

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

**Zacchaeus Sunday**  
**(02.18.2024.)**

**Luke 19:1-10**

And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. **(KJV)**

The arrival of Zacchaeus Sunday increases attention to the condition of the soul and the need to act. Zacchaeus was blessed to come face-to-face with the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus came to Zachaeus' home. Jesus and Zacchaeus interacted. They conversed in ways beneficial for Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus honestly and forthrightly told Jesus the actions he was taking to correct the wrongs in his life. The Gospel tells us salvation came to Zacchaeus' house that day. Jesus came to save Zachaeus. Jesus saves the lost. There is much to learn from this Gospel. Truth, honesty and being direct with Jesus are important lessons. Being willing to correct the wrongs in life in front of Jesus is an important lesson. Jesus' willingness to listen and understand the sincerity of Zacchaeus' acting to correct the wrongs in his life is apparent. Jesus is present in each home. Jesus is willing to listen to each person willing to confess his or her wrongs and correct them. Jesus is present in each family member, friend or co-worker with whom correcting a relationship is beneficial. The Scriptures are clear that each person is created in the image and likeness of God. (Gen.1:26) The Gospel of St. Matthew speaks about Jesus being present in each person in our lives. (Mt.25:31-46) The relationships we have determine our salvation. The relationships believers have in daily life are the active relationships with Jesus Christ. The way husbands and wives treat each other reflects their relationship with Christ. Parents relationships

with their children and sons and daughters' relationships with their parents affect their salvation and the final judgment before Christ. Employer and employee relationships will be judged by the Lord Jesus Christ. Zacchaeus used his direct experience with Jesus Christ for the salvation of his soul. Each person has daily opportunities to sincerely correct the wrongs in his or her life and make a lasting difference with Christ. It is courageous for a husband or wife to admit his or her wrongs in the marriage relationship and to take honest steps to rectify the relationship. Sincerely repentant prodigal sons or daughters make a lasting difference in family life. Jesus Christ gives each person the opportunity to repent. Repentance is possible when life exists in the body and the mind functions. Jesus is always present and willing to listen to confessions. Jesus is always present to forgive and enable believers to begin anew. Zacchaeus' sin did not hold him back. Zacchaeus willingness to acknowledge and correct the wrongs in his life made a deciding difference. God's Holy Church proclaims the Gospel about Zacchaeus each year to get believers' attention. The Gospel intends to motivate believers to repent and seek a wholesome relationship with Jesus Christ. The relationships with Jesus Christ and the relationships in daily life are inseparable. The relationship with Jesus Christ is defined and characterized by relationships in daily life. Improving our relationship with Jesus Christ involves improving our daily relationship. Being willing to begin again and correct any past wrongs in daily relationships is a way to begin anew in Christ. Starting anew in relationships can seem difficult and may at first even seem insurmountable. Jesus made clear that "With God all things are possible." (Mt.19:26) Maintaining hope and seeking to try with Christ's help is the way to begin. Relationships in parish life also require periodic renewal. God is ever-present to spur, guide and enable the renewal to occur. Parishes go through periods when corrections are needed. The parish church is the Body of Christ. Relationships in the parish always have the goal of growing and maturing in Christ. The encouragement of repentance and the offering of Communion spur the growth of the parish. Drawing wisdom from the Lord God and heeding the lessons of the Gospel lead to improved daily relationships and improved relationships with Christ. Being attentive to the Gospel lessons is always important. Love for God is manifested in daily relationships. Love for God is proven in the relationships in the home, at work and in the community. Parishes are where believers are expected to perfect their relationships with Jesus Christ.

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**Afterfeast of the Meeting of the Lord. Zacchaeus Sunday. February 5/18, 2024. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic**

## ***The Great Blessing of Water and the Home***

The Great Blessing of Water in our homes takes place after the Feast of Theophany, the Baptism of Christ, bringing the holy water & prayer in which Christ was baptized to our homes, as a blessing upon our families.

Traditionally, in most Orthodox parishes, the priest personally visits all his parishioners each year to pray with them in the place where they live, and to bless their surroundings with the newly sanctified water of Theophany (January 19).

We also bring the blessed water to our homes to use throughout the year to bless our homes and to drink whether we are ill or as part of our daily prayer life.

"There are many occasions in family life when a sip of holy water can help to remind us of the blessing that was given 'to bestow sanctification', 'unto healing of soul and body', 'to be a fountain welling forth unto life eternal', as the priest prayed in the litany of Epiphany day."

### **Weaving Christ into Our Lives**

The blessing of homes by these holy waters maintains the spiritual association between the 'family church' and the parish, as well as again providing for the sharing of God's spiritual gifts. ... This annual blessing is not as elaborate as the blessing of the new dwelling, but because of this it should not be overlooked, for it is in this way that the grace of God is extended to individual dwellings.

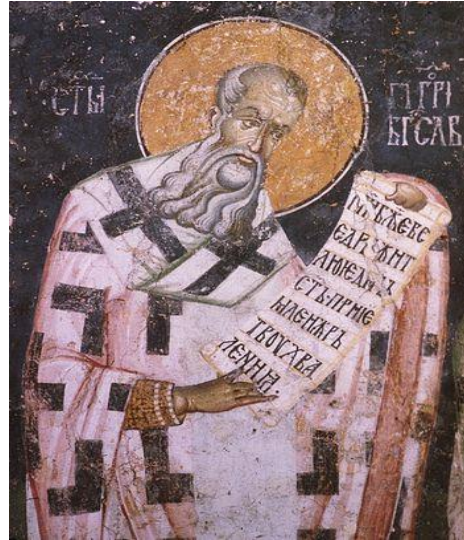
When the children are present, they have the opportunity to see the parish priest in a different and personal situation. If the priest permits, they can lead the way through the house, or hold a candle. They can show him their rooms or pets or favorite toys. They receive a blessing with water. For children, the house blessing shows the connection of the Church to the home. This is a perfect time to introduce your small children to having their bedrooms blessed as a 'shield of armor' to protect them when they sleep and all the fears they may have as children do so often.

### **In Summary**

What does it mean to ask God to bless something? All things in the world have been spoiled right along with us. God must bless His world again in order for it to be the way that He wants it to be. For this reason God sent His Son Jesus and the Holy Spirit to the world: to bless everyone and everything that He made, to make all things good again. When the priest comes to bless our homes, he asks God to have mercy on the house, to rid it of every evil and to fill it with every blessing.

***What a wonderful way to begin the New Year!  
Schedule your Visit with Fr. Dragan Vukovic directly  
by calling your parish priest 814-244-4063  
God bless you all!***

# AN “EVENING HYMN” BY ST. GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN



St. Gregory (329–391), fiery defender of Orthodoxy, profound thinker, and subtle theologian, is called Gregory the Theologian by the Universal Church. He became widely famous for his forty-five homilies, fragments of certain of which were even sung as church hymns. However, St. Gregory the Theologian was also a great ecclesiastical poet.

The saint wrote the larger part of his poetical compositions during the last years of his earthly life—after his return from Constantinople. The verses are not only dedicated to theological themes and moral teachings. A special category of the saint’s poetical heritage is his autobiographical works: memoirs, and poems written at the deaths of friends. The more well-known of these is a long poem in 1949 iambic verses, called, “Pro Vita Sua”.

The saint explains his motive behind using this literary form in the work, “On my Poems”. First of all, the poetic form “educates” the author, accustoming him to caring about measure, to expressing himself succinctly. Secondly, the saint wanted to give examples of soul-profiting poetry to those who love literary art, especially the young, and to take away the palm of primacy in literature from the ancient authors, “the incautious reading of which has at times brought forth bad fruits”. And thirdly, it is a war on heretics, mainly the Apollinarians, who composed new psalters and verses. “We shall also sing psalms, write much, and compose verse.”

St. Gregory’s verse is written in the traditions of ancient metrics: hexameters, pentameters, and trimeters. Nevertheless, the “Evening Hymn” we offer our readers is an exception. His poem [in the original] is seven-syllabic, syllabic-tonal, and closer to modern verse.

According to the testimony of [St. John Chrysostom](#), this hymn was sung at evening services. It was basically yet another step towards the creation of Byzantine liturgical poetry.

In the hymn, St. Gregory’s favorite themes are developed, including the unity of the Holy Trinity, the creation of the world, the creation of man as an “image of light”, his enlightenment and theosis, universal harmony, and man’s ascetical life.

The translation, maximally approximating the original in length and meaning, was made from the ancient Greek language in the publication, *Patrologia Graeca*. v. 36. Col. 511–514.

*This poem was translated into Russian by author and scholar Deacon Vladimir Vasilik. We are translating this Russian version into English, knowing of course that such a translation cannot match one from the original ancient Greek.—OC.*

## Evening Hymn

We bless Thee,  
My Christ, Word of God  
From Beginningless Light  
Thou art Light, Keeper of the Spirit,  
The Triune Light in one  
Thou doest establish in glory.  
And the movement of matter  
Thou hast placed in order  
And comeliness now.  
And human mind  
By wisdom and word  
Thou hast enlightened, having placed,  
Like brightness an icon  
In the heights as in the deep.  
Yeah, He sees the Light in light  
And it becometh light completely.  
Thou hast adorned with lamps  
The great vaults of heaven  
And commanded that, peacefully,  
The darkness of night would  
Alternate with day, so that the law of  
Love and brotherhood be observed.  
Thou dost complete at night  
The labors of our much-toiling flesh,  
And set us to do by day,  
What is pleasing to Thee.  
That escaping the darkness,  
We might reach the day,  
That before day we be not subject

To terrible, ominous darkness.  
And give Thou sleep most light  
To my weary eyes,  
That my tongue, singing praises,  
Joining chorus with the heavenly powers  
May not long fall motionless,  
May not Thy servant fall silent  
Amidst good thoughts  
In his departure to sleep.  
Let night not reproach  
The defiled thought of the day,  
And let the mocking laughter of night  
Not hinder lamentation.  
But may the mind outside the body  
Glorify Thee, O God.  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
To Them together be praise,  
Honor and glory,  
Unto the ages of ages.

*St. Gregory the Theologian  
Protodeacon Vladimir Vasilik*

*English translation by Nun Gornelia (Rees)*

## Services this Week

- **Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee  
(02.25.2024.)**

**St Meletius, Archbishop of Antioch- *Divine  
Liturgy starts at 10:00 AM***

## Donations February 11, 2024

Offering - \$ 631.00 Candles - \$62.00 Dues - \$150.00

### BUILDING FUND DONATIONS

IMO of Olga Pagano from Michelle Goas - \$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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## Saturday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> - 2:00 PM

At the Church Hall

A Baby Shower for our wonderful

Popadaja Vladanka & Father Dragan

Please sign up for your Covered dish.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **FISH FRIES**

Friday, February 16<sup>th</sup> thru Friday, March 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Huge thank you to our Madison Zahurak and Quinn Komar for their hard work at the opening fish fry!**

**Sunday, March 10<sup>th</sup> - Meatfare Sunday  
Luncheon following Divine Liturgy**

**Sunday, March 17<sup>th</sup> - Cheesefare Sunday  
Luncheon following Divine Liturgy**

**Sunday, April 21st - 5th Sunday of Lent  
Lenten Vespers at Our St. Nicholas  
Speaker Fr. Stefan Djoric - 5 PM**