

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

**The Feast of the Annunciation**  
**(04.07.2024.)**

**(Luke 1:24-38)**

And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men. And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.  
**(KJV)**

**The Third Sunday of Great Lent**  
**Veneration of the Holy Cross**

**(Mark 8:34-38, 9:1)**

And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For

whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power. (KJV)

We gather today in God's Holy Church to celebrate the Major Feast of the Annunciation. We come to church for the benefit of our souls and to seek the Kingdom of God.

At Holy Baptism we committed our lives to the Lord Jesus Christ. We choose to follow the narrow path to God's Heavenly Kingdom. During our journey we have departed from the path on too many occasions.

Repentance enables us to return to the narrow path and restores our unity with Jesus Christ. We find joy in the life in Jesus Christ that exceeds all joy. Jesus Christ offers us peace in the heart, mind and soul.

The Feast of the Annunciation celebrates the announcement to Mary, a virgin, that she would give birth to Jesus. The birth would be possible through the action of the Holy Spirit. The Gospel is clear all things are possible with God.

Mary received God's message from the angel Gabriel with complete obedience. She established the enduring example for believers through the centuries. Mary agreed to honor the word of God.

The Lord Jesus Christ taking on human flesh for our salvation changed the world forever. Jesus' humble birth, His miracles and teachings continue to amaze believers and inspire them.

Jesus' willingness to go to the Cross, to die, be buried and rise from the Tomb exceeds the capacity of the human mind. Jesus offers unconquerable hope for eternal life by His defeat of death.

Each believer has died with Christ and has risen with Christ at Holy Baptism. Each believer has been baptized under the Sign of the Cross. The Sign of the Cross is the Sign of Victory.

Today, during the Third Sunday of Great Lent, the Cross is prominently in the middle of the Church as a source of strength for believers journeying to Pascha.

Believers embracing the Cross demonstrate their love for Jesus Christ.

Christ's love for each believer was verified and manifested when He voluntarily ascended the Cross. Christ bore the shame of being tortured and crucified. He revealed He was stronger than death.

The Cross provides strength for believes embracing Christ's love and loving Christ completely. Martyrs of every century prove the value of the Cross and the love of the crucified and risen Christ.

The remaining days of Great Lent are opportunities for believers to live fully in Jesus Christ. Believers are encouraged to demonstrate their love for Christ and their love for their neighbors.

Believers are expected to continue to fast, increase daily prayers and give alms cheerfully during the days leading to Holy Week and Pascha. God's Church freely offers the necessary nourishment for the journey to Pascha.

Mary was chosen from among all women of all the centuries to give birth to Jesus. She has carried this singular honor without blemish through the centuries. She intercedes in behalf of believers before the Lord.

May the joy of the announcement of Jesus' birth fill our hearts, May the honor given to Mary be held dear in our hearts and minds. May the Cross in the middle of the church benefit our souls as we continue the journey to Holy Week and Pascha.

-----**Feast of the Annunciation. The Third Sunday of Great Lent. Veneration of the Holy Cross. March 25/April 7, 2024. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.**  
**Father Rodney Torbic**

## Sunday of the Veneration of the Holy Cross

On the Third Sunday of Great and Holy Lent, the Orthodox Church commemorates the Precious and Life-Giving Cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Services include a special veneration of the Cross, which prepares the faithful for the commemoration of the Crucifixion during Holy Week.

### Historical Background



The commemoration and ceremonies of the Third Sunday of Lent are closely parallel to the feasts of the Veneration of the Cross (September 14) and the Procession of the Cross (August 1). Not only does the Sunday of the Holy Cross prepare us for commemoration of the Crucifixion, but it also reminds us that the whole of Lent is a period when we are crucified with Christ.

As we have “crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:24), and will have mortified ourselves during these forty days of the Fast, the precious and life-giving Cross is now placed before us to refresh our souls and encourage us who may be filled with a sense of bitterness, resentment, and depression. The Cross reminds us of the Passion of our Lord, and by presenting to us His example, it encourages us to follow Him in struggle and sacrifice, being refreshed, assured, and comforted. In other words, we must experience what the Lord experienced during His Passion - being humiliated in a shameful manner. The Cross teaches us that through pain and suffering we shall see the fulfillment of our hopes: the heavenly inheritance and eternal glory.

As they who walk on a long and hard way and are bowed down by fatigue find great relief and strengthening under the cool shade of a leafy tree, so do we find comfort, refreshment, and rejuvenation under the Life-giving Cross, which our Fathers “planted” on this Sunday. Thus, we are fortified and enabled to continue our Lenten journey with a light step, rested and encouraged.

Or, as before the arrival of the king, his royal standards, trophies, and emblems of victory come in procession and then the king himself appears in a triumphant parade, jubilant and rejoicing in his victory and filling those under him with joy, so does the Feast of the Cross precede the coming of our King, Jesus Christ. It warns us that He is about to proclaim His victory over death and appear to us in the glory of the Resurrection. His Life-Giving Cross is His royal scepter, and by venerating it we are filled with joy, rendering Him glory. Therefore, we become ready to welcome our King, who shall manifestly triumph over the powers of darkness.

The present feast has been placed in the middle of Great Lent for another reason. The Fast can be likened to the spring of Marah whose waters the children of Israel encountered in the wilderness. This water was undrinkable due to its bitterness but became sweet when the Holy Prophet Moses dipped the wood into its depth. Likewise, the wood of the Cross sweetens the days of the Fast, which are bitter and often grievous because of our tears. Yet Christ comforts us during our course through the desert of the Fast, guiding and leading us by His hand to the spiritual Jerusalem on high by the power of His Resurrection.

Moreover, as the Holy Cross is called the Tree of Life, it is placed in the middle of the Fast, as the ancient tree of life was placed in the middle of the garden of Eden. By this, our Holy Fathers wished to remind us of Adam's gluttony as well as the fact that through this Tree has condemnation been abolished. Therefore, if we bind ourselves to the Holy Cross, we shall never encounter death but shall inherit life eternal

## Icon Of The Gommemoration

The most common icon associated with the Veneration of the Cross is the same icon used on the [Feast of the Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross, September 14](#). In the icon, Patriarch Macarius is standing in the pulpit elevating the Cross for all to see and venerate. On each side of the Patriarch are deacons holding candles. The elevated Cross is surrounded and venerated by many clergy and lay people, including Saint Helen, the mother of Emperor Constantine.

In the background of the icon is a domed structure that represents the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem. This church was one of the churches constructed and dedicated by Emperor Constantine on the holy sites of Jerusalem.

Another icon related to this feast depicts the actual service of veneration that is conducted in the churches on the Third Sunday of Lent. In the center of the icon is the Cross. It is on a table surrounded by flowers. Above the Cross is the image of Christ in a partial mandorla representing His glory. He is blessing those who have gathered to venerate the Cross, the rulers, clergy, monastics, and laity.

As in the service of veneration, the icon shows the priest venerating the Cross as the people chant the hymn "We venerate Your Cross, O Christ, and Your holy Resurrection we glorify," which is inscribed on the table holding he Cross.

## Orthodox Christian Gommemoration of the Sunday of the Holy Cross

The Sunday of the Holy Cross is commemorated with the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great, which is preceded by the Matins service. A Great Vespers is conducted on Saturday evening. The hymns of the Triodion for this day are added to the usual prayers and hymns of the weekly commemoration of the Resurrection of Christ.

Scripture readings for the Sunday of Orthodoxy are: At the Orthros (Matins): The prescribed weekly Gospel reading. At the Divine Liturgy: [Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:1-6](#); [Mark 8:34-38; 9:1](#).

At the conclusion of the Matins (the traditional practice in association with a vigil) or of the Divine Liturgy, a special service is held. The Cross is placed on a tray surrounded by basil or daffodils and is taken in solemn procession through the church to the chanting of the Thrice Holy Hymn. The tray is placed on a table before the people, and the hymn of the Feast of the Cross is chanted. As the priest venerates the Cross, the priest then the people chant, “We venerate Your Cross, O Christ, and Your holy Resurrection we glorify.” At the conclusion of the service, the people come and venerate the cross and receive the flowers or basil from the priest.

## Hymns for the Sunday of the Veneration of the Holy Cross

### **Apolytikion (First Tone)**

O Lord, save Your people and bless Your inheritance; grant victory to the faithful over their adversaries. And protect Your commonwealth, by the power of Your Cross.

### **Festal Kontakion (Grave Tone)**

No longer does the flaming sword guard the gate of Eden, for a marvelous quenching is come upon it, even the Tree of the Cross. The sting has been taken from death, and the victory from Hades. And, You, my Savior, has appeared unto those in Hades saying: Enter again into Paradise.

### **Seasonal Kontakion (Plagal of the Fourth Tone) - Sung during Divine Liturgy**

O Champion General, we your faithful inscribe to you the prize of victory as gratitude for being rescued from calamity, O Theotokos. But since you have invincible power, free us from all kinds of perils so that we may cry out to you: Rejoice, O Bride unwedded. (Translated by Father George Papadeas)

# Services this Week

- **Monday (04.08.2024.)**
  - Synaxis of the Holy Archangel Gabriel (Apodosis of Annunciation) - *Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM*
- **4<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent – St John Glimacus (04.14.2024.)**
  - Venerable Mary of Egypt
  - *Divine Liturgy starts at 10:00 AM*



**Donations March 31, 2024**

**Offering - \$ 1,360.00 Candles - \$66.00**

**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

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**CONGRATULATIONS**

**To our Father Dragan, Popadija Vladanka, and Petar on the  
arrival of Beautiful Baby Vera on Thursday, April 4<sup>th</sup>.  
God Bless the Vukovic Family!  
dobrodošla devojčica!  
Mnogaja Ljeta!**

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**Saturday, April 13<sup>th</sup> (Rain Date Wednesday, April 17<sup>th</sup>)  
Church Grounds Clean-Up - 8:30 AM**

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**SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT**

His Grace Bishop Irinej will be joining us on Sunday, April 21<sup>st</sup> for Divine  
Liturgy and evening Vespers.  
PLEASE make an effort to attend both services

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**Please see attached form in regards to Flowers for  
Pascha. If you have any questions, please see Suzette  
Gardenhour.**



# UPCOMING EVENTS

**Sunday, April 21st – 5th Sunday of Lent  
Lenten Vespers at Our St. Nicholas  
Special Guest – His Grace Bishop Irinej  
Speaker Fr. Stefan Djoric – 5 PM**

**Lazarus Saturday – Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup> – Divine Liturgy – 9:30 AM  
6:00 pm – Vrbica – Vesper Service - Sanctification of palms and pussy  
willows and procession following Vespers.**

**Palm Sunday – Sunday, April 28<sup>th</sup> – Divine Liturgy – 10:00 AM  
GREAT and HOLY THURSDAY - *May 2<sup>nd</sup>* - 9:30 am – Divine Liturgy  
7:00 pm – Great Vigil (The reading of the 12 Gospels)**

**GREAT and HOLY FRIDAY - *May 3<sup>rd</sup>*  
7:00 pm – Vespers Service Veneration of Plastanica (Epitaphios)**

**GREAT and HOLY SATURDAY - *May 4<sup>th</sup>* -9:30 am – Divine Liturgy  
Egg coloring and Lunch Following Divine Liturgy  
9:00 pm – Paschal Matins  
RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST - PASCHA *May 5<sup>th</sup>*  
10.00 am – Divine Liturgy**

**Anniversary Celebration – Sunday, May 19<sup>th</sup> !!!!**

**Cemetery Blessings  
Saturday June 8th St. Nicholas & Grandview  
Saturday June 15th Mercury Ave and St Petka**

**Polka-Fest – Friday May 31<sup>st</sup> to Sunday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**Band of Brothers – July 11-13<sup>th</sup> and 17 – 20<sup>th</sup>**

**TASTE OF SERBIA – Saturday, August 10<sup>th</sup>**

**Johnstown Slavic Festival – September 20-21<sup>st</sup>**



# FLOWERS FOR PASCHA



This year with our Easter falling on Sunday, May 5<sup>th</sup>, it may be difficult to get the flowers that we normally purchase. You have the option of purchasing your own flowers, or donating money that will be used to purchase flowers to decorate the tomb. Please complete the form below and return to Suzette Gardenhour no later than Sunday, April 28<sup>th</sup>.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

Paid \_\_\_\_\_ Check # \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to Suzette Gardenhour no later than Sunday, March 19<sup>th</sup>. If you are out of town – payment and completed form can be mailed to:

St. Nicholas Church  
1001 St. Clair Road, Johnstown PA 15905

Or contact Suzette at 814-421-1276 or shliva16@gmail.com

Please check this box if you will be purchasing your own flowers. They must be at the church no later than Friday morning, May 3<sup>rd</sup>.