

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905

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The Sunday after the Nativity (01.08.2023.)

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!

Every single child is precious. Every single life is precious. The current Gospel speaks about Herod seeking to kill children ages two and under. Herod wanted to kill the Christ-Child.

Archelaus is mentioned also as a possible danger to the Christ-Child, Jesus Christ's birth is celebrated in the present. Mindful believers attentive to the news are aware of the strong interest in abortion to continue the killing of children,

Society is measured by the way the way each person is treated. Christ's birth in the taking of human flesh draws attention to the value of each human birth. Each child is to be embraced and welcomed into the world with love and joy.

Progress is needed to root out the sin in the present world. Restoring love and value to human birth is a challenge. God's wisdom is necessary to reduce the rancor that arises around the giving birth to children.

Jesus Christ's birth is a time of great joy. Mary and Joseph were blessed among all males and females through the centuries to have the responsibility of protecting and caring for the Christ-Child.

Mary was chosen among all women of all centuries to be the birth-mother of the Christ Child. Her Divine selection and the action of the Holy Spirit exceed the capacity of the finite mind to fully understand and comprehend.

Joseph's responsibility in the face of the dangers mentioned in the present Gospel is not commonly highlighted. Today's world is often considered dangerous.

Herod's actions in killing young children are mind-gripping.

The joy of the Feast of the Nativity cannot be over shadowed by Herod's actions. Joseph, Mary and Jesus were able to travel and remain safe. Jesus was able to grow to adulthood.

Our love for Christ and our life-in Christ is certainly linked with the Virgin birth and the dangers that arose immediately. God's protection of the Christ-Child is evident.

God's action in today's world is evident for persons with eyes to see. The Church helps believers to find the way through the dangers of present-day life.

God's Holy Church is a haven of peace in a world filled with danger.

Each day the Church sets forth Divine services, wisdom and instruction to lead believers to the Kingdom of God. Wise believers look daily to the Church for nourishment, direction and strength.

The Church is within reach of each person seeking to address the hunger of the soul. The Church is present to enable the believer to unite and remain united with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ taking on human flesh and dwelling among the living set in motion a change in the world that continues until the Second Coming. God's Church enables believers to live, prepare and to grow in Christ until the Second Coming.

Believers seeking to understand the world's events learn from the Church's history and teachings through the centuries. The saints offer words of wisdom to address current and future concerns.

Jesus Christ's teachings and life including His death on the Cross and Resurrection give believers the basis for continuing until the Second Coming. Jesus Christ's Nativity lifts believers' minds to the heights and to the heavens.

Joy fills believers' hearts with the knowledge of Jesus Christ's birth. New life in Christ becomes possible. Jesus Christ is stronger than sin. Jesus Christ is stronger than death.

Each family, each home, each person benefits from Jesus Christ's relationship with Mary and Joseph. Each believer benefits from realizing the danger Jesus faced from the time of His birth.

Every child faces danger at birth. A home filled with love and care make a difference for children brought into the world. Protective, loving and caring parents make a difference in raising children.

The Church is where to learn about child-rearing. The Church provides nourishment for parents and children during life's journey to the Kingdom. Be thankful for Jesus' birth and safe passage to adulthood.

Peace of God! Christ is Born!

**The Sunday after the Feast of the Nativity. Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos.
December 26, 2022/January 8, 2023. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic**

The Prologue from Ochrid **St Nikolai of Zhicha**

1. THE HOLY PROTOMARTYR STEPHEN THE ARCHDEACON

Stephen was a kinsman of the Apostle Paul and one of those Jews who lived in the Hellenic provinces. Stephen was the first of the seven deacons whom the holy apostles ordained and appointed to the service of assisting the poor in Jerusalem. For this, he is called the archdeacon. By the power of his faith, Stephen worked great miracles among the people. The wicked Jews disputed with him, but they were always defeated by his wisdom and the power of the Spirit, Who acted through him. Then the shameful Jews, accustomed to calumnies and slander, incited the people and the elders of the people against the innocent Stephen, slandering him as though he had blasphemed against God and against Moses. False witnesses were quickly found who confirmed this. Stephen then stood before the people, and all *saw his face as it had been the face of an angel* (Acts 6:15), that is, his face was illumined with the light of grace as was once the face of Moses when he spoke with God. Stephen opened his mouth and enumerated the many good works and miracles that God had performed in the past for the people of Israel, as well as the many crimes and opposition to God on the part of this people. He especially rebuked them for the killing of Christ the Lord, calling them *betrayers and murderers* (Acts 7:52). And while they gnashed their teeth, Stephen beheld and saw the heavens open and the glory of God. That which he saw, he declared to the Jews: *Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God!* (Acts 7:56). Then the malicious men took him outside the city and stoned him to death. Among his persecutors was his kinsman Saul, later the Apostle Paul. At that time, the Most-holy Theotokos, standing on a rock at a distance with St. John the Theologian, witnessed the martyrdom of this first martyr for the truth of her Son and God, and she prayed to God for Stephen. This occurred one year after the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles. Gamaliel, a prince of the Jews and a secret Christian, clandestinely took St. Stephen's body and buried it on his own estate. Thus, this first among the Christian martyrs gloriously reposed and took up his habitation in the Kingdom of Christ God.

2. THE VENERABLE MARTYRS THEODORE AND THEOPHANES THE BRANDED

Theodore and Theophanes were blood brothers, born in Palestine and well educated in both secular and spiritual wisdom. They were monks in the community of St. Sava the Sanctified and later were ordained presbyters. They suffered harshly for their defense of icons under three emperors: Leo the Armenian, Michael Balbus and Theophilus. The demented Theophilus beat them with his own hands and ordered that they be branded with iron on their faces with derisive verses, for which they were called "the Branded." They were cast into prison in the town of Apamea in Bithynia. Theodore died there from his pains and wounds. Theophanes, freed at the time of the Emperors Theodore and Michael, was consecrated Metropolitan of Nicaea by Patriarch Methodius. St. Theodore died in the year 833 A.D. These two wonderful brothers suffered for Christ and received a wonderful reward from Him in the Immortal Kingdom of Light.

HYMN OF PRAISE

THE HOLY PROTOMARTYR STEPHEN THE ARGHEAGON

Upon Stephen, illumined by the Spirit,
The Jewish murderers rushed.
Bloody Stephen knelt
And in a loud voice cried out to God:
"O Lord, Who from the Cross forgave
The greatest sin to ever shake the earth,
The greatest sin that heaven ever beheld,
Thou forgavest Thy murderers.
Now, O Most-gracious One, forgive mine also!
This crime--what is it compared to that one?
And I, what am I, compared to my Lord?"
Saying this he gave his spirit to God.
The angry elders, ugly cowards,
Dispersed after they killed him.
Then from heaven angels flew down
Around the body of the Protomartyr.
They chanted a hymn in chorus to him
And carried his paradisal soul to Paradise.

REFLECTION

A story of the Divine Christ-child: Both great prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah, prophesied that the Lord would come to Egypt and that His presence would shake the pagan temples and destroy the idols. Isaiah wrote: *Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence* (Isaiah 19:1, cf. Jeremiah 43:12-13). When the divine refugees came to the city of Hermopolis (Cairo), they approached a pagan temple, and all the idols in that temple suddenly fell down and were shattered. St. Palladius writes of this in his Lausiatic History: "We saw the pagan temple there, in which all the carved idols fell to the ground at the coming of the Savior." In a certain place called Sirin there were

365 idols. When the Most-holy Virgin entered that temple with the Divine Child in her arms, all these idols fell down and were shattered. All the idols throughout Egypt fell in the same manner. The Holy Prophet Jeremiah, living in Egypt in old age, had prophesied to the pagan priests of Egypt that all the idols would fall and all the graven images would be destroyed at the time when a Virgin Mother with a Child, born in a manger, would come to Egypt. The pagan priests remembered well this prophecy. In accordance with it, they carved out a representation of a Virgin as she lay on a bed and, next to her in a manger, her young Child wrapped in swaddling clothes; and they venerated this representation. King Ptolemy asked the pagan priests what this representation meant, and they replied that it was a mystery, foretold by a prophet to their fathers, and that they were awaiting the fulfillment of this mystery. And, indeed, this mystery was fulfilled, and revealed not only in Egypt but also in the entire world.

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the wisdom of the Most-holy Virgin Mary:

1. How she spoke wisely with the angel of God (Luke 1:28-38);
2. How she pondered in her heart all that had happened at the birth of the Lord Jesus and all that was said of Him;
3. How, at Cana, she wisely told the servants to do whatever He told them.

HOMILY

on the Most-holy Virgin, the Theotokos

My soul doth magnify the Lord (Luke 1:46).

Brethren, we have in total only a few words spoken by the Most-holy Theotokos recorded in the Gospels. All of her words pertain to the magnification of God. She was silent before men but her soul conversed unceasingly with God. Every day and every hour, she found a new reason and incentive to magnify God. If only we were able to know and to record all her magnifications of God throughout her whole life, oh, how many books would it take! But, even by this one magnification, which she spoke before her kinswoman Elizabeth, the mother of the great Prophet and Forerunner John, every Christian can evaluate what a fragrant and God-pleasing flower was her most holy soul. This is but one wonderful canticle of the soul of the Theotokos, which has come down to us through the Gospel. However, such canticles were without number in the course of the life of the Most-blessed One. Even before she heard the Gospel from the lips of her Son, she knew how to speak with God and to glorify Him in accordance with the teaching of the Gospel. This knowledge came to her from the Holy Spirit of God, whose grace constantly poured into her like clear water into a pure vessel. Her soul magnified God with canticles throughout her whole life, and therefore God magnified her above the Cherubim and the Seraphim. Likewise, small and sinful as we are, the same Lord will magnify in His Kingdom us who magnify her, if we exert ourselves to fill this brief life with the magnification of God in our deeds, words, thoughts and prayers.

O Most-holy, Most-pure and Most-blessed Theotokos, cover us with the wings of thy prayers.
To thee and thy Son and our Lord be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Services this Week

- ❖ *Monday (January 8nd) - Holy Apostle, Protomartyr and Archdeakon Stephen - Divine Liturgy 09:30 AM*
- ❖ **Friday (January 13th) - PARAGLISIS - THE OFFICE OF SUPPLICATION TO SAINT NEKTARIOS - 05:00 PM - Confession**
- ❖ *Saturday (January 14th) The Circumcision of our Lord Jesus Christ, St Basil the Great (New Year) 09:30 Divine Liturgy*
- ❖ **SUNDAY (January 15th) - Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos 10:00 AM - Divine Liturgy**

**CHRISTMAS BULLETIN 2023
ST. NICHOLAS SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Father Dragan Vukovic
971 St. Clair Rd. - JOHNSTOWN, PA 15905**



**MIR BOZI – HRISTOS SE RODI! – VAISTINU SE RODI!
PEACE OF GOD! - CHRIST IS BORN! - INDEED HE IS BORN!**

Troparion of Nativity (Tone 4)

*Your Nativity, O Christ our God, Has shone to the world the Light of wisdom!
For by it, those who worshipped the stars, Were taught by a Star to adore You,
The Sun of Righteousness, And to know You, the Orient from on High. O Lord, glory to You!*

Kontakion of Nativity (Tone 3)

*Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One, And the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One!
Angels with shepherds glorify Him!
The wise men journey with a star!
Since for our sake the Eternal God was born as a Little Child!*

EPISTLE: (Gal: 4,4-7)

GOSPEL: (Matthews 2:1-12) Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard *these things*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, *in* the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

Donations January 1, 2023

Offering - \$ 1,366.00 Candles - \$50.00 Dues - \$250 Donations - \$40

Building Fund

Cameron Palmer - \$100

Slava Donation

Men's Club - \$250

GOLD COIN FOR CESNICA

Please see Richard Gardenhour if you would like to contribute to the purchase of the Gold Coin for the Christmas Cesnica

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

Christmas Schedule

Saturday, Jan 7th	The Nativity of our Lord and Saviour – Bozic 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy
Sunday, Jan 8th	Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy
Monday, Jan 9th	Holy Apostle, St. Stephen - 9:30 AM Divine Liturgy
Tuesday, Jan 10th	The Holy God-bearing Fathers – 9:30 AM
Saturday, Jan 14th	Circumcision of the Our Lord – 9:30 AM

SUNDAY, JANUARY 15, 2023
 KOLO MEETING – FOLLOWING DIVINE LITURGY

A very special thank you to all of the following who donated poinsettias for the altar:

- ☎ Diane V. Tomak IMO Damjena Gjurich & Bosa Vuckovich
- ☎ Michelle Pagano-Goas IMO Olga Pagano (Mother)
- ☎ Gojko, Rose, & Kristina Marinkovich IMO Deceased Family Members
- ☎ Eli Cvijanovich IMO Parents Ilija & Martha Cvijanovich
- ☎ Carole McAllister IMO Nick & Sara Davich
- ☎ Danica Wess IMO Buncich Family & Dick Wess
- ☎ Joanne & Pete Todorich IMO Nikola, Milka & Nick Jr. Todorich

- ⊙ Joanne Uzelac & Linda Freidhoff IMO Donald Uzelac
and Wayne & Patricia Freidhoff
- ⊙ Suzette & Richard Gardenhour IMO Grisin, Bozic &
Gardenhour Families
- ⊙ John & Patricia Pavich IMO Deceased Family Members
 - ⊙ Joseph Golden IMO Golden & Vuchev Families
 - ⊙ Jencine Campagna IMO Ray Taylor
 - ⊙ Adam Lichvar IMO The Dudukovich Family
- ⊙ Evelyn Walet IMO Father Sam Vuckovich & Aunt Mimi
 - ⊙ Donna Zimmerman IMO Nickolas, Mary, David and
Deborah Miller
 - ⊙ Joe Bartis IMO Connie Bartis
 - ⊙ Helene Gleason IMO Bosa & Lazo Vuckovich
- ⊙ Richard Kondas IMO Parents Amelia & Joseph Kondas
 - ⊙ St. Nicholas Kolo IMO Deceased Kolo Members
 - ⊙ Patricia Niel Buncich, Niel & Wess Families
- ⊙ Cameron & Linda Palmer IMO Eva Johnson/Visnich
 - ⊙ Garden Haven
 - ⊙ SEADS
