

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

The Third Sunday of Great Lent
Veneration of the Holy Cross
(03.23.2025.)

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)

God's Holy Church has come to the Third Sunday of Great Lent. The intensity of Great Lent increases with each day of the journey. Believers participating in the Lenten journey will seriously make the effort to grow in Christ.

Each believer is to complete the Lenten journey in greater conformity with the ways and teaching of Jesus Christ. The Lenten journey is beneficial when the believer seriously repents of sin and unites completely with Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ's Cross stands in the middle of the church as the reminder of Christ's great love. The Cross offers strength and direction for believers for the remainder of the Lenten journey.

The Cross points in anticipation to the ultimate joy of the celebration of Jesus Christ's Resurrection. The Cross offers hope when darkness exists in life. The Cross stands for triumph when believers feel at a loss in life.

Jesus Christ being nailed to the Cross seemed to be a great ending point.. The Cross revealed the ultimate truth about Jesus Christ. Death could not contain Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ triumphed over death.

The Lenten journey and Holy Week offer the highest levels of education. Great Lent and Holy Week offers inexhaustible learning for attentive believers. Attentive believers find authentic nourishment for the soul during this time in the Church.

The Church's Divine services provide instructional value of the highest order. No university degree equals the life-transforming and renewing experience coming from repentance and complete unity with Jesus Christ.

Repentance and unity with Christ transform believers of all educational levels Great Lent fosters repentance and unity with Christ. Believers journey through Great Lent to Holy Week and the ultimate celebration of Jesus' Resurrection.

The remaining three weeks of Great Lent and Holy Week will enrich and change the lives of believers seriously embracing life in the Church. Jesus Christ's love abounds in the Church at every moment.

Jesus Christ is present at every moment of life. Great Lent heightens awareness of Jesus' presence at all times. If Jesus feels distant in personal life, serious self-examination will reveal if the believer has moved away from Christ.

Great Lent is the annual call for believers to reunite fully with Jesus Christ. Great Lent is the time to actively repent of sins and to reject aspects of life having nothing to do with Jesus Christ.

The Gospel for today encourages believers to deny the self for the betterment of the life in Christ. The Gospel instructs believers to freely and fully confess Jesus Christ in daily living.

The world has temptations and attractions to draw the believer away from Jesus Christ. Evil exists to tarnish the souls of believers. Temptations and attractions perilous to the soul abound.

Great Lent is the time for increased vigilance and resoluteness to remain on the narrow path to God's Kingdom. Each day is an opportunity to invest in treasures in heaven and seek the path to eternal life.

God's Holy Church offers the love of Christ for believers with eyes to see and ears to hear. Prayer, fasting and almsgiving facilitate the successful and beneficial Lenten journey.

Attentive believers will look to the teachers of the Church and the examples of believers through the ages to learn how to benefit from Great Lent. The Church in wisdom offers Great Lent each year as the time of renewal.

The Church offers continuity that will continue until Jesus' Second Coming. Each day is an opportunity to prepare for the Second Coming and the Great and Final Judgment.

Care and value of the soul are emphasized in the present Gospel. The soul's value exceeds the value of the whole world. Believers are to care for the soul at every moment of life.

Every thought and action in life are to be weighed against the benefits and dangers to the soul. Believers are reminded of the immeasurable value of the soul today.

Thank God for the present Gospel. Thank God for the Cross in the center of the Church. Thank God for the opportunity to repent. May the Lenten journey lead to renewal and unity in Jesus Christ for each believer.

Third Sunday of Great Lent. Veneration of the Holy Cross. Martyr Quadratus of Corinth. March 10/23, 2025. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic

A LESSON ON PRAYER

Homily on Matthew 14:22–34



Artist: Greg Olsen. Photo: gregolsen.com

And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

The same word is used twice, in order to more strongly emphasize the solitude that the Lord purposefully sought and which He found after sending the multitudes away. A mountain, solitude, darkness. These are the conditions under which a person most easily feels the nearness of the Spirit of God; these are the conditions for the sweetest [prayer](#). All that our Lord Jesus Christ did, He did for our edification and salvation. For He came to earth in order to teach us not only with words, but by deeds, events, and by His every gesture and movement. He ascends the mountain, for on the mountain is the most profound quiet. He remains alone, for solitude means distance from this world. He prays in the darkness of night, for nocturnal darkness is a veil for the eyes, which most often hinder the mind and contemplation by darting from one thing to another. Christ's prayer on the mountain also has its hidden, inner meaning. Sending away the multitudes, ascending the mountain, remaining alone in the darkness—what does it all mean? Sending away the multitudes means setting aside all imaginations of the world and all memories that trouble us and bind us to themselves, and having freed ourselves from the world, to raise our minds to prayer to God. What does it mean to ascend the mountain? It means raising the mind, heart, and soul to the Lord, near to God, in God's presence. Whoever is drawn to the world with its endless interests, just as people while in a crowd cannot rise to the heights, where one remains one on one with His Creator. What does mean to be alone? It means an exposed soul, a soul just as it is. After departing from the world, a person may feel terrible [loneliness](#). People who through disappointment with the world are led to this terrible loneliness usually take their own lives, if they are not able to rise to those heights where man finds God. What does darkness mean? It means the total absence of

whatever there is of this world's light. For the one who prays in solitude, this whole world is immersed in impenetrable darkness, in which for him the dawn of Heavenly light proceeding from God gradually gathers strength and illumines a new world that is infinitely better, more radiant than this world. Thus, these are essentially the four steps of prayer, and this is their inner meaning. In this event of Christ's, these steps are represented in the images of sending away the multitudes, ascending the mountain, solitude, and darkness.

But this solitary prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ is even more edifying for us if we take into consideration what happened before it, and what is to happen afterwards. Before this prayer, the Lord worked the unprecedented miracle of multiplying the bread, and after it He walked on the waves of the sea as if it were dry land, to the very center of the sea. Although He worked this miracle by His own divine power—which He had before the creation of the world and which was always with Him even when He abided in time and in the flesh—He nevertheless prayed both in the temple with the people, and alone in the desert. It is hard for any of us to enter into the mysterious, personal motivations of these prayers of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, these prayers the Only-Begotten Son of the Pre-eternal Father continued also on earth, and witnessed to His immutable unity with His Father and the Holy Spirit. But besides this, the lesson that the Lord gives us through the example of His prayer is perfectly clear. Prayer must be preceded by [good deeds](#), for then prayer helps. First we must witness our faith by good deeds, and only then confess them with words. Further, prayer brings benefit only when we intend to do a good deed and call out to God for help. Any prayer that contains a request for God's aid in an evil deed is not only aimless, but also blasphemous. Doing evil and praying is the same as sowing tares and demanding that God grow wheat.

Before beginning any good deed, we must have recourse to God in prayer, ask for His grace, help and assistance, so that the work before us might be completed worthily and conscientiously. At the end of every good deed we should rise for prayer and give thanks to God that He vouchsafed us to complete this work. In a word, everything good that we possess or have done, or experienced and seen, or heard and read—everything, without exception, should be ascribed entirely to God and not to ourselves, our own strength, mind, or righteousness. For we are nothing before the Lord. And if after such great miracles our Lord Jesus Christ shows meekness, humility, and obedience before His Father and the Holy Spirit, though being equal to Them according to eternity and nature, then how much more so must we show meekness, humility, and obedience towards our Creator, Who created us from nothing, and without Whose help we cannot exist even for a minute—never mind do anything good?

St. Nikolai (Velimirovic)

Translation by Nun Cornelia (Rees)

Services this Week

- **4th Sunday of Lent – St John Glimacus (03.30.2025.)**
 - **St Father Alexius, Man of God**
 - ***Divine Liturgy starts at 10:00 AM.***
 - ***Vesper Service 05:00 PM – Holy Resurrection, Stubenville – Speaker: Fr. Nebojsa Vragic***

Donations March 16, 2025

Offering - \$1,317.00 Candles - \$67.00 Dues - \$150
Building Fund Donations
In Memory of Thomas Luy from Ann Raich Luy - \$1000

Large Candles

IMO Jeffrey Smith - 42 years of marriage from wife, Mariam Smith
IMO Shawn Novatny from Joe & Rose Novatny
IMO Shawn Novatny from Mike & Lindy Bakos
IMO Shawn Novatny from Tom & Carole McAllister
IMO Natalie Ofsanko from Olga Bulich
IMO Linda Palmer from Olga Bulich

Nut, Apricot, and Poppyseed Rolls are available!
(Also Pumpkin Rolls - \$10)

Thanks to all our WONDERFUL volunteers at the Fish Fry
A special Shut-out to the best workers
Meara Gleason, and Petar Vukovic (We love you!)

Please see Suzette to sign up for your Fish Fry Slot

Sarma Sale!!!!

Please fill-out the order form located in the church hall
or see Suzette for more information.

\$15/ ½ dozen - \$30/ dozen

Flowers for Pascha

Please see attached order form!!
ORDERS DUE NO LATER THAN MARCH 31st

UPCOMING EVENTS

Lenten Fish Fries

Friday, March 7th to Friday April 11, 2025

Lenten Vespers

5th Sunday of Lent – St. Mary of Egypt

Sunday, April 6, 2025 – 5:00 PM

*** Palm Sunday – Sunday, April 13, 2025**

*** PASCHA! – Sunday, April 20, 2025**

*** St. Nicholas Anniversary Celebration–**

Sunday, May 18, 2025

*** Polka Fest – May 30, – June 1, 2025**

*** Band of Brothers – July 2025**

*** Taste of Serbia – Saturday, August 9, 2025**

*** Johnstown Slavic Festival –**

September 19–20, 2025



FLOWERS FOR PASCHA



Provided by SEADS Garden Center

No.		Price	Total \$
	4 ½" - Bluebells	\$6	
	4 ½" - Mini Daffodils	\$7	
	5" - Gerber Daisy	\$7	
	6½" - Daffodils	\$11	
	6 ½ " - Hyacinths	\$11	
	6 ½ " - Tulips	\$11	
	6 ½ " - Martha Washington Geraniums	\$12	
	6 ½ " - Mums	\$14	
	6 ½ " - White Lily Single Stem	\$15.50	
	8 ½ " - Lily Double	\$29	
	8 ½ " - Hydrangea	\$25	
		Total	
		=	

Name: _____

In Memory of: _____

Paid _____ Check # _____

Please return to Suzette Gardenhour no later than Sunday, March 31st. 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