

<p>CHURCH BULLETIN</p>	<p>V. Rev. Fr. George Veselinovic, Parish Priest Monroeville, Pennsylvania 15146 412.622.4714 (cell) 412.856.8166 (office) dj.veselinovic@yahoo.com www.stnicholasmonroeville.org stnicholasmonroeville@gmail.com</p>	<p>SUNDAY December 30, 2018</p>
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THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST - FOREFATHERS

Timothy (1:15-17)

This saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And I am the foremost of sinners; but I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience for an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever.

Gospel: Luke (14:16-24)

And then Jesus said, "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet, he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.' Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I am on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.' Still another said, 'I just got married, so I cannot come.' The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.' 'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.' Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'"

TROPARION TONE VI

The angelic powers were at Your tomb; the guards became as dead men. Mary stood by Your grave, seeking You most pure Body. You did capture hell, not being tempted by it. You did come to the Virgin, granting life. O Lord, Who did rise from the dead: glory to You!

TROPARION OF THE FATHERS – TONE II

Great are the accomplishments of faith! For the three holy youths rejoiced in the fountain of flames as though at waters of rest. And the Prophet Daniel appeared as a shepherd to the lions as though they were sheep. Wherefore by their prayers, O Christ god, save our souls.

TRANSFER OF THE RELICS OF ST. NICHOLAS, WONDERWORKER

TROPARION TONE IV

The day of the joyous celebration has come; the city of Bari rejoices and with it the whole universe leaps from joy, singing the spiritual songs and psalms. For today, the holy feast, on

the occasion of the transfer of the honorable and exceedingly healing relics of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, has shone forth with the radiant rays, like the sun that does not set, driving away the darkness of temptations and calamities from those who faithfully exclaim to thee: "Save us, as our protector, O great Nicholas!"

KONTAKION TONE VI

When Christ God, the Giver of Life, raised all of the dead from the valleys of misery with His mighty hand, He bestowed resurrection on the human race. He is the Savior of all, the Resurrection, the Life, and the God of all.

KONTAKION TONE III

TRANSFER OF THE HOLY RELICS OF ST. NICHOLAS, WONDERWORKER

Your relics, O Saint Nicholas, came out as a star from the east to the west. The sea was sanctified by your journey, and the city of Bari, through you, has received the grace. For working for us, you have appeared as an excellent, wonderful and merciful Wonderworker.

KONTAKION OF THE FATHERS TONE VI

O thrice-blessed ones, you did not worship the image made by man, but armed with the invisible power of God, you were glorified in a trial by fire. From the midst of unbearable flames you called on God, crying: "Hasten, O compassionate One! Speedily come to our defense, for You are merciful and able to accomplish all that You will."

KONTAKION OF THE THEOTOKOS - TONE VI

Steadfast protectress of Christians, constant advocate before the Creator: do not despise the cry of us sinners, but in your goodness come speedily to help us who call on you in faith. Hasten to hear our petition and to intercede for us, O Theotokos, for you do always protect those who honor you.

SAINTS WE COMMEMORATE TODAY – *Holy Prophet Daniel; Holy Don Avvacum and Hegumen Paisius – Serbian Mothers' Day*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today – Parastos for Blagica and Nedeljko Kozomara. Vjecnaja pamjat! Memory eternal!

2019 BEAUTIFUL SERBIAN ORTHODOX DIOCESAN CALENDARS HAVE ARRIVED! Please support our church by purchasing these calendars for a minimal \$5.00. Calendars are available at the tutor's desk.

We will be having a Christmas play on Jan. 6th following Divine Liturgy. ALL children will have a role, so all parents need to attend and bring their kids. Also, there will be [mandatory] play practice **today** as well as MANDATORY dress rehearsal on Saturday Jan. 5th from 11-2. Lunch will be served to the children. Also, if anyone has any "Nativity" scene costumes like animals or angels that they would like to donate, please see Protinica Karen.

January 6th - Christmas Eve. Following Divine Liturgy, our beloved children will perform a Christmas play. Lunch will be served.

January 6th - Christmas Eve service will begin at 6:00pm. Traditional lighting of the Yule tree/ Badnjak will follow. A rich and wonderful dinner following the service will be in the church hall with entertainment provided by Srpski Sinovi/ Serbian sons. Invite your family and friends and celebrate the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. All are welcome/ Dobro do li!

January 13th – **Come celebrate Serbian New Year's Eve!** Doors open at 4:30 p.m with a traditional dinner served at 5:00 p.m. Ball drop in Belgrade at 6:00 p.m. Music provided by Srpski Sinovi. Adults - \$20 Children ó free! RSVP: 412-856-8166.

Beautiful Christmas Cards ó Available to purchase at the tutorø desk. \$20/pack or \$2/each.

Last Call! for NOODLE ORDERS for Orthodox Christmas. Call Rose Cheran at (412-824-7609). The ðnoodle makersö will then take a break. Stay tuned!

Purse Bash – A 2nd planning meeting will be held after church **today** in the Multi-purpose room. The Purse Bash is scheduled for March 2, 2019. Ladies, please plan to attend and help make this event a successful fundraiser. If you have any questions, please contact Sondra Deaunovich at Sondra7890@comcast.net or 412-760-5796.

The Committee for the 2019 SNF Summer Golf Tournament has met and is excited to begin planning for this big event for our church and local SNF lodges. To be successful, we will need everyone's help! There will be many opportunities for you to contribute. The Committee will keep you informed of our progress over the coming months. Pam Matejevich will be coordinating volunteers for the event which will take place August 7-11, 2019. Reach out to Pam or to Chairman Dushan Markoff to offer your help or ask any questions!

Maintenance Group is preparing for winter! *Please see insert!

REMINDERS

Adult Bible Study – Classes cancelled until further notice.

Vespers ó Saturday evening 6:00 p.m. Confession 6:30 p.m.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

The weeks between Thanksgiving and the Nativity are filled with a flurry of activity. Dinners and parties abound. We receive invitations from neighbors, friends, colleagues at work, and family. The invites come by mail, a phone call, email and E-vites. Some parties and dinners we will attend. Others we may wish to attend but are unable and a few of these events we will try to avoid at all costs. With the unwanted invitations, we may just graciously decline saying no thank you or we may hope a legitimate conflict arises or we may just make up an excuse.

Actually, it is good to decline some, if not most, of these invitations because they conflict with the genuine Orthodox Christian spirit of quiet, reflective anticipation and preparation for the Nativity that is encouraged during Advent.

In todayø Gospel reading, Jesus tells a story about someone who threw a dinner party, ðSomeone gave a great dinner and invited many.ö This ðsomeoneø must have had substantial wealth in order to throw this dinner because Jesus refers to it as a ðgreatø banquet, and He says this someone possessed a ðslaveø who tells the invited guests: ðCome, for everything is ready now.ö

How do the invitees respond when the dinner is ready? Jesus says, ðThey all alike began to make excuses.ö The word ðexcusesø implies some illegitimate reasons. But wait a minute, one guy ðbought a piece of landø and had to go see it. Another bought ðfive yoke of oxenø and needed to try them out and a third had ðjust been married.ø These three people seem to have perfectly legitimate reasons for not being able to attend the banquet. After all, doesnø taking care of the home and the family, and the job that provides for both, take priority over a banquet invite?

If we look at how the Church Fathers and Saints interpret the passage, we can begin to understand why these three reasons are not reasons at all but excuses. They say that the ðsomeoneø (or ðcertain manø) who hosts the great supper/banquet (is none other than God the Father. They say that the slave is Godø Son Jesus Christ. They say that the invited guests are those who proclaim faith in God. That would be you and me. And finally, the Church Fathers and Saints interpret the great banquet as the heavenly feast of the Kingdom of God. So, the underlying message is that no excuse, not home, not job, not even family, is good enough to skip out on Godø great banquet.

The mystical supper is celebrated every Divine Liturgy. Thus, God the Father puts on a great banquet every Sunday and every time we celebrate a liturgy. Do we have an excuse for not being here on Sundays? Will we have an excuse for not being here on Christmas day?

Working on our land, our yard, our house, our rental property, although not bad in and of themselves, when we allow them to interfere with attending Godø great banquet, they become an excuse. Likewise, we cannot use the yoke of our job, profession, or occupation as an excuse. Even our marriage, our spouse, and our children cannot become an excuse. How often do we allow one person in the family scheduling conflict to become a reason for the whole family not to attend church? How often do we attend the great banquet of the liturgy only if we have received no other invitations for Sunday morning and Christmas? In the passage, Luke 14:25-35, right after todayø gospel, Jesus discusses the cost of discipleship saying, ðIf anyone comes to Me and hates his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.ö Can the message be any more blunt or clear?

If we think that God does not care about rejecting His invitation or it is acceptable excuse because He knows that we really want to be there, we are sadly mistaken. God the Father does care. We know He cares deeply because Jesus relates that the master became angry after his slave reported the excuses and later said, ðNone of those who were invited will taste my dinner.ö God does not get angry because He is somehow offended at being rejected. Rather,

His anger results from knowing and seeing the unnecessary problems we bring upon ourselves when our priorities are upside down. He cares deeply for us. God does not shut us out of the dinner. We shut ourselves out with our own excuses. Neither does God force us to attend the His banquet. He respects our free will even when we reject His invitation even when the consequences are direly negative for us.

Will there be empty seats at God's banquet table? It's possible but not likely because after the invited guests refuse, the master tells the slave to "bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame." And "Compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled." Interestingly, here's where the connection is made between the heavenly banquet, the Divine Liturgy and the dining room table of our own home. In the passage immediately preceding today's Gospel, Luke 14:12-15, we hear Jesus say, "When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

Can there be any more succinct statement that summarizes the true meaning of the Nativity season? It's not about what we can do for each other, we who have means, power, wealth, property, jobs and a family. Rather, it's about what can we do for those who do not have these things and who cannot repay us for our generosity towards them. Our salvation depends on putting away all our excuses, accepting the invitation, and extending the same invitation to others. "Advent" means "coming." Christ, the eternal Word & Son of God, is coming to us as a little child during this season. But are we coming to Him? Are we coming to His birthday party this year? Are we coming to His resurrection banquet every Sunday? And who will we bring with us?

