

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

Theophany **(01.19.2025.)**

Matthew 3:13-17

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. **(KJV)**

God's Holy Church celebrates the Great Feast of Theophany today. The Lord Jesus Christ being Baptized by John in the Jordan is celebrated every year in the Church. Great joy is associated with this Feast.

The Divine Son of God entering the Jordan River is a renewing of Creation. The Holy Trinity is manifested in the Feast with the Voice from Heaven and the appearance of the Spirit like a dove.

Some church celebrations include the release of doves in the joy of the Feast. Water is commonly blessed in the churches on the Feast of Theophany. Believers drink the blessed water and it is used for the blessings of homes.

Believers take containers of holy water to their homes to use throughout the year. Great faith is centered in the application of holy water for personal use. Love of God is manifested in the celebration of the Feast of Theophany.

Attentive believers contemplate the manifestation of the Trinity at the time of Jesus' Baptism. Serious believers deeply consider St. John the Baptist's humility. The Feast of Theophany is time to consider one's personal relationship with God.

The Feast of Theophany comes shortly after the celebration of Jesus Christ's Birth. Both Feasts convey newness. Being a Christian involves responsible behavior consistent with the teachings and life of Jesus Christ.

Prayer and fasting facilitate growth in Jesus Christ. The Great Feasts of the Church provide encounters with Christ in the festal celebrations. Great Feasts always include the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

Attentive believers learn from each Divine Liturgy and are transformed when receiving the Precious Body and Blood of Christ. When parishes bless nearby bodies of water on the Feast of Theophany the communities are enriched.

God's blessings work through the water being blessed in the churches and in the communities where water is blessed. Faith is certainly involved in the act of great blessing of waters.

Faith is always a part of the Christian life. God rewards the faith of believers. God opens the pathways to the Heavenly Kingdom and eternal life for those deeply rooted in faith.

The storms of life are weathered and overcome with strong faith. The Light of the Resurrected Christ burns brightly in the hearts of faithful believers. Jesus demonstrated that the waters of Baptism are good by His personal example.

Each Christian believer experiences baptism. Each believer is sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit at Chrismation. Believers confess belief in the Holy Trinity at Baptism and at each Divine Liturgy.

The Confession of Faith, The Creed, is lived daily in the actions of faithful believers. The Lord God helps and guides believers in the long journey from the Baptismal font to the Kingdom of God and eternal life.

The Church offers the instructions and teachings necessary for believers to journey to God's Kingdom. The Great Feasts of the Church, particularly the Divine Liturgies of the Feasts offer a foretaste of the Heavenly Kingdom. The contents of the Divine services edify the attentive believer and lift open hearts and minds.

The Divine services of the Church open the hearts, minds and souls to the presence of the Lord God. Believers experience the Lord in the Divine services. Believers come to know the peace, love and joy of God.

During the Divine Liturgy believers are inspired to lay aside earthly cares. The presence of God exists in the Divine Liturgy. Believers are blessed to experience God's presence.

The Great Feast of Theophany draws believers to the Church. Believers are mindful of their own baptism as they celebrate Jesus' Baptism. The Baptismal waters are empowered by Jesus Christ.

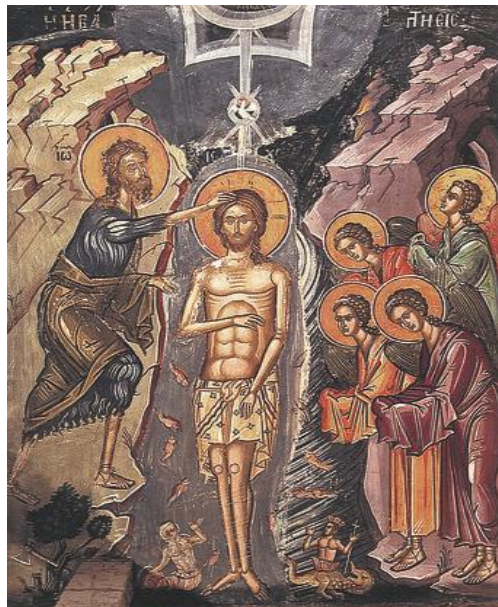
Theophany inspires believers to think carefully about God's Creation and the responsibility to care for Creation. Humans have a very responsible part in caring for the environment.

The land and earth's resources are not to be abused. They are to be used in ways pleasing to the Lord God. The Feast of Theophany each year is an opportunity to reassess personal responsibility in caring for Creation.

Thank God for the Church's celebration of Jesus' Baptism. Thank God for the opportunity to celebrate the Feast in freedom. May the joy of the Feast be a time of personal renewal in the Lord God.

**The Feast of Theophany. January 6/19, 2025. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.
Father Rodney Torbic**

ON THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST



Celebrating holy Theophany, we are transported in thought to the very place of this event, and we shall intelligently attend to what is happening there! There it is—Bethabara! You can see St. John standing on the shore, in clothes made of camel's

hair, with a girdle of a skin about his loins (Mk. 1:6). He is surrounded by a countless multitude of people from Jerusalem, Judea, and all the lands around the Jordan. The Baptism of the Lord has just finished, and all eyes are fixed upon the Son of man just emerged from the waters. They see nothing else. But sharpen by faith the eye of your mind, and following after John, passing over what is seen by all, turn an attentive gaze upon what is not seen by all—on the opened heavens, the dove descending, and the voice saying, *Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased* (Mk. 1:11). Fix your gaze, and do not tear your attention away from this wondrous vision! O! Who will give power to our words, that they might worthily sing praises to God in three hypostases, revealed at the Jordan!

Along with lost paradise, the heavens were shut closed by God's righteous judgment. But as a strong gate cannot hold back a powerful surge of water, so did the fortress of righteous judgment finally melt from the fire of Divine love—and now the heavens are opened. Brethren, let us also open the forces of our nature, let us insatiably receive the revealed God, and delight in Him. Let us soak all our senses with Him, all our thoughts and desires.

We are sunk in darkness; but here is abundant light. We are immersed in dismal separation—from heaven and from ourselves—but here is an all-enlivening peace. We are exhausted by our powerlessness, but here is the inexhaustible source of all strength!

And as after the darkness of night all creatures long for the light and strive with desire to receive the first rays of the rising sun, so do we turn the illuminated eye of our mind toward the Theophany, desiring to receive the comforting rays of the Divine economy of our salvation, redeemed by the merciful Word of God the Father—and delight in them.

As a creature constricted by the cold of winter greedily meets the spring, which looses the bonds of cold, and again finds harmonious vivification, so do we, vivified by the hope of salvation, with our hearts receive peace shining forth from the baptized Lord—and we delight in Him!

As during the summer heat the thirsting soil drinks in with a thousand lips the rain falling from the sky, so do we with every desire of our souls receive all the strength that is ready to pour upon us from the Spirit descending in the form of a dove—and we delight in it!

Why should we even invite ourselves to this? For, aren't we all led into the economy of salvation? Shouldn't we all therefore be enlightened, and conciliated, and enlivened? But O! When has it been so? Once the Lord, recalling John the Baptist, said reproachfully to the Jews, *He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light* (Jn. 5:35).^[1] Every year in our holy church the Lord brings also to us the light of His Theophany before John in the Jordan. Doesn't He say to us through this, "Here is the burning and shining light!" Make sure that that you be willing to rejoice only in his light while it is shining.

Be careful, brethren, for you walk in danger!^[2] (Eph. 5:15). Doesn't the deceptive call of the enemy of our salvation at times seductively strike our ears?

False wisdom says: "Come to me, I have the light." But it does not have the light, only a phantom light, and those who listen to it call light darkness and darkness light.

The world says: "Come to me, and I will give you peace!" But it has no peace, only a phantom peace, and those who are lured by it and discover the lie only too late reproachfully condemn it saying, "Peace! Peace! And where is peace?"

The prince of the world promises wide berth and life, and power and pleasure. But he has neither power, nor freedom, nor pleasure—only a phantom of these, and those who are seduced by them can only call themselves alive, free, and satisfied, while in fact they are wearied slaves, tormented by deprivation.

Hasten, brethren, to acquire the skill of discerning all of this in the light of the Theophany and do not be lured by what is only called light, and peace, and power but is not. Strive instead ever harder towards the One Who is the way, the truth, and the life, also righteousness, and illumination, and deliverance.

Well, we have almost gotten to judgment and self-condemnation. What is there to be done? That is how the Lord wants it to be. He has ordered that the Church brightly celebrate His Theophany, and wills that each of us enter into the joy of the feast only through the judgment of conscience. Whoever has tasted the gifts that are the cause of the Church's present celebration will rejoice; but whoever has not tasted them—first taste them, and then you will rejoice. Amen.

St. Theophan the Recluse
Translation by Nun Cornelia (Rees)

Services this Week

- **Monday (01.20.2025.)**
 - **Synaxis of the Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John**
 - ***Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM.***
- **31th Sunday after Pentecost -after Theophany (01.26.2025.)**
 - **Holy Martyrs Harmylus and Stratonicus (Apodosis of Theophany)**
 - ***Divine Liturgy starts at 10:00 AM.***

Donations January 12, 2025

Offering – \$3,906.00 Candles – \$79.00 Dues – \$250.00

Donations

IMO Steve & Mary Stramanak from Sharon & Jim Urban – \$100
IMO of Tete Donna Koslin Wharton from Sharon & Jim Urban – \$100

Building Fund

IMO Fr. Radisa Purich and Fr. Ned Grgurevich from Eli Cvijanovich – \$200

IMO Natalie Ofsanko

Donald & Diana Bailey – \$50, Gojko, Rose & Kristina Marinkovich – \$25

IMO Nancy Gula

Margaret Enoch – \$100, Eli Cvijanovich – \$25, John & Patty Pavich – \$20,
& Michael & Mary Raich – \$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
PLEASE TAKE YOUR POINSETTIAS HOME TODAY

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

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