

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

## **The Sunday before Theophany (01.14.2024)**

### **Mark 1:1-8**

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.” (KJV)

### **The Circumcision of Our Lord Jesus Christ**

#### **Luke 2:20-21, 40-52**

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which

was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.<sup>6</sup> And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man **(KJV)**

The Holy Orthodox Church is moving with certainty toward the Feast of Theophany. The celebration of Jesus Christ's Nativity is concluded. Joy remains fresh in the hearts and minds of believers.

The Julian Calendar New Year has arrived. The Church is commemorating St. Basil the Great today. Renewal continues for believers. The Feast of Theophany increases anticipation and expectations in believers' hearts and minds,

All believers have experienced the joy of Holy Baptism, The Baptism of Jesus Christ in the Jordan increases consciousness among serious believers about their own baptism.

The celebration of Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan renews Creation. Each believer participates in the renewal. The sprinkling, drinking of and blessing with Holy Water connects the Divine with the earth's inhabitants.

This is a time for believers to think deeply about the care of Creation and the responsible stewardship of Creation. Humans have a great responsibility in caring for the world in the present and until Jesus Christ's return.

Abuse of the earth, abuse of humans and other aspects of earthly life is poor stewardship and amounts to great sin. World wars, greed and extensive poverty challenge and cast a pall on the stewardship of world leaders.

Violence in the cities and rampant sin in many places demands great introspection by serious believers. The repentance St. John the Baptist preached needs to be considered.

The repentance Jesus Christ preached merits great thought. Great change is needed throughout the world for peace to be achieved. Repentance among serious believers can lead to wide spread change in human relationships.

Poverty and violence are best attacked when repentance takes place. Christians have the responsibility to begin the change through repentance. The proof of the Christian life becomes evident when Christ lives in hearts and daily actions.

The Holy Prophets of old spoke directly to the violence and sin prevalent in society. Contemporary believers challenge sin by repenting of sin and embracing Jesus Christ.

God's Holy Church offers the nourishment for believers to live in Christ. The Church opens the path to the Kingdom of God and eternal life. The Kingdom of God and eternal life are the ultimate goals established at Baptism.

Today we thank God for the blessing of hearing the Holy Gospel readings. Today we thank God for St. John the Baptist and the Evangelists Mark and Luke. We are grateful for the example of St. Basil the Great.

Time is of the essence for contemporary believers. We never know when Jesus Christ will return. Jesus Christ would not be pleased with the degree of violence existing in today's world.

Jesus Christ would not be pleased about the overall nature of human relationships. Love is lacking in relationships in too many different places. Hardships and hard hearts are too prevalent in the world.

Let us thank God for the hope and renewal possible in Christ. Let each believer set the example of repentance. With God's help, change and greater love becomes possible.

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**The Sunday before Theophany. The Circumcision of the Lord Jesus Christ. St. Basil the Great. The Julian Calendar New. Year. January 1/14, 2023. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic**

# PRAYER FOR THE FIRST DAY OF THE NEW YEAR



*Christ the Pantocrator*

Lord God, the Creator and Vivifier of all visible and invisible creatures, Who hath fashioned times and years, do Thou Thyself bless the New Year that begins today, which we number from Thine incarnation for our salvation.

May we spend this year, and many years to follow it, in peace and harmony with our neighbours. Strengthen and spread abroad the Holy Universal Church, which Thou Thyself didst found in Jerusalem and sanctify with the saving sacrifice of Thy Holy Body and Thy Most Pure Blood.

Lift up, preserve and glorify our fatherland; grant us long life, health, abundance of earthly fruits and good air; save me, Thy sinful servant, together with all my relatives and neighbours and all faithful Christians; and as our true Supreme Shepherd, protect and establish me on the path of salvation, so that all we, following it, may after a long and prosperous life in this world reach Thy Heavenly Kingdom and be found worthy of eternal bliss with Thy saints.

Amen!

## HOMILY ON THE NEW YEAR

I greet all of you gathered here with the New Year. I congratulate you with the joys that I hope the Lord might send you in the coming year. I congratulate you also with the sorrows that will inevitably visit you this year: perhaps today, perhaps tomorrow, or in the near future. Incidentally, do not be confused by sorrows or fear them. Sorrows and joys are closely bound up with each other. This may seem strange to you, but remember the words of the Savior: *A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world* (Jn. 16:21). Day turns to night, and night turns to day, bad weather turns to good; so also does sorrow turn into joy, and joy into sorrow.

The Apostle Paul pronounced threatening words against those who do not endure any punishment that comes from God: If you are left without punishment, you are illegitimate children. Do not be depressed; let those be depressed who do not believe in God. For them, of course, sorrow is onerous, because they know only earthly pleasures. But people who believe in God should not despond, because through sorrows they receive the rights of sons, without which one cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

**"Scorning the impious decree, the Children brought up together in godliness feared not the threat of fire, but standing in the midst of the flames, they sang: 'O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou.'" (Irmos of the Nativity of Christ, tone 1, canticle 7).**

Sorrows are that very threat of fire, or trial, but we must not fear them; rather we must be like the godly children and sing unto God in our sorrows, believing that they are sent to us by God for our salvation.

May the Lord save you all, and lead you to the Kingdom of Unwaning Light! Amen.

*January 1, 1913 (after the Liturgy)*  
*Spiritual Inheritance*  
*St. Barsanuphius of Optina*

# Services this Week

- **Thursday (01.18.2024)**
  - *Holy Theopemptus and Theonas; Venerable Syncretica - Holy Cross Day - Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM*
- **Friday (01.19.2024)**
  - **The Holy Theophany of our Lord Jesus Christ - EPIPHANY - Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM**
- **Saturday (01.20.2024)**
  - **Synaxis of the Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist John - Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM**
- **The 33rd Sunday after Pentecost- after Theophany (01.21.2024)**
  - *Holy Mart. Julian and Vasilissa; Ven. George Ghozebite; St Gregory of Ochrid - Divine Liturgy starts at 10:00 AM*

**Donations January 6-7, 2024**

**Offering - \$ 2,837.00 Candles - \$105.00  
Dues - \$250.00**

**Building Fund Donations**

**Michael & Susan Moncilovich - \$200  
IMO deceased family members from Eli Cvijanovich - \$100**

**Christmas Donations**

**St. Nicholas Kolo Srpska Sestra - \$500  
St. Nicholas Men's Club - \$250  
Miller Funeral Home - \$500**

**Cemetary Fund Donation**

**Eli Cvijanovich - \$100**

**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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**Next Sunday, January 21<sup>st</sup> following Divine Liturgy, we are all invited to our dear Father Dragan, Popadija and Petar's home for the celebration of their Slava, Sveti Jovan! Please plan to join them in celebrating their special day.**

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**Thank you to the following for donating to the purchase of the Gold Coin for the Cesnica: John Pavich, Carol & Tom McAllister, Jencine Campagna, Gary & Rose Marinkovich, Lazo Gjurich, Joseph Bartis, and Richard & Suzette Gardenhour**

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**Feel free to take your poinsettia at anytime.**

*A special thank you to all who purchased Poinsettias*

Tony & Linda Freidhoff & Joanne Uzelac IMO Donald Uzelac & Wayne & Patricia  
Freidhoff  
Carole McAllister IMO Nick & Sara Davich and Nick Jr.  
Evelyn Walet IMO Father Sam Vuckovich and Aunt Mimi  
Eli Cvijanovich IMO Deceased members of the Cvijanovich/Bitsko Families  
Dianna T. Dunnington IMO Milos & Mildred Tumbas  
Karyn Waligora IMO Lazo & Bosa Vuckovich  
Diane Tomak IMO Mother Bosa and Tetes Draga, Zora & Cookie, Baba Damjena  
and Kuma Julie  
Danica B. Wess IMO Buncich Family & Wess Family  
Mike Stipanovich IMO Alex & Beverly Stipanovich  
Joe Bartis IMO Connie Bartis  
Richard Kondas IMO Amelia & Joseph Kondas  
John & Patricia Pavich IMO Deceased Family Members  
Father Rodney Torbic  
Laura, Pete, Pete Jr. & Michelle Nesdore  
Donna Zimmerman IMO Nicholas, Mary, David, & Deborah Miller  
Diane Thomas IMO Helen Sabo & Dorothy Lavrnja  
Nicholas Banda IMO Deceased Members of the Devich, Perich & Banda Families  
Michelle Pagano IMO Olga Pagano  
Mary Kelly  
Gary, Rose & Kristina Marinkovich IMO Family  
Peter & Joanne Todorich IMO Nikola, Mildred & Nick Jr.  
Richard & Suzette Gardenhour IMO Grisin, Bozich and Gardenhour Families  
Helene Gleason IMO Betty & Lazo Vuckovich  
Pat Niel IMO Buncich, Niel & Wess Families

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### St. Sava Celebration

Sunday, January 28<sup>th</sup>

### Men's Club Pork Chop Dinner

Sunday, February 4<sup>th</sup>