

The Serb
Winter of 2024
publication of St. George Serbian Orthodox Church
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Serb Publication Staff

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The Church news-letter Editor assumes responsibility and the right to reject, delete and rewrite any part or all of the articles submitted for the publication. Any news of the social interest should be submitted to the Editor. No articles will be considered that are submitted unsigned and/or improperly identified

From your priest's desk

As we are getting closer to the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Church encourages us to intensify our spiritual lives, especially ten days before the Feast when the fasting gets more strict. We do this through fasting, praying, alms-giving, confession, and increased attention to "preparing for His coming" to prepare a fit dwelling place for Him.

Please check the schedule for the Nativity Services in our church and plan to attend them. After the Nativity season, comes the Theophany which is almost an equally important Feast Day.

I am suggesting to all families to commemorate the Feast of Nativity by attending the services, and by practicing Serbian Nativity (Bozic) traditions in your home with family and friends so your children can learn them.

Please let your Christmas donation to your church be a generous one.

Blessing of homes in our parish will start on Theophany. Please read your text/emails from me to schedule your home blessing.

In 2025 Great Lent will start on Monday, March 3 and the celebration of Pascha is on Sunday, April 20. Wishing you all many blessings and joy for the upcoming Feast of the Nativity of our Lord and Savior, a very healthy and prosperous New Year, and a blessed Theophany season!
Mir Božiji Hristos se rodi! Srećna Nova Godina!

**In Christ's service
Fr Aleksandar**



The Nativity Services in St George Serbian Orthodox Church, Joliet, IL

Mir Božiji Hristos se rodi! Peace of God Christ is Born!

Thursday, January 2 – St Ignatius of Antioch / St John of Kronstadt

Confession at 8:30 am; Divine Liturgy at 9 am

Sunday, January 5 – Sunday of the Holy Fathers / Serb Father's Day – Očevi

Hierarchal Divine Liturgy at 10 am. Parastos for +Fr Ned Lunich and luncheon in the hall. Church School and decorating of Badnjak.

Monday, January 6 – The Nativity Eve – Badnji Dan

Royal Hours at 9 am

Nativity Compline and Matins at 6 pm. Blessing of Badnjak (Yule Log) and refreshments in the upper-level hall after the church services.

Tuesday, January 7 – The Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ – Božić

Divine Liturgy at 10 am

From the Feast of the Nativity until the Eve of Theophany, January 18 is fast free

Wednesday, January 8 – Synaxis of the Theotokos / Sabor Presvete Bogorodice

Divine Liturgy at 9 am

Vigil/confession at 5 pm

Thursday, January 9 - St Stephen the Protomartyr / Sv Stefan Prvomučnik

Divine Liturgy at 9 am.

Saturday, January 11

Vigil / confession at 5 pm

Sunday, January 12 – Sunday after Nativity / Nedelja po Bozicu

Divine Liturgy at 10 am Church school and coffee hour

Monday, January 13 – Leave-taking of Nativity / Odanije Bozica

Vigil/confession at 6 pm

Tuesday, January 14 – St Basil the Great / Circumcision of our Lord / Old calendar New Year

Divine Liturgy of St Basil the Great at 9 am

The traditional Serbian Orthodox greeting for the Nativity season is Christ is Born and the reply is Indeed He is Born or Truly He is Born. In Serbian it is Hristos se rodi and the reply is Voistinu se rodi. The Christmas greeting is used from the day of the Nativity of Christ until the Apodosis or Leave-taking of the Feast which is January 13.



Christ is Born!

A Blessed and Happy holiday season to you all!

Dear Fellow Parishioners, By now, most of you have heard that we have entered a verbal agreement with Niko's Catering to rent our Social Center for the next 5 years pending Niko's procurement of the proper beverage licenses.

Thank you to all who attended the annual/special meeting to hear the Board's proposal and presentation to address any questions or concerns regarding this venture. And I have already expressed my gratitude to the Executive Board for their work and cooperation. Of course this also applies to their cooperative efforts on many other issues as well. A lot was accomplished.

We hope and pray that the actions of the 2024 Board secure our Church's health and welfare for many years to come. No one can predict the future but the best we can wish for is to do our homework and research and reach a decision based on the information available. Due to the critical importance of our decisions, anyone who still needs their concerns eased and questions answered are urged to pull me aside at any time and I'll do my best to help you understand how we researched and arrived at our decisions

As I write this on December 23rd, no final contract has been signed. So, if any of you feel compelled to offer suggestions or offer another avenue to pursue, this would be the time. You Stewards of our Church are the ones who shape our future destiny. It would be a shame if someone had something good to offer but remained silent.

I would be remiss in my duties if I didn't give special mention to Vicki. She was the one who sat down with Niko and brought him to us. Also kudos to Mike Cora and Nadine who dealt with the local and state governments regarding tax exempt status and liquor licensing.

Danielle's report in this issue will display the goals and objectives for the 2025 Board. With that, we say thanks to Howard and welcome to Justin, who will be making his maiden voyage into Church administration.

In the meantime, I hope this season provides a special kind of peace and joy for you and your loved ones.

Thanks for now, Dan Dorsey Church Board President

UPDATES FROM YOUR SAINT GEORGE CHURCH BOARD

SAINT GEORGE ANNUAL ASSEMBLY

On December 8, we held our Annual Assembly, which was well attended. Elections were conducted for the 2025 Church Board and the following individuals have been elected to serve our parish in the upcoming year:

President— Dan Dorsey
1st VP — David Laketa
2nd VP — Nick Malinovich
Secretary — Danielle Serdar
Treasurer — Vicki Dorsey
Financial Secretary — Tana Petrich

Members-At-Large — Steve Malinovich, Zach Kocoj, Michael Cora, Susan Kljaich, Phil Rowe, Justin Brkich

Auditing Board — Millie Rowe, Darlene Jovanovich, Olga Deschampes

Nominating Committee — Ryan Dorsey, Kathy Petkovich, John Dauer

Delegate to the Diocesan Assembly — Vicki Dorsey Alternate - Ryan Dorsey

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CHURCH BOARD FOR 2025

The following Recommendations were approved at the Annual Assembly. They are:

1. Lease our Social Center to Niko's Catering
2. Repair the road over the culvert on Stryker Ave.
3. Design and purchase bronze a plaque commemorating +V. Rev. Fr. Ned Lunich
4. Repair the south wall of the Social Center.
5. Address runoff issues on the east side of the Social Center.
6. Remove pomens from The Serb as they are listed in weekly bulletins.
7. Change annual stewardship donation increments in The Serb from \$1,000 to \$500.

BADNJE VECE

On January 6, Church services begin at 6PM. Afterwards, we invite you to join us at the Social Center for the blessing of the yule log and refreshments.

For those planning to attend, please bring a posno/vegan dish to share. The Social Center will be open at 5PM to allow you to drop off food donations prior to the commencement of the Church service.

At the conclusion of the event, we kindly ask everyone to assist with clean up to ensure we all get home at a reasonable hour. Thank you for your cooperation.

Finally, thank you to all our parishioners for your generous support throughout 2024. May you all have a blessed Nativity season and a joyful New Year!

HRISTOS SE RODI! VAISTINU SE RODI!

Šta je pravoslavni crkveni kalendar?

Kada je Hrišćanstvo početkom 4. veka, steklo objektivnu slobodu u Rimskom carstvu, pored ostalih spornih pitanja rešavano je pitanje datuma praznovanja Vaskrsa ili Novozavetne Pashe, kao najvažnijeg i središnjeg hrišćanskog praznika. Tako je Prvi vaseljenski sabor održan u Nikeji 325. god. zaslugom Cara Konstantina Velikog, rešio pitanje datuma praznovanja Vaskrsa ili Pashe. Saborska odluka glasi:

1. Vaskrs se slavi posle prolećne ravnodnevice – ekvinocija.
2. Vaskrs se slavi prve nedelje posle punog (uštap) meseca.
3. Hrišćani ne slave Vaskrs kada i Jevreji svoju Pashu (Pesah) 14. nisan.
4. Vaskrs se slavi uvek u nedelju (prvi dan nedelje, osmi dan, dan Hristovog Vaskrsenja).

Kada se steknu sva četiri nevedena uslova, po posebnim proračunima matematičkim i astronomskim, tada pada Vaskrs u određenoj godini. Od Vaskrsa zavise pripremne sedmice Velikog ili Časnog posta, zatim sedmice po Vaskrsu do Vaznesenja (Spasovdana) i Duhova (Pedesetnica).

Praznici: Praznici su svetkovine vezane za jedan dan u godini koji se posvećuje Bogu, Presvetoj Bogorodici i svetiteljima. Srpski termin „praznik“ ima u korenu pridev „prazno“, što se objašnjava stavom naših predaka koji su akcenat stavljali na činjenicu da toga dana nisu ništa radili, nego su bili „prazni od posla“. U starom srpskom jeziku ima još jedan bolji termin za praznik, a to je imenica „toržestvo“, nešto sjajno, veličanstveno. Ali, suština praznika nije radi odmora, da se ne radi, smisao hrišćanskih praznika je u njihovom večnom trajanju i duševnoj radosti koju donose. Praznik je naš susret sa Hristom Bogom, naš zagrljaj sa rajem.

Kalendar: nlat. CALENDARIUM, LAT. CALENDE – kalendar je prvobitno kod Rimljana bila knjiga u koju su se unosili porezi, koji su primljeni o kalendara (kalenda je prvi dan svakog meseca); kasnije su se u tu knjigu unosili prihodi koji su se od tog poreza dobijali. U novije vreme kalendar je knjiga sa podelom godine na mesece, nedelje, dane. Pravoslavna crkva prihvata stari tzv. Julijanski kalendar koji je nastao 46. godine pre Hrista. Rimokatolici koriste Gregorijanski kalendar. Naime, papa Grigorije XIII je 1582. reformisao Julijanski kalendar i od tada je rimokatolička crkva prihvatila taj reformisani kalendar.- gregorijanski.

Pravoslavni crkveni kalendar hrišćani koriste za određivanje datuma crkvenih praznika, postova, svetitelja i drugih verskih događaja. Evo osnovnih elemenata koji se obično nalaze u pravoslavnom crkvenom kalendaru:

1. Praznici se dele na Gospodnje (Hristove), Bogorodične, i svetiteljske praznike. Zatim, praznici se dele na pokretne i nepokretne.

- **Pokretni praznici:** Ovi praznici imaju isti dan kada se slave, a datum menjaju – kao npr. Vaskrs, Duhovi (Trojice), Cveti, Vaznesenje Hristovo. Oni su pokretni jer se temelje na datumu Vaskrsa, koji svake godine pada na drugi datum, ali dan je isti.
- **Nepokretni praznici:** Praznici koji se svake godine slave istog datum, a dan menjaju – kao npr: Božić, Bogojavljenje, Sretenje, Vavedenje, Vozdviženje Časnog Krsta, Usekovanje glave Svetog Jovana Krstitelja. Itd.

2. Praznici svetitelja: Svaki dan u pravoslavnom kalendaru je posvećen određenom svetitelju ili događaju iz crkvene istorije. Na primer, Sveti Sava (27. januar), Sveti Nikolaj (19. decembar) i drugi.

3. Postovi: Pored Velikog posta, postoji nekoliko drugih postnih perioda tokom godine, kao što su Apostolski ili Petrovski post, Gospojinski post, Božićni post i postovi sredom i petkom.

4. Sinaksar: je zbornik u kojem su kratki životopisi svetitelja i objašnjenje praznika.

5. Mesecoslov, minologiji, kalendar - liturgijska knjiga Pravoslavne crkve, sadrži po mesecima poređane živote svetaca i druga čitanja i kada se slavi koji svetitelj ili praznik.

6. Tropari i kondaci: Kratke liturgijske pesme koje se odnose na svetitelja ili praznik koji se obeležava tog dana.

7. Indiktion i indikt: Indikt je period vremena od 15 godina, koji je rimljanima služio kao rok plaćanja poreza: prvih pet godina se plaćalo u bakru, drugih pet u srebru i trećih pet u zlatu. Naša ga je Crkva primila u spomen slobode hrišćanskoj crkvi koju je darovao car Konstantin Veliki 313. god. Milanskim ediktom i ta se godina računa kao prva godina prvog indikta; Indikt je praznik nove crkvene godine koja počinje 1. septembra.

Indiktion ili pashalija (tablica koja služi za izračunavanje datuma Vaskrsa) je grčka reč za period od 532.g. posle kojeg krugovi Sunca i Meseca otpočinju zajedno, a Vaskrs pada u isti mesečni dan kao i pre 532.g.(krug Sunca traje 28 godina, posle čega godina počinje u isti dan, krug meseca traje 19 godina kada mesečeve mene padaju u isti dan i čas, i kada se pomnože 28 i 19 dobija se 532, i to je veliki indiktion), od Hrista do danas ima 15 indiktiona, 15. Indiktion je počeo 1941. g.

Srećko Zečević, protojerej



Dear Friends and Parishioners of Saint George SOC,

The SSS Mita Topalovich is preparing for Christmas Services and looking forward to celebrating the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with our Church family!

First, congratulations to singer Zvezdana Goljić. As a freshman in high school this year, she earned the State of Illinois Seal of Biliteracy in the Serbian Language. She completed tests in Serbian in 4 areas – conversation, reading, comprehension, and writing – and tested at borderline native speaker level. Keep up the good work in your studies and representing!

Second, Mitas once again held a Meat Burek fundraiser. The following is a note from chairperson, Darlene Jovanovich...

ACKNOWLEDGING YOUR KINDNESS

With Thanks for your support by purchasing Meat Bureks from Mitas! Also, for your additional monetary gifts...grateful to the following:

- Nina and Justin Brkich
- Protinica Gordana Bugarin
- Nancy Cora
- Bonnie Dauer
- Vicki Petrich Dorsey
- Michelle Efatoski
- Kathy Harper
- Dawn Huss
- Darlene Jovanovich
- Susie Kljaich
- Anka Laketa
- David Laketa
- Natalie McDonough
- Matthew Moses
- Annette O'Leary
- Gennie Ostoich
- Nadine Pakustys
- Marlo Perry
- Tana Petrich
- Kathy Petkovich
- Milly Rowe
- Danielle Serdar
- Gayle Shimek
- Mike Stamenkovich
- Alexandra Starčevich
- Simo Starčevich

You helped us reach a new goal of 40 Bureks sold!

To the following that assisted chairperson, Darlene Jovanovich, in purchasing and hauling ingredients, monetary donations to offset the cost, working two days of prepping...Hvala to:

- Father Aleks Bugarin
- Jack Book, Jr.
- Nina Brkich
- Sue Condon
- Nancy Cora
- Michelle Efatoski
- Holly, Zora, and Zvezdana Goljić
- Stephanie Jakovljević
- Nancy Jovanovich
- Kathy Petkovich
- Becky, Matthew, Abriya, and Eliya Prieboy
- Alexandra and Simo Starčevich
- Chrissy Vercelote

Special Thanks to long-time choir supporters and members for their monetary donations:

- Josephine Orlovich
- Marty and Bill Seemann
- Bonnie Dauer
- Anka and David Laketa
- Sue Condon
- Jack Book, Jr.

Appreciative of all...Puno hvala,

Darlene Jovanovich and Members of SSS Mita Topalovich

Third, we are approaching the 1-year anniversary of long-time Mitos member +Father Nedeljko Lunich falling asleep in the Lord. KINDLY, WE ARE REQUESTING THAT ALL SINGERS ATTEND CHURCH ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 5, 2025, TO SING RESPONSES FOR HIERARCHICAL LITURGY AND A 1-YEAR PARASTOS FOR +FR. NED. His faith in God and dedication to the Serbian Orthodox Church was unending and inspirational! Further, his dedication to, support of, love for, and participation in SSS Mita Topalovich was second to none! Let's be sure to have an overflowing choir loft, singing our praises to God together and raising our voices in prayer for +Fr. Ned, just as he is still praying for all of us. Vječnaja pamjat.

Wishing all a blessed Advent journey and Nativity of the Lord, Jesus Christ! May the year to come be filled with continued blessings for all of you and your families!

Musically yours,
Holly Goljić
Reporter, SSS Mita Topalovich

Srečan' Bozic' Merry Christmas

From: The American Serbian Social Club



We greet all of our Saint George parishioners with the Christmas greeting

“Srečan' Bozic' Hristos Se Rodi!!!!”

This past fall the ASSC was able to hold one luncheon after church at Serb Hall which was held on October 20th in the upper stairs bar room. The luncheon was well attended with some new faces which was very nice to see.

Moving forward into 2025 we do not what the future holds regarding luncheons. Most parishioners should be aware by now that the vote was passed to lease Serb Hall to Nikos Catering in Joliet. We will have conversations in the next few weeks regarding how this will affect future events since the was just recently passed at the general meeting. The ASSC is hopeful of the dates that have been reserved for the church to use the hall, that we may be able to use one or two of those dates for luncheons.

If the change in the hall operation does not allow for the ASSC to have luncheons in the upper bar area, we will look into new ideas on how to support our church and the parishioners of Saint George. Will this

change the focus to more external events, such as a football game in the fall and maybe a basketball game in the winter? These are items we need to discuss and come up with new ways for fellowship.

As always, a huge thank you to our partners of the Saint George Curial Club. They are always offering to help and offer ideas for future events and how we can make those events even better.

Srecan' Bozic Hristos Se Rodi from myself , Pete (kum) Petkovich , Mike Cora , Don Grubisich, Stephine Shimek,

Have Blessed and safe naivety season,

Respectfully

Milorad Stamenkovich, President ASSC.



Divine Light Has Shined Forth in our Dark World

PRIEST LUKE A. VERONIS | 06 JANUARY 2022

“The people walking in darkness has seen a great light... The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it... I am the light of the world, whoever believes in me shall not walk in darkness but will walk in the light of life.” (Isaiah 9:2; John 1:5; John 9:5)

These words of the Bible summarize the true meaning of Christmas. Christmas is about light, but not only about the lights around town. Christmas lights symbolize the One True Light that has come into the world. Christmas is about much more than one miraculous star that shined brightly 2000 years ago and led the wise men to find the Christ child. More significantly, Christmas is about the coming of DIVINE LIGHT into a dark world. This is the Good News of great joy which the angels proclaimed to the shepherds – the Divine Light has come into a world of darkness!

The Divine Light became a human being, and for those who choose to receive that Light, and follow that Light, their lives will never be the same. The Divine Light has come into a world of darkness and has changed our perspective of the world and our hope for the future, and it can change the lives of each one of us!

Every year I teach a course on World Religions at Hellenic College and Holy Cross School of Theology. As a part of this class, my students visit five different places of worship representing the great world religions. Whenever we visit a Jewish synagogue and listen to the rabbi talk about Judaism, one of the questions my students inevitably ask is why Jews don't believe that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah. The rabbi typically answers that when the Messiah comes on earth, he will bring peace and good will to all people. The Jewish Messiah will usher in an era of peace and stability, where, as the prophets say, *the lamb and the lion will sit down together*. The rabbi then states that if we look at the world before the coming of Jesus, and the world after the coming of Jesus, we don't really see much change. The years of BC and the years of AD are both full of darkness – the darkness of violence, ignorance, evil, and ongoing death. So, one can honestly ask, *“What difference has the coming of Jesus made in the world? If He is truly the Messiah, why hasn't the world changed?”*

A valid and tough question that Christians need to answer. Just look at the news every day, and we read death and the pandemic, about war and violence, about hatred and evil, about greed and suffering, and about the destruction of our world's planet as well as the destruction to God's greatest creation, humanity itself. Two thousand years after the coming of the Messiah and there still seems to be too much darkness in the world.

Well, if we believe that the coming of Christ, and that is what Christmas celebrates, will usher in an era of peace and good will on earth, then we don't understand well what the Bible, the Church, and our Christian faith actually teach. In fact, if we dream about peace and good will on earth here and now – for a utopia on earth – then we surely don't understand or even know what Jesus Himself taught. Jesus clearly told his followers that there would be many wars and tumultuous times in the future. He warned his followers that they must be prepared to take up their cross, to suffer and die, and become martyrs of the faith. The little baby born in Bethlehem would Himself grow up and experience all the darkness and ignorance and violence of the world, and would suffer terribly, even tasting death itself. So, in a very concrete sense, Jesus never promised that the world we live in would become a better, more peaceful, more beautiful place in the near future.

The coming of Jesus Christ on Christmas is an announcement of hope *in the midst of ongoing darkness*. The Divine Light has shined in the midst of a dark world and revealed that darkness isn't the only way. We can follow a different path of peace *in the midst of this dark world*. We can embrace light and hope and love in this world *even in the midst of darkness!*

One of my favorite images for understanding Christmas can be taken from World War 2. Think of the devastating war that engulfed the entire world for six years. War is the pinnacle of the world's darkness, evil and suffering. During WW2, many people suffered terribly and were longing for an end to the war. And when did that end happen? Well in the European theatre, one could argue that the end of WW2 began on D-Day, June 6, 1944 when the allied forces landed on the beaches of Normandy. Once the allied forces got a foothold on mainland Europe, the end of the war was in sight. This was the beginning of the end of the war!

Yet, how much longer did the war go on? V-Day, the actual end of the war didn't happen for another 15 months on September 2, 1945. During those 15 months, there was still much bloodshed and violence, darkness, suffering and death as the war raged on. Yet both the allied forces, and the axis powers knew that the tides of the war had turned, and the end was near. For the subjugated peoples, they understood the good news that the oppression and tyranny of evil forces was coming to an end. This is the message of Christmas!

Christmas can be seen as D-Day against the forces of Satan and all his powers of darkness. Christ's Second Coming will ultimately be V-Day. At Christmas – Christ's First Coming – God entered the world in a surprising way that fundamentally signifies the eventual end of darkness in the world. As we heard in the Epistle reading for Christmas, "*When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son.*" (Galatians 4:4) The coming of our Eternal God as a human being, the coming of the Uncreated Light into a world of darkness, the coming of Jesus the Messiah and the Christ as the Savior of the world, offers a sign of hope to the world that the reign of darkness is coming to an end!

Yes, there is still darkness and violence and much evil occurring every day in the world, and it will continue and even get worse until the Second Coming of Christ. Let us understand, though, that we are in that difficult yet hopeful period in between D-Day and V-Day. The Good News of Great Joy at Christmas announces that a Savior is born. God has come among us and given the world hope! For everyone who chooses to accept this Divine Light in our own lives, we will never despair of any darkness we see all around us because we know that the darkness shall never prevail. V-Day is around the corner. Until that time, however, we will engage against the darkness. We may suffer in the darkness but we know through Christ we can overcome it. We can overcome the darkness of ignorance by living in the light of divine knowledge. We can overcome the darkness of sin and evil by living in the light of God's goodness. We can overcome the darkness of hatred and violence by living in the light of divine love, forgiveness and mercy. We can overcome the darkness of death by living in the light of Christ's resurrection and victory!

Christmas is about *“people walking in darkness and seeing a great light.”* Christmas is about *“Light shining in the darkness and the darkness never overcoming it.”* Christmas is about Jesus, *“the light of the world, helping whoever believes in Him to never walk in darkness but to always walk in the light of life.”*

This is Good News of Great Joy to everyone who chooses to understand and live by the Divine Light of Jesus Christ. Many people will not understand and thus, will see a world of darkness all around. Those who choose to not understand will miss the essence of Christmas is truly about.

Yet for those of us who believe and follow newborn child in Bethlehem, we know that a Divine Light has shined forth, and we will never be afraid of darkness again! Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Dates to Remember:

January 7 – Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ / Bozic

9 – St Stephen the First Martyr

14 – St Basil the Great/ The Circumcision of our Lord / Old Calendar New Year

19 – Theophany

26 – Parish celebration of St Sava

27 – Feast of St Sava

February 15 – Meeting of our Lord in the temple / Sretenije

March 3 – Beginning of Great Lent



Cultural Club News

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Only a few months ago we were preparing for the beginning of a new Church school year, and now we are preparing for the Nativity of Christ!

In keeping with tradition, we will gather in the upper level of our Social Center to decorate the Badnjak on Sunday, January 5th, immediately following Divine Liturgy. Anyone wishing to donate fruit or pre-strung candy for the Badnjak may give the donation to any Church school teacher. All Church school children, parents, and Cultural Club supporters are welcome to participate in decorating the Badnjak!

This year, our Saint Sava Day Celebration will take place on Sunday, January 26, 2025. As in our most recent celebrations, our program will take place in our Church following Divine Liturgy, with a luncheon to follow in the lower level of our Church. Further planning will take place during our upcoming meeting.

Our Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, December 29th, immediately following Divine Liturgy. Along with the election of officers, planning for our Saint Sava luncheon and discussion of future events will take place. We encourage members to attend and participate in this meeting.

Our Saint George the Great Martyr bookstore is open for business every Sunday following Divine Liturgy. We have a variety of items for all ages, as well as a selection of crosses. Come to our bookstore and check out our inventory.

Our St. George Cultural Club is always welcome to new members. The cost to join is free and rewards are great.

Indeed He is Born!

Nancy Cora,

Cultural Club President



Excuses Hinder Us From Entering Into the Kingdom God

Excuses. We all make them. Excuses why we don't work out and exercise more. Excuses why we don't eat better and healthier. Excuses why we don't stop certain bad habits or overcome addictive behaviors. Excuses why we don't do what we know we should do. Excuses why we can't fulfill that promise we made to ourselves or to someone else or to God.

Our spiritual lives are filled with excuses as well – why we don't pray every day; why we don't read the Bible and other spiritual material to feed our souls daily; why we don't fast or take the church's teachings on spiritual discipline seriously; why we don't truly love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and love our neighbor as ourselves.

WHY do we make all these excuses? Is it because of laziness? Or lack of self-discipline? Is it because of a fear of failure? Or absence of motivation? Is it because we don't understand why we should do something? Possibly it's just that our priorities are such that our excuses make clear what we prioritize in our lives!

Well, Jesus highlights the danger of excuses in today's Gospel story. A man is preparing a Great Banquet and invites many guests. Imagine how, during the time of our Lord, an invitation to a Great Banquet was a very special, privileged event! People lived in poverty and struggled to survive day to day. An invitation to partake in a Great Banquet was quite an honor! A special event! Yet each of the invited guests make excuses about why they couldn't come.

Each one makes light of the day's special event and dismisses their invitation because they prioritize other things over the Great Banquet. The first one says "I am too busy with my work. I can't get away from my business. You know how it is. I have important things to do with work, and here lies my priority. Sorry I can't break away from my busy schedule to attend the feast."

Think about this excuse. How many of us place our work and our profession above all else, and relegate God's invitation to His mystical feast as secondary?

Another offers the excuse that he just bought new properties; maybe he has some new "toys" he must attend to. He has prioritized his material possessions, or maybe his hobbies and certain entertainment take precedence over God's invitation. Doesn't that well represent today's spirit for many people?

The third guest makes up the excuse that he just got married and has to attend to his own bride. Now this third excuse represents the priority of family. Many will find no problem with this excuse. Family is the most important thing in our lives, we say. We'll do anything for family! And yet, this is why Christ warns us that if we love family more than Him, we are not worthy of Him! The King's invitation to His Mystical Banquet comes before even family commitments!

Work. Possessions. Hobbies and Entertainment. Family. Each one of these things fight for our attention and demand that we prioritize them first in our lives.

This is why Jesus warned his followers with this story and related it to the Kingdom of Heaven. God invites each one of us to partake in His heavenly kingdom every week! He invites us as VIP guests! Imagine, we have a seat with the Eternal King in his Heavenly Banquet!

Yet, what do we do with this invitation? We don't understand or value the incredible blessing God offers us. We don't value the eternal significance of His Divine Invitation. Our Eucharistic heavenly banquet should be the highlight of our week! We can unite with Jesus Christ and be filled with His Presence! We can taste the ultimate and eternal joy and peace of His Heavenly Kingdom! And yet, we instead make excuses. We don't prioritize or value Jesus Christ and His divine invitation and instead, focus on the temporal, material, often superficial aspects of our lives – our work, our possessions, our hobbies, our family, our earthly blessings.

Now, some of us may protest, "When have we ignored God's invitation? We would never slight Him and not show up in His Heavenly Banquet." Yet, every Sunday the Kingdom of God is offered to us. Every Sunday in the Divine Liturgy, the eternal feast of receiving the Body and Blood of Christ is offered to us so that we may be united with Him. Yet, how many of us make excuses not to attend His Heavenly Banquet?

I'm too busy with work. I'm too tired from my work all week and need to sleep in. It's my only day to rest. I want to go play golf, or go to the Patriots game, or attend my kids sporting and dancing events. We make plenty of excuses and ignore the Divine Invitation of our Lord!

Be careful, though, and listen to how the Gospel story ends today. The Lord of the Great Banquet becomes angry that his invited guests have slighted His invitation and basically rejected Him. So, he tells his servants, ***"Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, NONE of those who were INVITED shall taste my banquet. For many are called, but few are chosen."***

Let me repeat these words – ***“NONE of those who were INVITED shall taste my banquet. For many are called, but few are chosen.”*** How will we feel when Jesus looks at us and says, **“I invited you to partake of my Eternal, Mystical Feast and you made excuses why you couldn’t come! You chose mundane, temporal, earthy priorities over Me! Depart from me. Yes, I called you, but you are no longer chosen! You have chosen something else over ME!”**

What a serious, sober warning to all of us. We need to take a good look at ourselves and on what we prioritize in our lives. Take a moment to reflect on the many excuses we make when we don’t accept the Divine Invitation of our Lord. He is knocking at our hearts every day waiting for us to open the door and invite Him in. He is sending us an invitation to come and partake of His heavenly Kingdom every Sunday and every time we celebrate the Divine Liturgy, waiting for us to fill His Banquet Hall. He is a patient God, passionately in love with us and wanting for us to partake of His heavenly and eternal blessings here and now.

Yet, how do we respond? How do we treat our Lord and what do we do with His Divine Invitation?

Today, I ask each of us to take a good look at the excuses we make, at the reasons why we prioritize so many other things in our lives over Jesus Christ and His Divine Invitation. Look at your excuses and then ask yourself, “Why am I making excuses? How can I overcome my excuses? How can I learn to prioritize Jesus Christ and His Church, how can I prioritize my life in Christ above all else?!”

We overcome excuses by learning WHY something is important. We overcome excuses by cultivating an open heart which develops a strong desire for all that is *“true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, and admirable?”* (Philippians 4:8) We overcome excuses by slowly developing a serious spiritual discipline, that starts with each week accepting the Divine Invitation to the Mystical Banquet of the Holy Eucharist. We overcome our excuses by accepting every day the Divine Invitation to enter into the Presence of God through our prayers and silence and spiritual reading. We overcome our excuses by prioritizing God above all else in our lives and discovering His continual Divine Invitation each day to dwell in His Presence.

Excuses hinder us from entering into the Kingdom of God. Let us put aside all excuses and seek first the Kingdom of God above all else!

**St George Church Anniversary
November 3, 2024**

\$600.00

Nadine O’Leary & Josh Potts

\$500.00

Roseanne Angelovich

Nancy Cora

John & Bonnie Dauer

Nick & Helen Malinovich

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Brane Planojevic

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Mike Stamenkovich

\$200.00

Josephine Orlovich
Gayle Shimek

\$150.00

Danielle Serdar

\$100.00

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Samantha Dauer
Dan & Vicki Dorsey
Susan Kljaich
Annette O'Leary
Phil & Millie Rowe
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\$10.00

Nadine Paukstys

**Memorials, Parastos and Donations
September 29, 2024 - December 22, 2024**

+Thomas Astorino

\$500, given by Josephine Orlovich
\$100, given by Anonymous
\$100, given by Patsy Kettmen
\$100, given by Susan Kljaich
\$100, given by Marlo Perry
\$100, given by Debbie Radakovich and Terry Hart
\$100 given by Olga Schumann
\$100, given by Nicolette Stanton
\$60, given by Rich and Therese Strezula
\$50, given by Suzanne Condon
\$50, given by Rob and Melissa Horvat
\$50, given by Bill and Marty Seemann
\$50, given by Gene and Chris Warriner
\$40, given by Jeff and Lori Heilstedt
\$40, given by Michael Kesich
\$40, given by Jim and Sue Talarico
\$25, given by Carrie Catudella
\$25, given by Radovan and Darlene Jovanovich
\$25, given by Steve Malinovich
\$25, given by Diane and Greg Ratajczak
\$20, given by The Barillo Family
\$20, given by The Laketa Family
\$20, given by Jill and Ted Mixen
\$20, given by Ziggy and Tony Zych

+Milos and +Jelica Bugarin and +Radasin and +Stojka Markovich

\$100, given by Jelena Bugarin and Dimitri Zografi

+Radasin and +Stojka Markovich

\$30, given by Goran Markovich

+George M Petrich

\$100 given by John and Bonnie Dauer and Family
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\$25, given by Tana J. Petrich

+David Potts

\$100, given by Millie O'Leary
\$100 given by Annette O'Leary

+Janice Taylor, given by

\$250, given by Michael and Nadine Keer

Parastos

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Krsna Slava Donatiions

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\$150, given by Matthew Moses – St Nicholas

\$50, given by Natasha Bukorovic

\$50, given by George and Milinka Pavlovic – Dedication of St George Temple - Djurdjic

\$40, given by William & Patricia Zakavec, Jr – St Nicholas

Health and Salvation

\$35 for Stevan Bugarin

St George Serbian Orthodox Church

\$15,000 given by the Estate of +Ely Grubisich

\$1,000, given by Alexandra (Kocoj) and Neal Szpulski in celebration of their marriage

Memorials, Health & Salvation, Slava and Parastos received as of December 22, 2024. If there are any corrections, please contact the financial secretary, Tana Petrich at tjpetrich@gmail.com. Corrections will appear in the next edition of The Serb.

