

**SUNDAY**  
**March 15, 2020**

**SAINT NICHOLAS SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**

**Very Rev. Fr. George Veselinovic**, Parish Priest

412-622-4714 (cell) 412-856-8166 (office)

dj.veselinovic@yahoo.com

www.stnicholasmonroeville.org

stnicholasmonroeville@gmail.com

**SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT: ST GREGORY PALAMAS**

**TROPARION - TONE VI (RESURRECTION)**

The angelic powers were at Your tomb; the guards became as dead men. Mary stood by Your grave, seeking Your most pure body. You captured hell, not being tempted by it. You came to the Virgin, granting life. O Lord, Who rose from the dead, glory to You.

**TROPARION - TONE IV (TRANSLATION OF THE RELICS OF ST. NICHOLAS)**

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!"

**TROPARION - TONE VIII (ST. GREGORY PALAMAS)**

O light of Orthodoxy, teacher of the Church, its confirmation, O ideal of monks and invincible champion of theologians, O wonderworking Gregory, glory of Thessalonica and preacher of grace, always intercede before the Lord that our souls may be saved!

**KONTAKION – TONE VI (RESURRECTION)**

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 (TRANSLATION OF THE RELICS OF ST. NICHOLAS)**

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 - TONE VIII (ST. GREGORY PALAMAS)**

Holy and divine instrument of wisdom, joyful trumpet of theology, together we sing your praises, O God-inspired Gregory. Since you now stand before the Original Mind, guide our minds to Him, O Father, so that we may sing to you: Rejoice, preacher of grace!

**KONTAKION - TONE IV (FROM THE LENTEN TRIODION)**

Now is the time for action! Judgment is at the doors! So let us rise and fast, offering alms with tears of compunction and crying: Our sins are more in number than the sands of the sea; but forgive us, O Master of all, so that we may receive the incorruptible crowns!

**Epistle: Hebrews 1:10-2:3**

In the beginning, Thou, Lord, didst found the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of thy hands; they will perish, but thou remainest; they will all grow old like a garment, like a mantle thou wilt roll them up, and they will be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years will never end." But to what angel has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand, till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet?" Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?

Therefore we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the message declared by angels was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him.

**Gospel: Mark 2:1-12**

At that time, Jesus entered Capernaum and it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, not even about the door; and he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak thus? It is a blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question thus in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"-he said to the paralytic-"I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home." And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet and went out before them all; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

**Instead of "It is truly meet..." we sing:**

All of creation rejoices in you, O Full of Grace: the assembly of Angels and the race of men. O sanctified temple and spiritual paradise, the glory of virgins, from whom God was incarnate and became a Child – our God before the ages. He made your body into a throne, and your womb He made more spacious than the heavens. All of creation rejoices in you, O Full of Grace. Glory to you!

**Commemorated today:** St. Gregory Palamas, the Archbishop of Thessalonica; Hieromartyr Theodotus, Bishop of Cyrenia

**RESPONSE TO COVID-19/CORONAVIRUS FROM FR. GEORGE**

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I encourage each of you to exercise restraint, keep a clear head, and maintain a prayerful calm. Let us not succumb to panic and fears associated with the situation surrounding the Coronavirus. At the same time, it would be unacceptable for us to take this situation lightly and neglect

medical preventive measures, endangering oneself and others. We must observe sanitary and hygienic preventive measures in a consistent and rigorous way at our parish and home. Let us intensify our prayer for overcoming the disease and ask Our Lord and Savior to bestow strength to the doctors and medical personnel who are fighting it.

Our Father and Bishop IRINEJ has issued the following statement regarding activities at church. These actions are shared by all jurisdictions and diocese of the Orthodox community of North America. "Due to the dangers of COVID-19, until further notice, all coffee hours are cancelled, all Church and Serbian school classes, meetings, and joint vesper services and lectures. The

Divine Liturgy, of course, remains." More instructions and guidelines are to come today. ALL Divine Liturgies (on Sundays and "Red Letter" Feast Days) as well as Presanctified Liturgy WILL continue as scheduled.

*O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk.*

*But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant.*

*Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions, and not to judge my brother or sister, for blessed art Thou, unto ages of ages. Amen.*

*-Lenten Prayer of St. Ephrem*

#### REMINDERS

- **LENTEN FISH FRY** – Our Lenten Fish Fry **will** continue but it will be offered as carry-out only. You may still eat it on church property, however.
- **PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY** – **Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m.** March 18, and 25<sup>th</sup>, April 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is a solemn Lenten Vespers with the administration of Holy Communion added to it. To prepare (for Holy Communion), please prepare just as you would for Holy Communion on Sundays. The faithful who are unable to make the effort of total fasting on Wednesdays because of weakness or work, however, may eat a light Lenten meal in the early morning. *Please see the insert for more information on what Presanctified Liturgy is.*

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **CANCELED – Thursday Evening Akathist & Bible Study** until further notice. Thank you for your understanding.
- **POSTPONED – House Blessings** – House blessings will be postponed until further notice. Thank you for your understanding.
- **EASTER FLOWERS** – Order forms for Easter Flowers are now available. The deadline date is **Wednesday, April 1, 2020**. The completed order form and payment need to be received in order for flowers to be ordered. Your support and cooperation are sincerely appreciated.

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

- **CANCELED – Lenten Vespertal Services** held throughout our Pittsburgh Deanery have been canceled. Thank you for your understanding.

● **Saturday, April 25 – St. Nicholas Tamburitzans Concert** at McKeesport HS Auditorium at 3:00 p.m. with special guest, "Kud Drina", Serbian Folklore Group from Patterson, NJ. Please see the ad booklet request to help support our Tamburitzans!

● **SAVE THE DATE: Sunday, May 3** – Senior Luncheon hosted by the Outreach Committee

● **SAVE THE DATE: Sunday, May 17** – Our St. Nicholas Church **Slava**

● **SAVE THE DATE: Friday, May 22 – Sunday, May 24** – SSF Festival Monroeville

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

On the second Sunday of Great Lent, there is a great feast in the blessed city of Thessalonika, Greece. It is the feast of St. Gregory Palamas. On this day, the holy relics of the saint are taken from the Church of St. Gregory in a procession throughout the city, escorted by bishops, priests, sailors, policemen, and thousands of faithful. One wonders why his earthly remains are still held in such great veneration. How could his bones remain incorruptible more than six hundred years after his death? Indeed, St. Gregory's life clearly explains these wondrous facts. It illustrates the inspired words of the apostles that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 6:19) and that we are "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4).

St. Gregory Palamas was born in the year 1296. He grew up in Constantinople (now Istanbul, Turkey) in a critical time of political and religious unrest. Constantinople was slowly recovering from the devastating invasion of the Crusades. It was a city under attack from all sides. From the west, it was infiltrated by Western philosophies of rationalism and scholasticism and by many attempts at Latinization. From the east, it was threatened by Muslim Turkish military invaders. The peace and faith of its citizens were at stake.

Gregory's family was wealthy. His father was a member of the senate. Upon his father's sudden death, Byzantine Emperor Andronikos II Paleologos (1282–1328), who was a close friend of the family, gave it his full financial support. He especially admired Gregory for his fine abilities and talents, hoping that the brilliant young man would one day become a fine assistant. However, instead of accepting a high office in the secular world, Gregory sought "that good part, which will not be taken away" from him (Luke 10:42).

Upon finishing his studies in Greek philosophy, rhetoric, poetry, and grammar, Gregory, at only twenty or twenty-two years of age, followed a burning passion in his heart. Like a lover who strives to stay alone forever with his loved one, Gregory was thirsty for this living water (see Revelation 22:17). Therefore, no created thing could separate him from the love of God (see Romans 8:39). He simply withdrew to Mount Athos, an already established community of monasticism. He first stayed at the Vatopedi Monastery, and then moved to the Great Lavra. In Athos, the novice Gregory took as his spiritual guide St. Nicodemos of Vatopedi Monastery. This holy man of prayer guided Gregory on the path of ascetic labor: prayers, vigils, fasting, continuous repentance, and monastic obedience. The young novice Gregory was especially attached to the prayer of the heart, also known as the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner" (see Luke 18:38).

The experienced practice of the Jesus Prayer, requiring solitude and silence combined with physical exercises and breathing methods, is called “hesychasm” (from the Greek *hesychos*, meaning inner stillness, peace, or silence). Those practicing it are called “hesychasts.” Inner silence of this kind makes us capable of listening to the whispers of the divine within us. “The kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21). Therefore, the Jesus Prayer is the prayer of the whole person, involving the human body, mind, soul, and heart.

The hesychasts spoke and wrote about their unique experience. They taught people to pray without ceasing, as the Apostle Paul commands *all* Christians to do (1 Thessalonians 5:17). They explained that in prayer, man is filled from within with the eternal glory, with the divine light beheld at the Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor.

Around the year 1330, a certain monk Barlaam arrived in Constantinople from Calabria, Italy. He was a famous scholar, a skilled orator, and an acclaimed Christian teacher. Barlaam visited Mt. Athos and became acquainted with hesychasm.

Barlaam valued education and learning much more than contemplative prayer. Therefore, he believed the monks on Mount Athos were wasting their time in contemplative prayer when they should be studying. He ridiculed the ascetic labor and life of the monks, their methods of prayer, and their teachings about the uncreated light experienced by the hesychasts. Countering the traditional stance of the Church that “the theologian is the one who prays,” Barlaam asked: “How can an intimate communion of man with the Divine be achievable through prayer, since the Divine is transcendent and ‘dwelling in unapproachable light’ (1 Timothy 5:16)? No one can apprehend the essential being of God!” Barlaam was convinced that God can be reached only through philosophical, mental knowledge—in other words, through rationalism.

The words of Barlaam were not merely a challenge to a few monks. They defied the experience of the Church as a whole. The West, with its rationalistic tendencies, has associated the image of God with man’s intellect. Barlaam’s mind was full of rational arguments, but his heart was cold. Certainly, life with God is not just information, but also experience. Our living God cannot be conceived and described only by study, but must be spoken about from experience. “Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?” (Luke 24:32).

Journeying from Mt. Athos to Thessalonika and Constantinople, Barlaam clashed with the monks, refusing to test their way of vigils, prayer, and fasting, or to accept their spiritual experience. Unfortunately, many monks were swayed by his arguments and stood by his side. Deceived by considering the living faith as mere rational knowledge, Barlaam waged a war against the ascetics.

At the request of the Athonite monks, St. Gregory countered at first with verbal admonitions. But seeing the futility of such efforts, he put his theological arguments in writing.

In his *Triads in Defense of the Holy Hesychasts* (1338), Palamas interpreted the experience of the Church by presenting logical arguments, based on the Scripture and the writings of the Fathers. Addressing the question of how it is possible for humans to have knowledge of a

transcendent and unknowable God, he drew a distinction between knowing God in His *essence*, or nature, and knowing God in His *energies, actions, or the means* by which He acts.

Towards the year 1340 the Athonite ascetics, with St. Gregory’s assistance, compiled a general reply to the attacks of Barlaam, the so-called Hagiorite Tome. Since the heated arguments flared everywhere in the churches, a general council was held at Constantinople in the year 1341. In front of hundreds of bishops and monastics, St. Gregory Palamas held an open debate with Barlaam in the halls of the Great Church of Hagia Sophia. On May 27, 1341, the council accepted the position of St. Gregory Palamas that God, unapproachable in His essence, reveals Himself through His energies, which are directed towards the world and are able to be perceived, like the light of Tabor, but which are neither material nor created. The teachings of Barlaam were condemned as heresy, and he himself was anathematized and returned to Calabria.

St. Gregory was a living Gospel. God gave him the gift of healing, especially in the last three years before his death. When we hear in the Lenten Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, “The Light of Christ illumines all,” may we remember the call of the illumined Gregory for unceasing prayer and ascetic labor, that we be truly illumined by the light of the Resurrection.

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#### **LITURGY OF THE PRESANCTIFIED GIFTS**

The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is of very early and, in a sense, practical origin; practical in that it was seen as the means for the faithful to commune of the Sacrament on days when the Eucharistic Liturgy could not be celebrated. In early times, at least until the fourth century, Communion was considered so much a part of the Eucharistic Sacrifice that it was unthinkable to attend without partaking.

Of all the Lenten rules, one is unique to Orthodoxy, and so gives us a key to its liturgical spirit: it forbids the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on weekdays in Lent, as incompatible with fasting, the sole exception being the Feast of the Annunciation. But so as not to deprive the faithful of “the food of immortality”, the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is prescribed, that is, a “Eucharistic synaxis” without the Consecration. The festal nature of the Eucharist is thus reserved for Saturdays and Sundays in Lent, while on the days of total fasting, Wednesdays and Fridays, the people receive the Holy Gifts that were sanctified on the previous Sunday.

The Presanctified was from the start an evening service, Communion following Vespers, to be conducted after the Ninth Hour, i.e. three o’clock in the afternoon. The daylong fast was thus broken early in the evening, much as the total fast on Sunday is broken after Communion. It is likely that this service was not always confined to Lent, but was common to all of the Church’s fasting seasons. However, permeated as it is with the “bright sadness” of Lent, it has taken on a special beauty and solemnity. As we pray for the Catechumens, those being made ready for Holy Baptism on Easter Saturday, we sense a direct connection with the Christian Church of the early centuries, and understand the initial character of Lent as preparation for Baptism and for Easter.

But it is the Prayers of the Faithful that really illuminate the Lenten road, giving us a fuller understanding of the meaning and purpose of the Lenten discipline: *“Liberate all our senses from killing passion, setting over them as benevolent sovereign our inner reason. Let the eye be averted from every evil sight, and the ear be deaf to idle talk. May the tongue be purged of unseemly speech. Purify these lips that praise You, Lord. Make our hands abstain from wicked deeds, doing only such things as are pleasing to You, thus sealing with Your grace all our members, and our mind.”*

Then, as we prepare for the Entrance of the pre-consecrated Gifts: *“Behold, His spotless body and life-giving blood are about to make their entrance at this hour, to be laid on this mystical table, invisibly attended by a multitude of the heavenly host. Grant that we may receive them in blameless communion, so that as the eyes of our understanding see the light, we may become children of light and of day.”*

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***Excerpts from the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts***

***Psalm 129***

*Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord; Lord hear my voice. Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication. If You, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? For with You there is forgiveness, that You mayest be feared. Because of Your Name have I waited for You, O Lord; my soul hath waited upon Your word, my soul hath hoped in the Lord. From the morning watch until night, from the morning watch let Israel trust in the Lord. For with the Lord there is mercy and with Him is abundant redemption, and He will deliver Israel from all his iniquities.*

***Psalm 130***

*O Lord, my heart is not exalted, nor are mine eyes become lofty. Nor have I walked in things too great or too marvelous for me. If I were not humble-minded but exalted my soul, as one weaned from his mother, so wouldst You requite my soul. Let Israel hope in the Lord, from henceforth and forevermore.*

***Psalm 140/141***

*O Lord, I have cried out to you: hear me, O Lord. Lord, I have cried out to you, hear me; hearken to the voice of my prayer as I cry out to you, hear me, O Lord. Let my prayer rise as incense before you; the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice. Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth, and a gate to contain my lips. Let not my heart incline to evil deeds, to finding excuses for sinful doings. In the company of men who work iniquity, and I will not partake of their delicacies. Let the just man chasten me with kindness and chide me. But the oil of the wicked shall never touch my head, yet even then would I pray for their good will. Their judges were dashed against the rock: they shall hear my words, how sweet they are. As a lump of clay broken on the ground, so shall their bones be strewn near the grave. On you, Lord, O Lord, my eyes are fixed; in you have I trusted: take not my life. Keep me from the snare which they have set for me, and from the traps of wicked men. The wicked shall fall into their own nets, while I alone escape.*

***Psalm 141/142***

*With my voice, I cried out to the Lord, with my voice, I implored the Lord. Before him, I will pour out my prayer; in his presence, I will tell of my distress. When my spirit was fainting within me, you knew my paths. On that very road I was walking, they set a trap for me. I looked to my right and observed: no one was aware of me. I had no means of escape: no one would take care of my life. I cried out to you, O Lord, and said, “You are my hope, my share in the land of the living. Attend to my supplication, for I am laid very low. “Deliver me from my oppressors, for they are too strong for me. Release me from prison, that I may give thanks to your name.”*

EASTER FLOWER ORDER FORM

**ORDER DEADLINE WEDNESDAY APRIL 1, 2020**



Spring flowers will be ready for Christ’s tomb on Good Friday and should be taken home after Divine Liturgy on Easter Sunday. Please mark your selection.

Type	Cost per Unit	Quantity	Cost
Lily 6"	\$15.00		
Lily 8"	\$25.00		
Tulips 6"	\$15.00		
Hydrangea 6 ½ " (double bloom, pink and blue) SPECIFY COLOR	\$25.00	Pink	
		Blue	
Hyacinth 8"	\$15.00		
Azalea 6"	\$20.00		
Mums 6 " white	\$15.00		
		<b>Total Cost</b>	

Print how you would like the name to appear on the inscription card.

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Please PRE-PAY orders with cash or check made payable to Pat Kolar and attach it to you order. To place an order, give the completed form and payment to Sophie Vargo or to Pat Kolar or mail to Pat at 106 Murrysville Road, Trafford, PA 15085.

[Paid by  CASH  CHECK NO. \_\_\_\_\_]

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_

If you have questions about ordering the flowers, please call/email Pat Kolar (412 372-4239) [patkolar@verizon.net](mailto:patkolar@verizon.net) .

*Profits from the sale of Easter flowers will benefit the St. Nicholas Sunday School.*

