

THE SERB

A quarterly publication of St. George Serbian Orthodox Church in Joliet
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Peace of God
Christ is born Truly is born!
Hristos se Rodi
Kala Christougenna

The Serb
Winter of 2025
publication of St. George Serbian Orthodox Church
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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

Weekly envelopes for 2026 are available in the church narthex. Please take the box of envelopes with your name and use it throughout the year. If any other parishioner would like to receive a box of envelopes, please see Tana Petrich or myself.

January is full of important Major Holy Days. Please plan to be in church for all services and especially if you are retired and are available to attend. Christmas, Theophany, Old Calendar New Year- St Basil the Great and St Sava, are important to prepare to partake of Holy Communion. The time from the Nativity until the Eve of Theophany are fast - free, so your preparation will include your daily repentance, vigilance, and prayers. Hopefully the weather will cooperate and you will be able to attend church.

On Theophany there will be the blessing of water after the liturgy. This water is used for the blessing of homes and other various items in church. And also for all faithful to use in their homes. Please check your texts and emails from me as I will start making the schedule of home blessing right around Theophany. If you would prefer to bless your home later on this year, please let me know.

We have many new families who attend our worship and want to become a part of our St George family. This is a wonderful thing and a sign our church is growing. We also currently have several catechumens who are learning and by the grace of God, will be baptized/converted in 2026. Please keep them in your prayers.

Great Lent will begin in 2026 on Monday, February 23. The plan is to have another Lenten retreat during the season, so please look for more information in the bulletins and church's FB and website.

There are 4-5 interested travelers to the Old Country in September thus far. If you would be interested in visiting Serbia and Lika in September for about two weeks, please let me know by Pascha.

In case you have a problem coming to church and would like to partake of the Sacraments, please let me know so that I can come to your home and bring you Holy Communion.

Wishing you a blessed Nativity season and a healthy New Year! See you in church.



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

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

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

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

Sunday, January 4 – Sunday of the Holy Fathers / Serb Father's Day – Očevi

Divine Liturgy at 10 am.

Tuesday, 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.

Wednesday, 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

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

Divine Liturgy at 9 am

Vigil/confession at 5 pm

Friday, January 9 - St Stephen the Protomartyr / Sv Stefan Prvomučenik

Divine Liturgy at 9 am.

Saturday, January 10

Vigil / confession at 5 pm

Sunday, January 11 – Sunday after Nativity / Nedelja po Bozicu

Divine Liturgy at 10 am Church school and coffee hour

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

Vigil/confession at 6 pm

Wednesday, 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.

ST GEORGE EXECUTIVE CHURCH SCHOOL BOARD

WINTER 2025

Blessed Nativity Fast to All. May this special season will be one of spiritual renewal and reflection for all.

We offer the following updates on the life of our parish, shared by your Church Board.

SPECIAL ASSEMBLY

On October 19, we held a Special Assembly to discuss a financial donation by our parish to the St Mardarije Spiritual & Cultural Center, formerly known as the St Sava Camp Building. Presenting updates on this project were Renovation committee members from our church: Nina Brkich, Ryan Dorsey, and Simo Starceovich. After hearing about the positive progress on this renovation, stewards in attendance voted to donate \$50,000 to this undertaking which included \$10,000 that was previously approved.

If you or your family would like to stay apprised of the St Mardarije Spiritual & Cultural Center building progress or to make a personal donation, please visit: <https://stsavamonastery.org/renovation/>

If you prefer to mail a check, you may send it to St Sava Monastery, PO BOX 519, Libertyville, IL 60048. Checks payable to St Sava Monastery. The memo should note: Camp Renovation.

ST GEORGE ANNUAL ASSEMBLY

On December 7th, we held our St. George Annual Assembly at the Social Center. The Choir provided a lovely luncheon prior to the Assembly which was appreciated. We had 32 of our stewards in good standing attend the meeting. Reports were provided by Father, various board members, and organizational presidents.

During the Annual Assembly, the Board presented several focus areas for 2026. All recommendations were approved by the Assembly and will be pursued in the coming year:

- 1) Insurance -- Secure and Evaluate Insurance Quotes for Church, Social Center, and Parish Home
- 2) Social Center – Redirect water flow and repair wall on south side
- 3) Social Center – Repair emergency exit door ramps and railings
- 4) Social Center – Paint Exterior Doors and Railings
- 5) Landscaping – Mulching and replacement of dead bushes at the Church and Social Center
- 6) Church and Social Center – Power washing of building exteriors
- 7) Formation of a Centennial Planning Committee

The newly elected Church Board Members for 2026 are:

President: David Laketa

First Vice-President: Bonnie Dauer

Second Vice-President: Nick Malinovich

Secretary: Danielle Serdar

Treasurer: Nancy Cora

Financial Secretary: Tana Petrich

Members at Large: Michael Cora, Donald Grubisich, Susan Kljaich, Steve Malinovich, Tom Roach, Phil Rowe

Auditing Committee: Olga Deschamps, Darlene Jovanovich, Millie Rowe
Nominating Committee: Nancy Cora, John Dauer, Ryan Dorsey

We welcome the new Board and wish its members every success and fulfillment as they serve our parish. At the same time, we extend our sincere thanks to our outgoing Board members—Dan Dorsey, Vicki Dorsey, and Justin Brkich—for their faithful service. Their contributions are appreciated, and although they are stepping away from Board roles, we know they will continue to support and serve our parish community.

It is hard to find the right words to fully thank Dan and Vicki Dorsey for the many years they devoted to serving on the Board. Most recently, their leadership played a key role in making the lease of our parish hall possible and in strengthening the parish's financial footing. Because of their dedication, our parish is in a better place today. We are all deeply grateful for all they have done. May God Grant You Both Many Years!

The Centennial Committee was established during the meeting to begin preparations for our parish's 100-year anniversary in 2028. We are grateful to the parishioners who will volunteer their time and talents to help plan this historic celebration. Committee members are Nancy Cora, Bonnie Dauer, Kathy Harper, Darlene Jovanovich, Nancy Jovanovich, Susan Kljaich, Zakk Kocoj, and Chrissy Verdelote.

BADNJE VEČE

Following the Nativity Compline and Matins Service at 6:00pm on January 6th, please come to the Social Center for the blessing of the Yule Log (Badnjak) and some refreshments.

If you are attending, please consider bringing a posno/vegan dish to share. It can be dessert, bread, jam, nuts, chips, dip, veggies, salads, fruit. NO hot dishes as the kitchen will NOT be in use. Please bring in a disposable container. The Social Center will be open at 5:00pm, so you may drop off your food donation prior to Church Services. At the end of the evening, we need cleanup help from EVERYONE in attendance. This will get everyone home at a reasonable hour.

HRISTOS SE RODI! VAISTINU SE RODI!

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!: Homily for the Nativity of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus

Christ

PRIEST PHILIP LEMASTERS

We gather today to celebrate the birth of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world. If our celebration were merely a sentimental time of good feelings or a cultural event, it would provide nothing more than a passing distraction from familiar problems that are often well beyond our control. Thanks be to God, Our Lord's Nativity is not a momentary escape from reality, but an invitation to enter into reality itself and find the healing of our humanity in Him.

If we are ever tempted to think that God is somehow remote from or unconcerned with our brokenness and pain, we need only look at the conditions in which the Son of God was born in order to be delivered from such delusions. Perhaps we have heard the story so many times that we no longer see the details clearly. The One Who is fully divine and fully human was born in a cave that served as a barn, and He had an animal's feeding trough for His crib. He came into the world like a homeless person as the Son of a transient Jewish couple forced by the occupying Roman authorities to take a long, difficult, and dangerous journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. The Theotokos endured the ordeal in the latter stages of pregnancy, accompanied by her elderly guardian Joseph. Since the wicked Herod wanted to kill the Messiah from His birth, the family fled for their lives in Egypt. Their situation was as precarious as that of refugees today who risk everything to escape from death at the hands of brutal, oppressive regimes. No doubt, some refugee babies are born in barns along the side of the road to this very day.

In order to enter into the holy mystery of Christmas, we must allow our hopes, fears, and assumptions to be called into question by the Lord Who became a vulnerable baby born in the most dangerous of circumstances of the sort that remain all too common in our world of corruption. Today we celebrate nothing less than the eternal Word, Who spoke the universe into existence, humbling Himself beyond all human understanding in order to heal every dimension of the human person. He does so in order to make us all participants in His divine and holy life by grace. He is born of His Virgin Mother to make us sons and daughters who shine brightly with the divine glory and share even now in the peace of His Kingdom. He has united divinity and humanity in His own Person for the sake of all who bear the divine image and likeness. This feast reveals both Who God is and who we are called to become. Its meaning infinitely surpasses mere sentimentality as a distraction from "the real world." Indeed, it is an entrance into what is ultimately real and true.

The Lord lived and ministered as He was born with humble, self-sacrificial love for the blessing of all. He is not a Savior for only certain types of people according to worldly divisions such as nationality, race, or politics. The New Adam is born to set right all that has gone wrong in our world of slavery to the fear of death. Christ's coming does not operate according to the usual ways of that world, but subverts its boundaries and divisions, often turning them completely upside down. Angels proclaimed His birth to lowly shepherds, not to the high, mighty, and powerful. Persian astrologers, who were certainly not Jews, traveled a great distance to worship this Messiah at His birth. The King of All comes into the world under the earthly authority of corrupt, unjust rulers.

In order to embrace the good news of Christmas, we must offer the broken dimensions of ourselves to Him for healing, especially those that arise from how comfortable we have become with the usual ways of corruption. Even as He entered fully into the misery of the world as we know it, we must welcome Him into our darkest and most difficult challenges. We become more fully our true selves as we embrace His restoration of the human person in God's image and likeness. Even as He was born into a world enslaved to the fear of the death in order to liberate it, we must become living icons of what happens when people entrust themselves fully to the God-Man. We must manifest the new day of His Kingdom in response to every person and situation we encounter. We must serve a Lord Whose Reign remains not of this world and calls us all into question.

In His Nativity, the Savior has lowered Himself in order to raise us up to the dignity from which we had fallen. He is born to share His divine life as He restores and fulfills every dimension of who we are as the children of God. That is the gloriously good news of this great feast, and it extends literally to all, regardless of what deep challenges and sorrows we face or what petty

divisions we have allowed to color how we view our neighbors. Perhaps the Incarnation of the God-Man occurred in such difficult circumstances in order to make clear that His salvation is not an escape from the grave problems posed by even the harshest realities of life. Instead of looking for distractions from our difficulties, let us entrust ourselves to Him as we cooperate with His gracious purposes for the healing of our souls and for the salvation of the world. Jesus Christ became a human person so that we might become nothing less than “partakers of the divine nature” by grace. Let us celebrate this great feast by doing precisely that.

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 Monday, January 5th, in the morning (check with Nancy Cora for exact time). Anyone wishing to donate fruit or pre-strung candy for the Badnjak may give the donation to any Church school teacher on or before Sunday January 4th. 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 25, 2026. 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 28th, 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



Kolo Sestara News



As the holidays are upon us and the year is ending, we acknowledge our sorrows and our joys.

We mourn the loss of our sister Josephine Orlovich. May her memory be eternal.

Recent Kolo Events

We held a Sloppy Joe fundraiser in November, with Susan Kljaich and Danielle Sedar serving as co-hosts for the event. People seemed to enjoy the options of carry-out and dining in. All in all, it was a successful and fun event.

New officers were elected at our annual meeting on December 14. Congratulations to our new officers:

- President: Protinica
- Vice-president: Susan Kljaich
- Secretary: Annette O'Leary
- Treasurer Nadine Paukstys
- Auditing committee Zoe Evans, Millie O'Leary, Dawn Hess

Looking Ahead

The sisterhood is looking forward gathering after the feast day to celebrate a Christmas luncheon, to which the parish is invited. Details on the event will be shared as soon as final decisions are made.

Wishing you all a Blessed Nativity and a Happy New Year!



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I pray that all are healthy and having a blessed Advent journey!

Previously, Mitas was scheduled to participate in the concert of Serbian Singing Society Stevan Šijački in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in October. BUT, ended up having to back out of the concert, because...baby Starčević was on his way! Mitas president, Simo Starčević, and his wife Becca, a Mitas singer, joyfully welcomed their son, Samuel August Starčević! Congratulations to the family of three! God bless Auggie!

Mitas was excited to perform at the Church Anniversary banquet on Sunday, November 2nd! There were many singers in attendance to pay tribute to not only St. George Serbian Orthodox Church, but also the late †Fr. Ned Lunich, singing his favorite choir piece! As mentioned in the last article, we are only a few years away from St. George Serbian Orthodox Church Centennial! Now is the time to join choir to properly prepare for the 100th anniversary celebration!

Mitas also extends condolences to the Jovanovich/Goljić family. Former singer, †Amy Jovanovich, fell asleep in the Lord, at the young age of 59. She is the sister of Mitas singer, Holly Goljić, and aunt of Mitas singers, Zora and Zvezdana Goljić. Mitas was on hand to sing †Amy to her rest to join the choir of angels. Vječna pamjat.

As always, Mitas welcomes all interested singers! Expand your Church family by singing in the choir! Come to the choir loft and we would be happy to get you started on your Serbian choir endeavors!

Looking forward to celebrating the birth of the Lord, Jesus Christ, with the parishioners and friends of St. George Serbian Orthodox Church. Until then...

Musically yours,
Holly Goljić
Reporter, SSS Mita Topalovich



Thoughts on Theophany and Revelation

ELISSA BJELETICH |

Traditionally, Christians mark the moment when our Lord is revealed to the world on January 6/19. In the early days, we celebrated His birth, the visit of the Magi, and His baptism all at once – and each of these events, in its own way, is the moment at which our Lord truly comes to us. He comes to us in His incarnation, and then He is revealed to the nations through the Magi who honor Him, and finally He is proclaimed by John at His baptism. I find it so poetic and apt that “the moment” seems to happen more than once. Martha stood before our Lord and confessed, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.” (John 11:27) Even seeing Him in the flesh, Martha knows Him as the One “who is to come”, for isn’t our Lord always coming to us? Even today, our Lord is still coming to us all the time, every day, and we joyfully expect the day when He comes again.

Over the years, Christians have separated these feasts of the revelation of Christ, moving Christmas to December 25/January 7, creating a joyful twelve-day season of celebration. In the Christian East, the arrival of the Magi (now Epiphany in the West) is celebrated on Christmas, and provides a counterpoint to the angelic salutation to the shepherds, emphasizing

how Christ comes for all of us: for Gentile and Jew, for the educated and the illiterate, for the rich and the poor. January 6/19 for the Orthodox Christian is Theophany, the feast of Christ’s baptism.

In his beautiful Discourse on Theophany, St. John Chrysostom explains that,

[...] Christ made Himself known to all — not then when He was born — but then when He was baptized. Until this time He was not known to the people. And that the people did not know Him, Who He was, listen about this to John the Baptist, who says: “Amidst you standeth, Him Whom ye know not of” (Jn.1:26). And is it surprising that others did not know Him, when even the Baptist did not know Him until that day? “And I — said he — knew Him not: but He that did send me to baptise with water, about This One did tell unto me: over Him that shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding upon Him, This One it is Who baptiseth in the Holy Spirit” (John 1:33).

And so John baptizes our Lord, and the Orthodox Church sings,

When You were baptized in the Jordan, O Lord
the worship of the Trinity was made

manifest
for the voice of the Father bore witness to
You,
calling You His beloved Son.
And the Spirit, in the form of a dove,
confirmed the truthfulness of His word.
O Christ, our God, You have revealed
Yourself
and have enlightened the world, glory to
You!
(Kontakion of Theophany)

For the Orthodox, January 6/19 is the day
when the Holy Trinity was made manifest:
human senses could take in the Father
(through His voice), the Son (in the flesh)
and the Holy Spirit (in the form of a dove).
In this moment, the Holy Trinity is revealed
to us more concretely than ever. The Son is
incarnate, and now even the Father and the
Holy Spirit can be heard and seen: the Holy
Trinity is present in the stuff of creation.

Our Lord, in order to fulfill all
righteousness, steps into the waters of the
Jordan and is baptized by John. The waters
of baptism wash away our sins, but Christ is
without sin, so His baptism engenders the
opposite: His holiness streams into the
Jordan, sanctifying the waters. We see God
pouring into creation in a physical way,
inhabiting the very matter.

According to Orthodox tradition, at that
moment, the Jordan River ran upstream;
the mighty river knew its Creator and

changed direction. John the Baptist, who
leapt in his mother's womb, now sees the
Jordan leap at the coming of the Lord! In
our icons of Christ's baptism, the water is
tumultuous and the fish are jumping. God's
creation responds to Him, recalling the
Psalmist: "the sea saw and fled, the Jordan
turned back". (Psalms 114:3) The Psalms
sing about how creation praises the Lord;
may this echo in our hearts when we hear a
waterfall singing or see an eagle soaring. All
of creation praises God forever!

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth
greatly rejoice; Let the sea be shaken and all
its fullness. Then the fields and everything
in them shall rejoice; Then all the trees of
the forest shall greatly rejoice before the
face of the Lord; for He is coming [...]
(Psalm 96: 11-13a)

On Theophany, we celebrate His presence
among us. We gather in our churches and at
the shores of local waters, and we pray that
He will again pour His holiness into the
rivers and lakes and oceans, and into vessels
of water in our churches, just as He
sanctified the waters of the Jordan. We ask
Him to bless these waters, and in the days to
come, Orthodox priests will carry
Theophany's holy water into the homes of
the faithful, to bless each of them. We invite
God to be present in our world and in our
homes, praying that He will come reveal
Himself in our hearts.

The Feast of Presentation and the Candle of our Souls

Today we celebrate one of the twelve great feasts in the life of the Church. The Feast Of Meeting, also known as the presentation of the Lord in the temple. This took place 40 days after the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, aka Christmas. It was a time for the mother to bring a sacrifice to the temple and to ask the priest to pray for her purification as seen in the book of Leviticus 12. Our own practice mirrors this ancient practice of the Jews. We church the child and the mother around the 40 day mark and through the churching we pray for the mother's purification and ask for her to be accepted back into communion with the Holy Church. That day, she receives the Eucharist for the first time since giving birth.

In some places this feast is also called Candlemas. We know that by the 7th century there was a custom that involved candles and processions. We know this because St. Sophronius of Jerusalem mentions it clearly in one of his sermons. This procession with candles is a symbol of

what the Elder Simeon did that day in the temple when he took the young Christ into his arms and said “Lord, now lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Thy people Israel.”

He carried the light of the world in his arms! Can we imagine such a joy and such a blessing? We are overjoyed when we carry a newborn child for the first time. Yet, here he was carrying the child that he had literally been waiting a lifetime in order to finally see. We can only begin to imagine his exuberance and overwhelming joy.

In his sermon on the Feast of The Presentation, St. Sophronius of Jerusalem said the following,

“Our lighted candles are a sign of the divine splendor of the one who comes to expel the dark shadows of evil and to make the whole universe radiant with the brilliance of his eternal light. Our candles also show how bright our souls should be when we go to meet Christ. The Mother of God, the most pure Virgin, carried the true light in her arms and brought him to those who lay in darkness. We too should carry a light for all to see and reflect the radiance of the true light as we hasten to meet him.

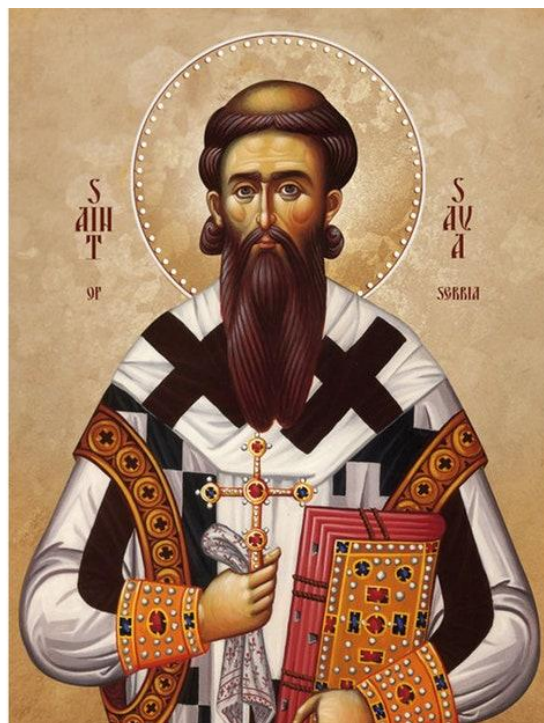
The light has come and has shone upon a world enveloped in shadows; the Dayspring from on high has visited us and given light to those who lived in darkness. This, then, is our feast, and we join in procession with lighted candles to reveal the light that has shone upon us and the glory that is yet to come to us through him. So let us hasten all together to meet our God. The true light has come, the light that enlightens every man who is born into this world. Let all of us, my brethren, be enlightened and made radiant by this light. Let all of us share in its splendor, and be so filled with it that no one remains in the darkness. Let us be shining, as we go together to meet and to receive with the aged Simeon the light whose brilliance is eternal.

Rejoicing with Simeon, let us sing a hymn of thanksgiving to God, the Father of the light, who sent the true light to dispel the darkness and to give us all a share in his splendor. Through Simeon’s eyes we too have seen the salvation of God which he prepared for all the nations and revealed as the glory of the new Israel, which is ourselves. As Simeon was released from the bonds of this life when he had seen Christ, so we too were at once freed from our old state of sinfulness.”

We fall into sins. We fight about many things. We struggle with one another. We argue over politics, we argue over sports, we argue over chores and housework, we argue about trivial matters in our homes and even in the church, or we argue about weightier matters like respect and justice. Yet we can also learn from the words of the Righteous Simeon that we can be, and should be, at peace. Why? Because we have seen and known the salvation that is now present through the coming of Jesus Christ into the world and into our lives.

We should stop being petty and earthly. We can cease our sinful habits and ways of thinking and take the opportunity to look up to the heavens and thank God for His love and mercy. Where would we be without such mercy and love? Where would we be without His salvation? Where would we be if He had not forgiven our sins?

But all of this is now open to us, heaven itself is opened to us, because of Our Lord Jesus Christ and we are forever thankful for such a precious gift. As St. Sophronius mentioned, we should work to make our souls glow with His radiance. We should shine with our love for God and one another. Nothing more and nothing less is needed. May we enter into this feast with joy and may the Lord make radiant lights who reflect His precious and life giving light. AMEN.



St Sava of Serbia

Rastko Nemanjic, or Sava Nemanjic in monasticism, was a Serbian prince who made great contributions to the whole Orthodox world, not just his own Serbia. He was the son of Stefan Nemanja and Ana who were both devoted to God. From his early childhood, Rastko did not think about inheriting his father's kingdom and aspired to monasticism, knowing that the kingdom will be taken care of his brothers Vukan and Stefan.

Very early in his life, in late teenage years, Sava departed his home and went to the Holy Mountain (Mount Athos) to receive monastic tonsure. He was tonsured at a Russian monastery called Rusik. He departed that monastery and spent the best years of his monastic life at the Greek monastery of Vatopedi at the Holy Mountain. There, he was joined by his father who also became a monk and received the name Simeon. While they were living at Vatopedi, Sava learned Greek and learned Byzantine chanting. Sava was such a good chanter that he ended up being the Protopsaltis (first chanter) of the Holy Mountain.

When the time was right and when he received permission from the abbots of the Holy Mountain, he went with his father and rebuilt Hilandar monastery. This monastery was originally founded by Georgios Hilandariou but was renewed again and rebuilt by Sava and his father Simeon. During this time, many Serbian monks started coming to Hilandar and the Holy Mountain in general. At Hilandar, St. Sava used the typikon (order of church services) of Vatopedi monastery as well as Byzantine chant.

St. Sava also helped our Church to obtain its autonomy and autocephaly. His political connections in the Orthodox world and particularly Constantinople helped him rise to the spiritual heights of being the first Archbishop of the Serbian lands. He organized Serbian Churches based on the Athonite model. This included Byzantine/Serbian Architecture and Byzantine chanting as well as various different typikons of the Church that were taken from various parts of the Orthodox world; mostly from Palestine, Jerusalem and Constantinople, and also Alexandria. (When the Patriarch of Alexandria visited Serbia a few years ago he thanked St. Sava for the gifts he brought to Alexandria during his visit! There has been almost 8 centuries since Sava visited Egypt!)

Wherever Sava was, he was always a great ambassador of the Serbian people. Skin color or nationality were not his concern. He always sought what was good in everyone and tried to expand the borders of Serbian Orthodoxy into heights that no Orthodox Church achieved at that time. As a great ambassador of Serbs, he was loved by every race of men and every Orthodox and even non-Orthodox nations. This is why he is also known as Equal to the Apostles!

St Sava died in Bulgaria on Theophany enjoying the outmost respect in the Orthodox world as a Saint who he was while he was still alive.

What does his example mean to us now in America?

To many Serbs, St. Sava represents different things. However, many understand St. Sava to have been Serbian nationalist. The truth is that St. Sava is a SAINT. To be a Saint means to be above Nationalist categories and live for heavenly reality. This does not mean that Sava was not passionate about the good of his Serbs, he absolutely was! However, through that passion many people benefited both Serbs and non-Serbs. Therefore St. Sava is first and foremost the symbol of Orthodoxy and tolerance and not the Symbol of Serbian-ness. When he organized the Church in the Serbian lands, he took what was the best from all over the Orthodox world. He was not afraid to be a Greek, or Antiochian or Russian, or Alexandrian in the Orthodox sense. What we see in the Orthodox Church of Serbia is the blend of various traditions that exist in other Churches. Serbian Orthodoxy, as defined by St Sava, is pan-orthodoxy or ALL ORTHODOXY. Of course, everything is blended into one seamless whole which today we call Serbian Orthodoxy.

The truth of the matter is this, there is not a church in the Orthodox world that can say that has what the Serbian Church has. Through St. Sava we have everything that is good from every branch of Orthodoxy. The Spirit of the Serbian Church is therefore the Spirit of inclusiveness, the spirit of brotherhood and compassion and as such is incredibly potent when it comes to our mission in the American lands. Just like St Sava, we should never hide behind National categories and justify our exclusivity. If we want to follow the path of St. Sava of Serbia, we will accept with open arms everyone who is coming to our Church to meet Christ and gain salvation. The moment we stop thinking about our Church in relation to other Orthodox Churches or to other Orthodox and even Non- Orthodox Christians, we will know that we are not on the path of St Sava.

Whenever we hear our kids singing hymns to St. Sava, remember that they are always singing hymns to freedom, equality, love of our neighbors, and openness. When these songs of theirs hit our hearts and we start living what our kids are singing, we will know truly what it means to be the disciple of Christ, the disciple of St. Sava of Serbia.



St George Serbian Orthodox Church of Joliet 97th Church Anniversary November 2, 2025

\$597 Michael & Nancy Cora

\$555 Susan Kljaich

\$500 Pete & Kathy Petkovich

\$300 Steve Malinovich

\$250 Stamenkovich Family

\$200 Marty & Bill Seemann, Gayle Shimek

\$160 Eliya & Abriya Prieboy

\$150 Annette O'Leary

\$125 Danielle Serdar

\$100 Fr Aleksandar Bugarin & Family, Dan & Vicki Dorsey, Aleksandar & Jordan Jenic, Nick & Helen Malinovich, Millie O'Leary, Michael & Stacie Petkovich, Velibor Sajic, Sam & Alex Starcevich, Milan & Vladinka Vranjes,

\$97.97 Anonymous

\$70 Matthew & Ron Moses

\$60 Michelle & Ertan Efatoski

\$50 Pero & Olga Blagojevic, Jack & Chris Book, Jr, Sue Condon, Stevan & Draginja Lukin, Pat Mancke, Natalie McDonough, Tana Petrich & Alan Miller, Ernie & Mary Ann Pinne, Susan & Tom Roach, Lilyana & Alexander Vukojev,

\$25 Radovan & Darlene Jovanovich, Anka Laketa,

\$20 Anonymous, Jack & Dolly Book, Kristijana Bugarin, Scott Lockwood, Markovic Family, Bob Orlovich, Rebecca Prieboy, Nikola Radojkovic, Rajka Rajak, Suzana Roman, Simo & Becca Starcevich

\$10 Nadine Paukstys

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Memorials, Slavas and Donations October 12, 2025 - December 21, 2025

+Roseanne Angelovich

\$25, given by Anka Laketa

+Dmitar and +Milka Bjekich (Bjelobaba)

\$50, given by Jandrija Bjelobaba

+Josephine Orlovich

\$500, given by Michael & Neda Bilder

\$200, given by Nick & Helen Malinovich

\$193.73, given by Ellen Lieber

\$100, given by Larry & Beth Bravato

\$100, given by Susan Kljaich

\$100, given by Anka Laketa

\$100, given by David Laketa

\$100, given by Cynthia & Mel Rushing

\$100, given by Mary Teberg & Barb Miller

\$75, given by Bill & Marty Seemann

\$60, given by Edythe Miller

\$50, given by Anonymous

\$50, given by Fr Aleksandar Bugarin & Family

\$50, given by Ginger Carrollo-Christian, DDS and Staff

\$50, given by Tracy Bianco & Jack Glenn

\$50, given by Tana Petrich

\$50, given by Olga Schumann

\$50, given by George & Debbie Shimek

\$50, given by Anna Repke

\$30, given by Roger & Reenie Trizna

\$25, given by Elizabeth & James Bilotta

\$25, given by Radovan & Darlene Jovanovich

\$25 given by Fran Naal

\$20, given by Tommy Blanco

+Daniel Prieboy

\$50 given by Annette O'Leary

+Joan Cizmas

\$25, given by Art & Kathie Anderson

A Donation to St George Serbian Church of \$250 was given by the Estate of + Natalie Radakovich

Saints Cosmos & Damian Slava \$100, given by Howard Grundy

Saint George (Djurdjic) Slava \$50, given by Milinka Pavlovic

Saint Archangel Michael Slava \$50, given by Suzana Roman & Olgica Golubovic

St. Nicholas Slava \$300, given by Steve Malinovich, \$300, given by Matthew Moses, \$50, given by Dan & Vicki Dorsey, \$25, given by Bill & Patricia Zakavec

Health and Salvation \$50 for David Roman, given by Suzana Roman & Olga Golubovic

Important Dates to Remember:

January – 25 – Parish celebration of St Sava with children's program

27 – Feast of St Sava

February 12 – Holy Three Hierarchs, St John Chrysostom, St Basil the Great and St Gregory the Theologian

15 – Presentation of our Lord in the temple, 40 days after Nativity

23 – Beginning of Great Lent

