. Sunday after the Nativity. Virgin Martyr Anyisia. Venerable Teodora of Gaesaria in Cappadocia. December 30, 2024/ January 12, 2025. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic

GOD ENTERED INTO THE DEPTHS OF HUMAN LIFE

Christ is Born!



In truth God as a man was born on earth! Why? *That we might live through him* (1 John 4:9). For without the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ, human life is wholly and completely a suicidal absurdity, and death is truly the most outright and horrible absurdity on earth. To comprehend

death means comprehending life in all its depth, height, and limitlessness. This can only be done by the All-man-loving Lord, Who by His immeasurable love becomes man and forever remains the God-man in the human world. Only as God-life, life in God, can human life acquire its eternal meaning. But outside of God, life is the most ridiculous absurdity, filled with offense and bitterness. Your life, O man, can find its only reasonable, rational, logical meaning in God alone. And your thought, brother, your human thought finds its divine and immortal meaning only in God, only as God-thought. Human thought only becomes God-thought in the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the same with your senses, O man—only in God do they find their divine, immortal meaning. Without this, your senses are your most merciless torturers, continually crucifying you on an eternal cross, after which there is no resurrection. And the conscience? Where does this ferocious stranger come from in us, people? It too only unites with its divine and eternal meaning as God-conscience. Without this, human conscience is a ferocious and ghastly absurdity. And your death, and my death, and the death of all people—isn't it the cruelest torture for human beings throughout the world? Yes, it truly is. But it too, only as the death of the God-man, gains its eternal meaning through the resurrection of the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ; for through Him and only through Him does victory over death happen and death in the human world can be comprehended. Thus also everything human, the entire human with all his innumerable infinities, only as the grace-filled God-man in the deified and all-vivifying Body of the God-man Christ—the Church—gains his divine, eternal, God-human, and higher meaning. Through His incarnation, through becoming man, becoming human, has God in the most manifest way entered into the very womb, the very bowels of human life, into the blood, into the heart, into the center of all existence. Squeezed out by voluntary human sin from the world, from the body, from the human soul, through the incarnation, by becoming man He returns to the world, to the body, to the soul. He wholly becomes a man, and being a man He labors for man, settles into the world and among creatures, takes care of the creature, enlightens the creature, saves the creature, transforms the creature, and deifies the creature. God's incarnation is the greatest upheaval and the most providential event, both on Earth and in Heaven, for the miracle of miracles has happened. If up until then the creation of the world from nothing was the greatest miracle, the incarnation of God in man has without a doubt surpassed it in its miraculousness. If at the creation of the world the words of God were clothed in matter, then at the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ God has clothed Himself in a body, in matter, in flesh. Therefore the incarnation of God became providential throughout the whole creation—for every individual, for every being, for every creature.

You, too, live by Him—live by the God-man and you will be healed of all deaths, all sins, all passions, and all diabolism. May your life become a God-life. In this is your whole heavenly-earthly mystery, O man, the moment you become a member of the church—a member of the God-man Body of Christ. And how should we live in the Church of Christ? We should live through the Holy Mysteries and holy virtues. That is why there is a fast before the Nativity. Fasting is the first virtue, and prayer is always with it. These two foundational virtues bring a person to the God-man and teach him with divine wisdom how to live by Him and in Him. What should we do with the body given to us from God? Purify it, free it from all uncleanness, from all

passions, from all evil, from every demon. And what does this mean? It means cleansing it of every sin, for in every sin a devil is hiding, in every sin a devil works apart from your free will. In a great sin is a prince of demons, in a small sin is an imp. You and I and every person has been given all the necessary means to conquer those demons, all the passions, all sins, and all deaths in us and in the world around us. Prayer and fasting are in the first place. The all-true lips of the All-true Lord Jesus Christ have pronounced also this life-creating truth: *This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting* (Matt. 17:21)—all kinds of sins, all kinds of passions, all kinds of demons.

The Nativity is before you, before me, before us, brothers and sisters: God is born as a man, “so that we would receive life through Him” and thus be filled in soul and body with God. And this is most readily acquired by prayer and fasting. They cleanse and purify the body and the soul, so that wondrous joy would settle into them, and the sweetest God-infant, our Lord Jesus and God would fill completely our human existence, all of its enumerable infinities. It is for this reason, O man, that your body and your soul were created—to be filled with God and to live with God in the divine world on high. Our God-given teachers in this work are humble prayer and humble fasting—these holy foundational Gospel virtues. May they fly with us, may they precede us and ceaselessly announce to all people throughout the world the all-saving and all-joyful glad tidings:

Christ is Born!

St. Justin Popovic
Translation by Nun Cornelia (Rees)

Services this Week

- **Tuesday (01.14.2025.)**
 - **The Circumcision of our Lord Jesus Christ; St Basil the Great (New Year)**
 - *Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM.*
- **Saturday (01.18.2025.)**
 - **Holy Theopemptus and Theonas; Venerable Syncretica - Holy Cross Day**
- **29th Sunday after Pentecost (01.19.2025.)**
 - **The Holy Theophany of our Lord Jesus Christ - EPIPHANY**
 - *Divine Liturgy starts at 10:00 AM.*

Donations January 5-7, 2025

Offering - \$5,980.00 Candles - \$207.00 Dues - \$200.00

Christmas Donations

Men's Club - \$250.00 Choir - \$200.00

Contributions for Gold Coin for Cescica

Adam Lichva, Jencine Campagna, Dan & Dyne Tomak, Gary, Rose, & Kristina Mainkovich, Richard & Suzette Gardnehour, John & Patty Pavich, Tom & Carole McAllister, Tony & Linda Freidhoff

Building Fund

Adam Lichvar - \$62

IMO George & Millie Moncilovich - Michael Moncilovich - \$500

IMO Natalie Ofsanko

Sandra Davidson - \$100, Mike & Karen McGowan - \$50

Michael & Mary Raich - \$50, Steve Purich - \$50,

Patricia Sheldon - \$25, Louis & Debbie Gjurich - \$25,

Sylvester Gjurich - \$25, Richard & Suzette Gardenhour - \$25,

Dianna Dunnington - \$25, Eli Cvijanovich - \$25,

Kim Rusky & Catts Uzelac - \$20, Darlene & Nick Hobar - \$20

Large Candles

IMO Lazo & Bosa Vuckovich from Helene Gleason

IMO John & Millie Pavich and Daughter Connie Bartis from Olga Bulich

IMO Brother Joseph Kondas from Richard Kondas

IMO Jeffrey Smith -41 years of marriage from wife Mariam Smith

IMO Dorothy Thomas from John & Patricia Pavich

IMO Joseph & Amelia Kondas from Richard Kondas

Our New Library!

We will be offering a selection of books for our parishioners to borrow for your enjoyment. All reads will be recommended by Father Dragan. At this time we have two available, "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy: Finding the Way to Christ in a Complicated Religious Landscape" and "Memory Eternal: Living with Grief as Orthodox Christians" - These titles are available in the Candle Room. Please feel free to sign one out and return when completed. If you have any suggestions, please speak with Father Dragan.

Small pocket calendars are available in the Candle Room for \$10

Nut, Apricot, and Poppyseed Rolls are still available!

A special thank you to all who purchased Poinsettias

Tony & Linda Freidhoff & Joanne Uzelac IMO Donald Uzelac & Wayne & Patricia Freidhoff
Carole McAllister IMO Devich and Lovrich Families
Evelyn Walet IMO Father Sam Vuckovich
Eli Cvijanovich IMO Deceased members of the Cvijanovich Family
Ed & Kathy Urban IMO Parents, Pete & Irene Martinovich
Karyn Waligora IMO Lazo & Bosa Vuckovich
Diane Tomak IMO Damjena & Lazo Gjurich and Bosa & Lazo Vuckovich
Danica B. Wess IMO Buncich Family & Wess Family
Mike Stipanovich IMO Alex & Beverly Stipanovich
Joe Bartis IMO Constance Bartis
Richard Kondas IMO Parents, Amelia & Joseph Kondas
John & Patricia Pavich IMO Deceased Family Members
Michael Mastovich IMO Milan & Helen Mastovich
Jencine Campagna
Father Rodney Torbic
Donna Zimmerman IMO Nicholas, Mary, David, & Deborah Miller
Diane Thomas IMO Helen Sabo & Dorothy Lavrnja
Jeanette "Chee Chee" Czubak IMO Vinny Czubak
Olga Bulich IMO Lillian Fleck, Sam Vuckovich & Nicholas Matijevic
Mary Kelly IMO Stephanie Lightbody
Gojko, Rose & Kristina Marinkovich IMO Family
Peter & Joanne Todorich IMO Nikola, Milka & Nick Jr.
Richard & Suzette Gardenhour IMO Grisin, Bozic and Gardenhour Families
Helene Gleason IMO Cookie Saula, Zora Locher & Bosa Vuckovich
Pat Niel IMO Buncich & Niel Families
Jencine Campagna
Lazo Gjurich and Peti Gjurich IMO Betty Gjurich

UPCOMING EVENTS

Circumcision of Our Lord (St. Basil) – Tuesday (January 14th)
9:30 AM –Divine Liturgy

Men's Club Pork Chop Dinner – Sunday, January 19, 2025

St. Sava Celebration –Sunday, February 2, 2025

Fish Fry

Friday, February 7, 2025

*** Lenten Fish Fries**

Friday, March 7th to Friday April 11, 2025