

# Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

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## The Sunday after Theophany (01.22.2023.)

### 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)**

God's Kingdom is embraced as the primary goal for believers from the time of Holy Baptism. The journey to God's Kingdom is to continue from Holy Baptism throughout the remaining days of earthly life.

The Lord Jesus Christ connects repentance with preparing for the Kingdom. Centuries have passed since Jesus spoke of repentance. Repentance remains essential for the believer.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the highest authority for earthly believers. The Lord's message of repentance is to be taken to heart throughout earthly life. God's Kingdom is the goal and repentance is necessary for the goal to be achieved.

The present Gospel speaks about great light in darkness and light in the shadow of death. When believers are immersed in sin, life is very dark and death to the soul is entirely possible.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Light when life is very dark and sin endangers the soul. Every person sins more than he or she is fully aware. Jesus Christ's lights the path out of darkness and the way for the soul to safety.

Believers heeding Jesus' message to repent will follow Christ's Light along the path to the Kingdom. Jesus' teachings and His life, death and Resurrection give the believer direction and nourishment for life's journey.

Jesus' goodness and mercy in the forgiveness of sins and His Precious Body and Blood keep the believer on the road to God's Kingdom. Prayer and fasting keep the believer away from the dangers of life's pitfalls.

The Divine services of God's Holy Church nourish and strengthen the believer. The Church is a fortress and safe haven against the ills of the world. Believers are renewed in Christ by attending the Divine services.

The saints and martyrs of God's Holy Church are examples for believers to learn from and to seek as intercessors. The Mother of God is the Protectress of believers and a shining example of purity in life.

The Church is celebrating the Lord Jesus Christ's Baptism in the Jordan at this time. Remembrance of each believer's Baptism comes to mind when Christ's Baptism is celebrated.

The believer's Christian identity is forever established at Holy Baptism and Chrismation. The believer puts on Christ and is sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Life's journey taken up following Baptism carries with it the expectation of faithfulness to Christ. Believers are expected to be faithful to Christ by honoring His teachings and commandments.

The journey to God's Kingdom begins and continues within the Church. Believers benefit from the presence and support of the Church until Christ's Second Coming and the Final Judgment.

Every day is a day to prepare for Christ's Second Coming. Every day is a time to prepare for the Great and Final Judgment. Personal relationships and behavior establish the record for the Great and Final Judgment.

Celebrating the Feast of Theophany is integral to the liturgical life of the Church. Heeding Jesus' message to repent is also consistent with life in the Church.

Repenting believers turn away from sin and direct their lives to actively following the Lord Jesus Christ. Serious believers guard the heart, mind and soul. Serious believers seek Jesus Christ as first and foremost in life.

John the Baptist gave his life for Christ. John the Baptist is a foremost example of humility in understanding his relationship with Christ. At the time of Theophany, St. John the Baptist captivates the attentive believer's mind.

Joy radiates in creation when Jesus is Baptized in the Jordan and the Holy Trinity is made manifest. Believers have much to think about at this time when the Feast of Theophany is celebrated.

Believers do well to personally measure and assess how well the commitment to Jesus Christ is being honored in daily life. An honest assessment of life reveals the extent of personal sin.

Repentance is the way to return to the narrow path to God's Kingdom. Repentance is the way to restore God's Kingdom as the primary goal in life.

Peace overtakes the heart, mind and soul when repentance takes place.

The joy of Holy Baptism is renewed when Jesus Christ is restored through repentance as first and foremost in life. Taking seriously the Feast of Theophany encourages, hastens and fosters repentance in serious believers.

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**The Sunday after Theophany. Holy Martyr Polyeuctus; Holy Hieromartyr Philip, Metropolitan of Moscow. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic**

## The Prologue from Ochrid St Nikolai of Zhicha

### **1. SAINT SAVA [SABAS], ARCHBISHOP OF SERBIA**

Sava was born in 1169 A.D. He was the son of Stefan Nemanja the Grand Župan of Serbia. As a young man, Sava yearned for the spiritual life, for which he fled to the Holy Mountain [Mt. Athos], where he was tonsured a monk and lived according to the ascetic rule with rare zeal. Stefan Nemanja followed the example of his son and came to the Holy Mountain, where he was tonsured a monk and eventually fell asleep in the Lord as the monk Simeon.

Sava obtained the independence of the Serbian Church from the Byzantine emperor and the patriarch, and became the first Archbishop of Serbia. Together with his father, he built Hilandar Monastery and, after that, many other monasteries, churches and schools throughout the Serbian lands. On two occasions he made pilgrimages to the sacred places in the Holy Land. He restored peace between his two brothers, who were estranged because of a struggle for power. He restored peace between the Serbs and their neighbors. In establishing the Serbian Church, he also established the Serbian state and culture. He instilled peace between all the Balkan peoples and worked for the benefit of all--for which he was loved and respected by all who lived in the Balkans. He gave a Christian soul to the Serbian people--a soul that did not perish with the eventual collapse of the Serbian state. Sava reposed in Trnovo, Bulgaria, during the reign of Emperor Asen, on January 12, 1236 A.D., after becoming ill following the Divine Liturgy on the Feast of Theophany. King Vladislav translated his body to the Milešev Monastery, from which Sinan Pasha removed St. Sava's relics, to burn them on Vračar hill in Belgrade on April 27, 1595 A.D.

### **2. THE VENERABLE MARTYRS: THE FATHERS OF SINAI AND RAITHU**

These holy martyrs were slain by the Saracens--the fathers of Sinai in the fourth century, and the fathers of Raithu in the fifth century.

### **3. SAINT HILARY, BISHOP OF POITIERS**

Hilary was an ardent combatant against the heresy of Arius in the West. He suffered much because of his defense of Orthodoxy. Hilary wrote many works; the most important was his thesis about the Holy Trinity. He reposed in the Lord in the year 367 A.D.

### **4. SAINT NINA, ENLIGHTENER OF GEORGIA**

Nina was a relative of St. George the Great-martyr and Juvenal the Patriarch of Jerusalem. Her parents belonged to the nobility in Cappadocia, and--since her parents were tonsured in the monastic state--Nina was educated under the tutelage of Patriarch Juvenal. Hearing about the people of Georgia, the virgin Nina, from an early age, desired to go to Georgia and to baptize the Georgians. The Most-holy Mother of God appeared to Nina and promised to take her to this land. When our Lord opened the way, the young Nina indeed traveled to Georgia, where, in a short period of time, she gained the love of the Georgian people. Nina succeeded in baptizing the Georgian King Mirian, his wife Nana and their son Bakar who, later on, zealously assisted Nina's missionary work. During her lifetime, Nina traveled throughout Georgia, converting the entire nation to the Christian Faith. She did her work at the time of the terrible persecution of Christians at the hands of Emperor Diocletian. Having rested from her many labors, Nina reposed in the Lord in the year 335 A.D. Her body is entombed in the Church of the Holy Great-martyr George in Bodbe Convent. She worked many miracles during her life and after her death.

### **HYMN OF PRAISE SAINT NINA**

A virgin most beautiful, noble Nina,  
By providence became the Apostle to the Georgians,  
In defiance of the persecution by Diocletian, the Emperor.  
With the Cross she baptized King Mirian,  
His wife Nana and his son Bakar,  
And through them, all the people and the elite of the leaders.  
With the Cross of the Son of God she baptized them all.  
Saint Nina, Apostle to the Georgians.  
From her youth Nina prayed to God  
That Djul (the Rose)--Georgia--be baptized by her;

And that for which she prayed, the good God granted.

From Nina's hand the Cross shone

Upon gentle Georgia, where it shines even now,

Where Nina's hand blesses even now.

There is Nina's grave, over which a church glistens,

Glorifying Saint Nina and the Lord Christ.

### REFLECTION

If, at times, the dogmas of the Faith seem like hard food, you should first endeavor to fulfill the moral dogmas of Christianity: then the understanding of the dogmas of the Faith will be revealed to you. The inquisitive examination of higher things, without effort regarding the improvement of your life, does not bring any benefit. Once, the monks of Egypt were reflecting on Melchisedek, and not being able to come to a clear understanding of the mysterious personality of this ancient king and high priest, they invited Abba Copres to their assembly and asked him about Melchisedek. Upon hearing this, Copres struck himself three times on the mouth and said: "Woe to you Copres! You left that which God commanded you to do, and you inquire into that which God does not require of you." Hearing him, the monks were ashamed and dispersed. St. John Chrysostom writes: "If we adhere to the true dogmas and are not concerned about our behavior, we will not have any kind of benefit; and in the same way, if we concern ourselves about our behavior and neglect true dogmas, we will receive no benefit for our salvation. If we want to be delivered from Gehenna and to gain the Kingdom, we need to be adorned on both sides--with correctness of dogmas and honorable living."

### CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the mercy of the Lord Jesus:

1. Toward sinners and toward those who are ill;
2. Toward the people who are confused, as a flock without a shepherd;
3. Toward mankind in general, for whom He allowed Himself to be crucified.

### HOMILY

#### on the vision of the invisible world

"We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

We see this material and transient world, but we look to that spiritual and immortal world.

We see earthly joy, often interrupted by tears and sighs and, in the end, always concluding with death; but we look to spiritual joy among the angels and saints of God in the heavens, to joy uninterrupted and eternal.

We see the sufferings and failures of the righteous in this life; but we look at their glory and celebration in the next world.

We see many successes, the glory and the honor of the unrighteous in this life; but we look to their defeat, condemnation and indescribable torment in eternity.

We see the Church of God often humiliated and persecuted in this world; but we look to the final victory of the Church over all of her enemies and adversaries, both visible and invisible. Brethren, we often see tyrants and abductors as rulers and wealthy men in this age, and we see saints as poor, dejected and forgotten; but then we look at the other kingdom, the Kingdom of God--eternal, sinless and immortal--in which the saints will reign, without one tyrant or abductor.

O Lord, most patient and most merciful, open our spiritual vision, that we may see that which awaits us after this brief life, and that we endeavor to fulfill Thy law.

**To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.**

## Services this Week

- ❖ *Friday (January 27<sup>th</sup>) St Sava, First Archbishop of Serbia*  
09:30 Divine Liturgy
- ❖ **SUNDAY (January 29<sup>th</sup>) – The 33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**  
10:00 AM - Divine Liturgy

**Donations January 15, 2023**

Offering - \$ 2,366.00  
Dues - \$100

Candles - \$50.00  
Donations - \$100

**Building Fund**

In Memory of Jeffrey Smith from Linda & Lucky Villa - \$50

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**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

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**Today, Sunday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, following Divine Liturgy,  
everyone is invited to Father Dragan and Popadija  
Vladanka's home in celebration of their Slava, Sveti Jovan.**

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**SUNDAY, JANUARY 29, 2023  
St. Sava Program & Luncheon  
Honored Kumovi, Kum Petar Vukovic & Kuma Quinn Komar**

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**Please feel free to take your Poinsettia  
And any extras that you would like.  
Garden Haven was generous in donating 50 poinsettias and  
S.E.A.D.S donated a few extra.  
Everyone help themselves!**

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**Fish Fries begin Friday, February 24, 2023**