

# Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905

Rev. Presbyter Dragan Vukovic

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## The Sunday of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council (05.28.2023.)

### John 17:1-13

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word., Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. **(KJV)**

God's Holy Church is celebrating the Lord Jesus Christ's Ascension. Believers are mindful of the Lord Jesus Christ being taken up to heaven while at the same time Christ is always being present with believers.

The Lord Jesus Christ's glorious Second Coming is anticipated each day until His return. The time of life until Christ's return and the great and final judgment is to be used for repentance and following the way of Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ is ever-present to nourish and guide believers. The Lord's teachings abound and are proclaimed in the Church. Christ's Precious Body and Blood enable believers to remain united with Him.

Growth in Christ is possible throughout life until the glorious Second Coming. God's Holy Church provides the pathway and the nourishment for the journey to eternal life and the Heavenly Kingdom.

Each moment of time is a precious opportunity to be united with Christ in prayer. Every moment of life merits giving thanks to the Lord God for the blessings of life.

Christ is ever-present and within reach through prayer. With careful use of eyes to see and ears to hear, believers determine the direction life is to take that is pleasing to the Lord God.

The Holy Scriptures, the Divine services and the teachings of the Church define the paths to be taken during earthly life. God protects believers against earthly perils through His teachings and the presence of the Church.

The hunger in the soul yearns for the experience with Christ. Christ satisfies the soul through the Divine Mysteries in the Church. Remaining faithful to Christ from Holy Baptism until departure from this life is the believer's goal.

When a believer falls into sin, repentance is always timely and beneficial. The quicker a person repents, the easier it is to put the sin behind and have the burden lifted from the conscience.

God's Holy Church fosters Christian growth throughout life. Believers faithful to Christ grow with the passage of time. Infants grow into mature adults when they are raised in the Church.

The ideal is for each person to progress to live fully in Christ throughout life. The Church facilitates growth in Christ and keeps the believer united with Christ through the Holy Mysteries.

Parents, family members and God-parents have a part in being sound Christian examples. Adult Christians have a responsibility to be mature examples leading lives of integrity and based in the truth of Christ.

Parents faithful to Christ provide a nurturing atmosphere in the home. Husbands and wives faithful to each other are beneficial examples for their sons and daughters.

Employers faithful to Christ create a working atmosphere that is healthy for employees. Employees working with integrity build an exemplary work record and are very productive.

God's Holy Church leads believers to the Heavenly Kingdom while simultaneously teaching the faithful how to live a God-pleasing earthly life.

The Church is very instructive and relevant for learning about daily life.

Jesus Christ's Ascension into heaven captivates the mind and is worthy of continuous thought. Everything known about Christ merits full consideration of the mind.

Life is to be invested in learning about Christ. Increased investment in learning about and experiencing Christ results in life becoming more Christ-like. Joy and peace increase as the believer grows in Christ.

Opening the heart, mind and soul to Christ creates opportunities for life to be enriched by Christ. Sin deters and impedes Christian growth, peace and joy.

Repentance removes the obstacles for peace and joy in Christ.

Love abounds when Christ fills the heart, mind and soul. Jesus Christ's Ascension is the time of peace, love and joy in God's Holy Church.

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**The Sunday of the Fathers of the 1<sup>st</sup> Council. Venerable Pachomius the Great. Achilles, Bishop of Larissa. May 15/28, 2023. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic**

## HOMILY ON THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

The Holy Church now rouses all the people of the earth to joy and says, “*All ye nations, clap your hands, Christ hath ascended whither He was Before,*”<sup>1</sup> i.e., to heaven.

And so, on the [Feast of the Ascension of the Lord](#), all Christians should rejoice. What is there to be happy about? It would seem that it was necessary rather to be sad and grieve, because our sweetest Savior Jesus Christ departed from us with His visible presence and ascended to heaven, from whence he will come again—but he will come as a terrible Judge of all earthly people. No, on the day of remembrance of the Ascension of the Lord, there are more reasons for joy than for sadness. Let's just consider why the Lord ascended to heaven from us.

The Lord ascended from us to heaven not to grieve us with His departure, but to arrange things most usefully for us. His whole life, all His works were for our benefit, for our salvation; in the same way, His ascension was for our good. Loving us, He came down to us from heaven and, having lived with people, laid His soul on the cross for them. So out of love for us he also ascended to heaven, to benefit us. As He himself said to His disciples: *It is better for you that I go, for if I do not go, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you* (Jn. 16, 7). So, the Lord ascended to heaven in order to send One equal to Himself, the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, Who would comfort the holy apostles and all true Christians in their sorrows, troubles and persecutions. That's the first reason for joy. Come, come, Lord Jesus, and send us the Comforter!

Further, the Lord ascended from us to heaven so that He could look down on us from above, as a Father on a child, as a Shepherd on His sheep, as an Eagle on the chicks, as a Leader on his army, so that He could see everyone and consider the distress and needs of each of us and give help to everyone. Like some king, having gathered his numerous troops for war and wanting to see all his regiments, ascends to a high place—on a mountain or on some building—and looks down from a height and arranges them; and when he sees that they are prevailing, rejoices over them. And if he notices that they are being overcome, he quickly sends aid to them. So our Lord, the King of kings, having His Church militant on earth—that is, His faithful Christians—ascended to heaven, as if to a mountain, so that from a height He could see everyone's ascetic labors and weave crowns for those who are struggling and give a helping hand to those who are exhausted;

in order to restore the fallen and make them stronger against their enemies, and to place an obstacle before those who persecute us. The Holy Protomartyr Stephen is struggling in an anguishing feat, he is being stoned by the Jews, and our Lord, having opened the sky, looks at him from the height of His glory, so that seeing this the sufferer exclaims: *I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God* (Acts. 7, 56).

The Lord ascended from us to heaven in order to shine like the sun on all of us from the height of heaven with His grace. As the sun hiding in the west produces the evening darkness throughout the celestial empire, and when it rises to the heights, the darkness flees from the entire celestial empire, and the sun's rays illuminate the universe with wondrous light, so our spiritual Sun, Christ, while He lived on earth, as if in the west, did not show His luminous divinity to people. Until then, over all the earth was the darkness of ignorance of God's essence; and after He shone forth from His tomb He ascended to heaven, then the lightning of His divinity illuminated the universe, His name became glorious from the east to the west, over all the earth, and the whole universe was enlightened by the knowledge of God.

The Lord ascended from us to heaven in order to arrange for us a path to heaven, and to be our Leader in the mountainous countries. There was no path to heaven for man until the very ascension of the Lord to heaven; *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven*, says the Lord (Jn. 3:13). *He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.* (Eph. 4:10). So, before this, no one could ascend to heaven, even if he were righteous and holy; and when our Lord, clothed in human nature, ascended to heaven, the way to heaven was arranged for the whole human race, and the souls of the holy forefathers and prophets, led out of hell, followed Christ by that way. Apostles, saints, martyrs, confessors, ascend to them; worthy righteous people who follow Christ's footsteps ascend to them even now. Now everyone knows the way to heaven. Just don't you be lazy to ascend, Christians!

So, the Lord ascended from us to heaven—in order to open the doors of heaven to us—for an unhindered entrance there. Our forefather Adam closed the doors of Paradise to the whole human race, and a Cherub with a flaming weapon stood at the doors. I say, Adam closed Paradise and the entrance to life, but he opened only the entrances to death and hell, but the Lord did the opposite—He closed the entrances to death and hell, and Paradise opened—first to the robber, to whom he said, *Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise* (Lk. 23:43), then to everyone. And finally, He opened heaven itself with His Ascension.

Such are the all-joyful reasons for the Ascension of the Lord from us to heaven. Further, the Lord ascended from us to heaven to intercede for us before God the Father. Thus says the Holy Apostle John the Theologian: *And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins* (1 Jn. 2:1–2). And so, we sinful people will not despair of our salvation, but we will be faithful, for we have a good Intercessor for us to God the Father—Christ our Savior Himself, Who intercedes for us. Only let's not be lazy, and with Christ's intercession we will send our warm prayers to the Heavenly Father. Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ intercedes for us to God the Father and propitiates Him.

But for whom is he petitioning? For sinners. For which sinners? For those who repent; He propitiates His Father for them. But he does not propitiate for unrepentant sinners because they crucify for the second time the Son of God by their grave sins; also, by touching the blood of the Son of God without repentance they trample on it with their impenitence. And so sinner, have fear, O you who are unrepentant, lest the sudden punishment of God overtake you and you be consumed from the land of the living, and you be condemned together with the murderers who crucified the Son of God.

Finally, the Lord ascended from us to heaven in order to prepare for us a place in heaven where we will live forever and reign with Him, our Lord. So He Himself says: *I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also* (Jn. 14:2–3). What a joyful reason for the Ascension! The Lord ascended from us to heaven to prepare a place in heaven for all the righteous and pious people, as well as for us sinners, if we turn and repent from the bottom of our hearts. Where the place is for the Apostle Peter, who rejected the Lord and wept bitterly about it afterwards; where the harlot is, who wept at His feet, where the prodigal son is, where the publican is, where the robber is, there also will be a place for us; only we must weep bitterly over our sins. We will fall at His feet with repentance like Peter and like the harlot; as the publican we will be converted. Let us be crucified with Him, like the good thief. Let us repent, and we will be saved. Let us all rejoice in the Ascension of our Lord and Savior. Amen.

*St. John of Kronstadt*

## Services this Week

- ❖ **Friday - 06.02.2023. – PARALYSIS - THE OFFICE OF SUPPLICATION TO SAINT NECTARIOS -05:00 PM – Confession**
- ❖ **Saturday – 06.03.2023. - Holy Equal-to-the-~~Ap.~~ Emp. Constantine Helen, Ven. Helen of Decani – Memorial Saturday - 09:30 AM Divine Liturgy**
- ❖ **Sunday – 06.04.2023. – Pentecost (Trinity Sunday) - 09:00 AM Divine Liturgy**

## **Donations May 21, 2023**

Offering - \$ 741.00   Candles - \$54.00   Dues - \$100.00

### **Building Fund**

#### **In Memory of George Moncilovich**

Betty Baranik - \$50, Milan & Terry Saula - \$50, Tom & Carole McAllister - \$50  
Sylvester Gjurich - \$25, Bob Stramanak - \$10

**In Memory of Amelia Moncilovich - Milan & Terry Saula - \$50**

#### **Altar Boy Robe Fund**

Milan & Terry Saula - \$100

### **Anniversary Donations**

Kumovi Richard & Suzette Gardenhour - \$300

Dianna Dunnington - \$100

Danica Wess - \$100

Father Rodney Torbic - \$50

Delores Gartrell - \$50

Kathleen McDowell - \$50

Gojko, Rose, & Kristina - \$40

Sylvester Gjurich - \$25

Lazo Gjurich - \$20

Helene Gleason - \$20

Joe Lia - \$20

Carole & Tom McAllister - \$20

Patricia Niel - \$20

Natalie & John Ofsanko - \$20

Dan & Dyne Tomak - \$20

St. Nicholas KSS - \$1000

St. Nicholas Men's Club - \$250

St. Nicholas Choir - \$200

To the Building Fund for the Anniversary

In Memory of Connie Bartis - Joe Bartis - \$100

In Memory of Father Ned and Father Purich - Eli Cvijanovich - \$100

From George Kohan - \$20

### **Large Candles**

In Memory of Mike & Mildred Tumbas from Kathleen McDowell

In Memory of Bosiljka & Lazo Vuckovich from Dan & Dyne Tomak

In Memory of Julia & Demetrias Lambrinos from Dan & Dyne Tomak

In Memory of Andrew Grisin from Richard Kondas

In Memory of Damenja & Lazo Gjurich from Diane and Dan Tomak

In Memory of Connie Bartis from Bartis & Pavich Family

We are now taking donations for large candles in the Candle Room

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Donations are being accepted for flowers to decorate the entrances to the church!!!  
Please see Donna Zimmerman or Pat Niel

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## REMINDER

Change in church time - Beginning Sunday, **June 4, 2023**. Divine Liturgy will begin at **9:30 AM** and continue to Sunday, September 2, 2023.

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### PLEASE NOTE CHANGE IN TIME

**GRANDVIEW CEMETERY - Saturday, June 10, 2023 - Beginning at 11:00 AM**

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Our recent graduate, Ben Ribaric, son of Casey and Danielle Ribaric, would like to invite everyone to his High School Graduation party!! Please respond to Danielle Ribaric at 814-418-1577 (call or text) no later than June 1, 2023.

- Place: ACRP Rec Park – 34 Knox St. Johnstown, PA 15906
- Date: Saturday, June 10, 2023
- Time: 1:00 PM



**UPCOMING EVENTS**  
**Polka-Fest June 2-4, 2023**

Please see Suzette Gardenhour to secure your time to work to help make this event a success for us.

**MEMORIAL SERVICES 2023**

Memorial services at the Church cemeteries will be held as follows:

BENSHOF HILL CEMETERY - Saturday, June 10, 2023 - 9:30 AM (Begin at Bottom)

**PLEASE NOTE CHANGE IN TIME**

**GRANDVIEW CEMETERY - Saturday, June 10, 2023 - Beginning at 11:00 AM**

OLD ST. NICHOLAS CEMETERY - Saturday, June 17, 2023 - 9:30 AM

ST. PETKA CEMETERY - Saturday, June 17, 2023 - 10:30 AM - (Begin at Bottom)

Band of Brothers - July 13-15 & 19-22, 2023



Taste of Serbia - August 12, 2023



Slavic Festival - September 15-16, 2023