

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

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The Sunday after Theophany (01.23.2022)

Matthew 4:12-17

Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee; And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (*KJV*)

The Holy Scriptures provide specific names and locations for believers through the centuries to verify. Today's Gospel reading is an example of specific names and locations being used as a basis for learning.

God's Holy Church proclaims verifiable truth as the Lord Jesus Christ is truth. (Jn.14:6) Embracing truth is the primary basis for life and for the way of life. Truth leads believers on the narrow path to the Heavenly Kingdom and Eternal life.

The current Gospel reveals the work of God through the centuries. Truth endures. The Holy Prophet Isaiah mentioned Zabulon and Nephthalim centuries before the time of St. John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Is.9:1-2)

Holy Prophet Isaiah's words were fulfilled as mentioned by the Evangelist Matthew in the present Gospel. At Baptism and at each Divine Liturgy, believers profess in the Creed the belief in the Holy Spirit speaking through the prophets.

Today's Gospel verifies the work of God is fulfilled and verified with the passage of centuries. The present Gospel is a lesson of patience in seeking to learn from and about God.

St. Peter's Epistle gives perspective to God's actions through the centuries. The Epistle states: "Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (2 Peter 3:8)

The enduring wisdom of the Holy Prophet Isaiah is expressed in these words: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your **ways** my **ways**, saith the LORD." (Is.55:8)

Learning about the Lord is a life-long experience. God is greater than we will ever be able to realize. The present short Gospel reading has endured through the centuries and is rooted deep in preceding centuries.

Believers need to be humble in thought and always be patient and open in learning about God. God is ever accessible for learning and for nourishing the soul. Seekers of knowledge about the Lord God need not remain in the dark.

The present Gospel states the people in darkness saw great light. The Lord Jesus Christ is the light of the world and enables believers to move out of darkness.

St. John's Gospel preserves Jesus words about being the light of the world.

Jesus said: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (Jn.8:12) God's Holy Church guides believers from darkness to light in Christ.

Each year on Pascha in the Gospel reading we hear about St. John Baptist bearing witness to the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. (Jn.1:6-9)

Learning about God takes work and effort. Conscious choices are involved in remaining true to the baptismal commitment throughout life. Sin gets in the way of believers' faithfulness and must be firmly rejected.

The Lord Jesus Christ made clear in the present Gospel the necessity of repentance. Each believer determines whether to repent. Each person decides on the value he or she places on the care of the soul.

Career choices, personal interests, goals and relationships will reflect if the soul has primary value for the believer. St. Mark's Gospel states: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mk.8:36)

Willingness to be focused on Jesus Christ throughout life requires great determination. When the believer commits to Jesus Christ being first in life, all else falls into proper place.

The Church celebrates Jesus Christ's Resurrection on Pascha. Pascha is the Feast of Feasts. Each Divine Liturgy is an experience of the Resurrection, a unification with Christ and a movement toward God's Kingdom and eternal life.

The present Gospel unites believers with Christ and is a basis for deep and serious thought. Individuals invest in the Kingdom of God when taking the Gospel seriously.

The Gospel lessons are to be incorporated into daily life and applied with great care. The Church has endured and overcome persecutions in preserving, protecting and proclaiming the Gospel.

Each believer invests proportionately according to the effort applied to making the Gospel a part of daily life. God's blessings are immeasurable and unlimited. God's love is manifested in the Gospel.

Everyday is an opportunity to learn from the Gospel and demonstrate gratitude to the Lord God. Believers move from darkness to light when heeding the Gospel and following the Light of Christ.

The Sunday after Theophany. St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa; Venerable Dometian, Bishop of Mitylene. January 10/23, 2022. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic

HOMILY OF HIS EMIENCE LAURUS SKURLA METROPOLITAN OF EASTERN AMERICA & NEW YORK, FOR THE SUNDAY AFTER THEOPHANY

Metropolitan Laurus (Skurla)

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.



Dear brethren and sisters, today we are gathered here to glorify in prayer the great feast of Theophany.

This Sunday, in the liturgical language of the Church, is called the Sunday after the Enlightenment.

Some of us probably know that in antiquity, and even today in the liturgical books, the feast of the Theophany of the Lord is referred to as the Day of the Enlightenment.

Why is such a title, such an appellation, applied to the feast of the Baptism, the feast of Theophany?

If we carefully investigate and delve with you into the hymns of these recent days, we would have to direct our attention to the fact that these hymns speak to us of the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ at the Jordan for baptism.

And so, from that moment light shone forth for those sitting in darkness, for those sitting in the gloom and shadow of death.

In the kontakion of the feast we sing, "Thou hast appeared today to the whole world, and Thy light, O Lord, hath been signed upon us who hymn Thee with understanding. Thou hast come, Thou hast appeared, the Light unapproachable."

With the appearance of the Lord in the Jordan, the splendor of salvation shone upon humanity. The Lord preached among the people for three years, preparing them for the coming of the kingdom of God. But the people only marveled at His miracles; they did not accept Him; and in the end they crucified Him.

Yet the Lord arose, and after His resurrection He ascended into the heavens and sent the Holy Spirit down upon His disciples; and He founded the Holy Church and bestowed upon it all the gifts that conduce to life and piety.

The entrance of the kingdom of heaven was thrown wide, but it is up to us to enter in—and one can do so only through the Holy Church, through the Holy Mysteries.

The first Mystery is Holy Baptism, through which we enter into the Holy Church. Through the Mystery of Baptism we are enlightened, we become members of the kingdom of Christ.

Early in the Christian era, on the Eve of Theophany the baptism of catechumens was performed, and it took place in baptisteries; but for the faithful in church the prophecies of the Holy Scriptures concerning the baptism of the Lord were read. These readings are even now read in church on the even of Theophany, the 13th of January. There are thirteen of them.

When the baptism of the catechumens was completed, they were led into the church and greeted with the hymn, "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

Thus it is that, because, on the eve of Theophany, the catechumens were enlightened with the light of the Faith of Christ, the feast of Theophany, now as in ages past, is called the Day of Enlightenment.

During these holy days may the Lord enlighten us also with the light of His grace, and may we turn to the Lord more frequently with the words of the prayer with which the priest concludes every Matins service: "O Christ, Thou true Light, Who enlightenest and illuminest every man who cometh into the world, may the light of Thy countenance be signed upon us, that therein we may behold the unapproachable Light; and direct our steps to the doing of Thy commandments, through the supplications of Thine all-pure Mother and of all Thy saints. Amen."

Metropolitan Laurus (Skurla)

The Prologue from Ochrid *St Nikolai of Zhicha*

1. SAINT SAVA [SABAS], ARCHBISHOP OF SERBIA

Sava was born in 1169 A.D. He was the son of Stefan Nemanja the Grand Župan of Serbia. As a young man, Sava yearned for the spiritual life, for which he fled to the Holy Mountain [Mt. Athos], where he was tonsured a monk and lived according to the ascetic rule with rare zeal. Stefan Nemanja followed the example of his son and came to the Holy Mountain, where he was tonsured a monk and eventually fell asleep in the Lord as the monk Simeon.

Sava obtained the independence of the Serbian Church from the Byzantine emperor and the patriarch, and became the first Archbishop of Serbia. Together with his father, he built Hilandar Monastery and, after that, many other monasteries, churches and schools throughout the Serbian lands. On two occasions he made pilgrimages to the sacred places in the Holy Land. He restored peace between his two brothers, who were estranged because of a struggle for power. He restored peace between the Serbs and their neighbors. In establishing the Serbian Church, he also established the Serbian state and culture. He instilled peace between all the Balkan peoples and worked for the benefit of all--for which he was loved and respected by all who lived in the Balkans. He gave a Christian soul to the Serbian people--a soul that did not perish with the eventual collapse of the Serbian state. Sava reposed in Trnovo, Bulgaria, during the reign of Emperor Asen, on January 12, 1236 A.D., after becoming ill following the Divine Liturgy on the Feast of Theophany. King Vladislav translated his body to the Mileševo Monastery, from which Sinan Pasha removed St. Sava's relics, to burn them on Vračar hill in Belgrade on April 27, 1595 A.D.

2. THE VENERABLE MARTYRS: THE FATHERS OF SINAI AND RAITHU

These holy martyrs were slain by the Saracens--the fathers of Sinai in the fourth century, and the fathers of Raithu in the fifth century.

3. SAINT HILARY, BISHOP OF POITIERS

Hilary was an ardent combatant against the heresy of Arius in the West. He suffered much because of his defense of Orthodoxy. Hilary wrote many works; the most important was his thesis about the Holy Trinity. He reposed in the Lord in the year 367 A.D.

4. SAINT NINA, ENLIGHTENER OF GEORGIA

Nina was a relative of St. George the Great-martyr and Juvenal the Patriarch of Jerusalem. Her parents belonged to the nobility in Cappadocia, and--since her parents were tonsured in the monastic state--Nina was educated under the tutelage of Patriarch Juvenal. Hearing about the people of Georgia, the virgin Nina, from an early age, desired to go to Georgia and to baptize the Georgians. The Most-holy Mother of God appeared to Nina and promised to take her to this

land. When our Lord opened the way, the young Nina indeed traveled to Georgia, where, in a short period of time, she gained the love of the Georgian people. Nina succeeded in baptizing the Georgian King Mirian, his wife Nana and their son Bakar who, later on, zealously assisted Nina's missionary work. During her lifetime, Nina traveled throughout Georgia, converting the entire nation to the Christian Faith. She did her work at the time of the terrible persecution of Christians at the hands of Emperor Diocletian. Having rested from her many labors, Nina reposed in the Lord in the year 335 A.D. Her body is entombed in the Church of the Holy Great-martyr George in Bodbe Convent. She worked many miracles during her life and after her death.

HYMN OF PRAISE **SAINT NINA**

A virgin most beautiful, noble Nina,
By providence became the Apostle to the Georgians,
In defiance of the persecution by Diocletian, the Emperor.
With the Cross she baptized King Mirian,
His wife Nana and his son Bakar,
And through them, all the people and the elite of the leaders.
With the Cross of the Son of God she baptized them all.
Saint Nina, Apostle to the Georgians.
From her youth Nina prayed to God
That Djul (the Rose)--Georgia--be baptized by her;
And that for which she prayed, the good God granted.
From Nina's hand the Cross shone
Upon gentle Georgia, where it shines even now,
Where Nina's hand blesses even now.
There is Nina's grave, over which a church glistens,
Glorifying Saint Nina and the Lord Christ.

REFLECTION

If, at times, the dogmas of the Faith seem like hard food, you should first endeavor to fulfill the moral dogmas of Christianity: then the understanding of the dogmas of the Faith will be revealed to you. The inquisitive examination of higher things, without effort regarding the

improvement of your life, does not bring any benefit. Once, the monks of Egypt were reflecting on Melchisedek, and not being able to come to a clear understanding of the mysterious personality of this ancient king and high priest, they invited Abba Copres to their assembly and asked him about Melchisedek. Upon hearing this, Copres struck himself three times on the mouth and said: "Woe to you Copres! You left that which God commanded you to do, and you inquire into that which God does not require of you." Hearing him, the monks were ashamed and dispersed. St. John Chrysostom writes: "If we adhere to the true dogmas and are not concerned about our behavior, we will not have any kind of benefit; and in the same way, if we concern ourselves about our behavior and neglect true dogmas, we will receive no benefit for our salvation. If we want to be delivered from Gehenna and to gain the Kingdom, we need to be adorned on both sides--with correctness of dogmas and honorable living."

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the mercy of the Lord Jesus:

1. Toward sinners and toward those who are ill;
2. Toward the people who are confused, as a flock without a shepherd;
3. Toward mankind in general, for whom He allowed Himself to be crucified.

HOMILY

on the vision of the invisible world

"We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

We see this material and transient world, but we look to that spiritual and immortal world. We see earthly joy, often interrupted by tears and sighs and, in the end, always concluding with death; but we look to spiritual joy among the angels and saints of God in the heavens, to joy uninterrupted and eternal.

We see the sufferings and failures of the righteous in this life; but we look at their glory and celebration in the next world.

We see many successes, the glory and the honor of the unrighteous in this life; but we look to their defeat, condemnation and indescribable torment in eternity.

We see the Church of God often humiliated and persecuted in this world; but we look to the final victory of the Church over all of her enemies and adversaries, both visible and invisible.

Brethren, we often see tyrants and abductors as rulers and wealthy men in this age, and we see saints as poor, dejected and forgotten; but then we look at the other kingdom, the Kingdom of God--eternal, sinless and immortal--in which the saints will reign, without one tyrant or abductor.

O Lord, most patient and most merciful, open our spiritual vision, that we may see that which awaits us after this brief life, and that we endeavor to fulfill Thy law.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Services this Week

**THURSDAY - January 27th – St Sava, First Archbishop of
Serbia – Divine Liturgy – 09:00 AM**

**- 32th Sunday after Pentecost – (Sunday, January 30th) – 10:00 AM
Divine Liturgy**

Donations January 16, 2022

Offering - \$285.00 Candles - \$22.00

Christmas Donation to the Building Fund

**In Memory of deceased members of the Cvijanovich and Bitsko
Families from**

Eli Cvijanovich – \$200.00

Donations January 6-9, 2022

Offering - \$5,847,.00 Candles - \$172.00 Dues - \$350.00

Donations

Gold Coin for Cesnica - \$130

**From: Joe Bartis, The Gardenhours, The Marinkovichs, Carole
McAllister,**

John & Patricia Pavich & Dyne Tomak

Men's Club Christmas Donation - \$250

Anonymous - \$50

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Building Fund

In Memory of Connie Bartis

Donna Zimmerman - \$50

Large Candles

**In Memory of Julie Lambrinos from Kumovi Dan & Dyne Tomak
In Memory of Parents, Mike & Mildred Tumbas from Robert &
Milica Knepp**

In Memory of Ranka Marinkovich from Richard Kondas

In Memory of Ed Gartrell from Steve Purich

In Memory of Linda (Locher) Leckrone from Dorothy Podolak

**Thank you to the following for donating poinsettias to
decorate the church for the Nativity**

Father Rodney Torbic

Danica Wess

**Carole McAllister IMO Nick, Sara & Nicholas Jr Davich,
Dan & Dyne Tomak IMO Damiena & Lazo Gjurich and Bosa & Lazo
Vuckovich,**

Quinn KomE IMO Connie Bartis

Diane Thomas IMO Helen & Dorothy Lavrnja

Evelyn Walet IMO Father Sam Vuckovich & Aunt Mimi

Helene Gleason IMO Bosa & Lazo Vuckovich & Mary Ellen Locher

Eli Cvijanovich IMO deceased members of the Cvijanovich Famly

Richard & Suzette Gardenhour IMO The Bozic, Grisin &

Gardenhour

Families

Melana Simms IMO Connie Bartis

John & Patricia IMO Connie Bartis

Mary Kelly IMO Bill Kelly

Pete & Josie Todorich IMO Nick, Milka & Nick Jr Todorich

Joanne Uzelac IMO Dino Uzelac

Linda & Tony Freidhoff IMO Patty & Wayne Freidhoff

Joseph Bartis IMO Connie Bartis

Gary, Rose & Krisitina Marinkovich IMO Marinkovich & Holbay

Families

Richard Kondas IMO Parents Amelia & Joe Kondas

Joe & Radost Golden IMO Golden & Vuchev Families

**Patricia Niel IMO Milos, Mary, Rod, Milos Jr. Buncich & Krisitna,
David Niel
& Michelle**

Cameron & Linda Palmer IMO Mrs. Jean Palmer

Lynn Wright IMO Constance Bartis

Christine Lesosky Rohanna IMO Connie Bartis

Lisa Cadwell, MD IMO Constance Bartis

HOLIDAY ROLLS

**The kolo is selling Nut, Poppysed, Apricot and Lekvar - \$12/each
Please see Donna Zimmerman if you are interested, we have a few
left... We**

also have Pumpkin Rolls (\$10)! -(724) 757-4189

IMPORTANT DATES

Sunday, January 30th

St Sava Program

Program and Luncheon following Divine Liturgy!

**Please plan to stay to support our children, the future of
Our St Nicholas Church!!!**

Friday, February 4th

Fish Fry

Sunday, February 20th

**Men's Club Slava Celebration
With a Serbian Steak Dinner**