

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

The Sunday after Theophany
(01.26.2025.)

Matthew 4:12-17

Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee; And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. **(KJV)**

The Gospel of St. Matthew has been proclaimed and preserved in the Church for centuries. The importance of St. Matthew's Gospel in the Church is worthy of each believer's attention and consideration.

Personal life is enriched when the Gospel is read as a regular part of daily life. Reading the Gospel on a regular basis nourishes the heart, mind and soul. The Gospel offers sound direction for daily living.

Today it is worthy to acknowledge that St. John the Baptist was in prison. If we go back through the centuries, we note that many saints and good people were in prison in addition to those who were clearly criminals.

St. Matthew's Gospel describing the Great and Last Judgment describes the importance of visiting the imprisoned. Jesus Christ is identified with the imprisoned according to St. Matthew's Gospel. (Mt. 25:31-46)

Today's Gospel references the Holy Prophet Isaiah. The Creed embraced by believers at Baptism and recited at each Divine Liturgy expresses belief the Holy Spirit spoke through the Prophets.

St. Luke's Gospel (16:19-31) verifies the value of being attentive to Moses and the Prophets. The rich man in the Gospel is told if his brothers are not mindful of Moses and the Prophets they will not benefit from one rising from the dead.

Beginning today and during the remaining time of earthly life, believers will decide how they will spend the time of life. The time of life comes only once and is not repeated.

Each moment is an opportunity to invest in the Kingdom of God. The Holy Gospel instructs believers how to invest in and travel the path to the Kingdom.

Today's Gospel talks about the Light of Christ.

The Light of Christ illumines the path to the Kingdom. Each person determines the degree they will embrace and follow Jesus Christ to the Kingdom. Learning about Christ and following Jesus Christ is completely voluntary.

The Church offers unlimited opportunities for each moment of each day to learn about, follow and grow in Jesus Christ. Deliberate effort is required to seriously follow Jesus Christ on the narrow path to the Kingdom.

Serious effort is involved in any undertaking that is worthwhile. Following Jesus Christ in a serious way is compatible with good in daily life. Jesus Christ is the Personification of Good.

When a person does good and pursues good with Christ in mind, the person embraces Jesus Christ. Believers can learn to live on daily basis in Christ by being attentive to the teachings and life of the Church.

Jesus Christ' Baptism in the Jordan by John the Baptist is a major feast in the Church. Major feasts are instructional and transformational. Believers' lives are transformed through their active and attentive participation in the feasts.

The Divine Liturgy is a part of all major feasts. Believers experience and are united with Jesus Christ in the Divine Liturgy. The Light of Christ wipes out any darkness. The Light of Christ triumphs over the darkness of death.

The Light of Christ illumines hearts, minds and souls. Jesus Christ wipes out the sins of believers choosing to repent. The current Gospel references Jesus' call for repentance because the Kingdom is at hand.

Each person chooses the goals of life. Believers embrace God's Kingdom as the goal at Baptism. God's Kingdom is to be pursued daily from the time of Baptism until departure from this life.

Remaining conscious of the goal of the Kingdom each day keeps the narrow path to the Kingdom in focus. Repentance is required when a person departs from the narrow path. Jesus is present to offer forgiveness when repentance occurs.

The joy of the Feast of Theophany resounds in the Church today. Serbian Orthodox Christians are indebted to St. Sava today and every day for being inspirational in their lives down through the centuries.

St. Sava is a lasting example of faithfulness to Jesus Christ. The Church of St. Sava has endured endless persecution unto the present day and has triumphed by following the Light of Christ.

Today be mindful and rejoice at Jesus Christ's Baptism in the Jordan. Thank God for St. Sava being the formidable example in Jesus Christ benefittig believers throughout the world.

The Sunday after Theophany. Holy Martyrs Hermylus and Stratonicus. Apodasis of Theophany. January 13/26, 2025. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The blessing of a home is one of the most beautiful and profound traditions of our Orthodox faith, deeply connected to the Feast of Theophany. On this day, we commemorate the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Jordan River, where He sanctified the waters for the salvation of mankind. The Church blesses the waters on this holy day, as a powerful symbol of spiritual cleansing and renewal. Just as the holy water blessed on Theophany represents the sanctification of all creation, the blessing of our homes with this same holy water brings God's blessing, peace, and divine presence into our lives.

Saint Luke of Crimea, a great archbishop and surgeon, taught us that "Where there is prayer, there is peace, and where there is peace, there is God." Just as Christ's baptism sanctified the waters, the blessing of our homes with this same holy water grants us the grace of the Holy Spirit, bringing peace, protection, and God's presence into our homes. By receiving this blessing, our homes become places where God's grace dwells, reminding us to live in harmony with His will.

We invite you, dear brothers and sisters, to open the doors of your home to God's blessing this Theophany season. Schedule the blessing of your home and allow the prayers of the Church, the sanctified water, and the presence of the Holy Spirit to fill your home with light and peace. Father Dragan Vukovic is available for this sacred act and can be reached at 814-244-4063.

May the blessing of the Holy Spirit be with you and your families, granting you health, love, and spiritual joy.

With love in Christ,

Yours in the Lord,

Fr. Dragan Vukovic

Services this Week

- **Monday (01.27.2025.)**
 - **St Sava, First Archbishop of Serbia**
 - ***Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM.***
- **Friday (01.31.2025.)**
 - **St Athanasius the Great; St Cyril of Alexandria; St Maximus, Archbishop of Serbia**
 - ***Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM.***
- **32nd Sunday after Pentecost (01.26.2025.)**
 - **Venerable and God-Bearing Father Euthymius the Great**
 - ***Divine Liturgy starts at 10:00 AM.***

Donations January 19, 2025

Offering – \$600.00 Candles – \$25.00 Dues – \$50.00

Building Fund

IMO Natalie Ofsanko

Edward & Jeanne Oparnico – \$100, Debbie McCormick – \$50,
Chris Maggs – \$20

IMO Nancy Gula

Helen Havrilak – \$25, Chris Maggs – \$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!

**PLEASE TAKE YOUR POINSETTIAS HOME TODAY
(Today is the last Sunday!)**

UPCOMING EVENTS

St. Sava Celebration – Sunday, February 2, 2025

Fish Fry

Friday, February 7, 2025

Lenten Fish Fries

Friday, March 7th to Friday April 11, 2025

Lenten Vespers

5th Sunday of Lent – St. Mary of Egypt

Sunday, April 6, 2025 – 5:00 PM