

Bishop Irinej Visits Saint Nicholas Parish in Philadelphia on the Third Sunday of Great and Holy Lent



St. Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church of Greater Philadelphia was blessed with an Archpastoral visit by our Father and Hierarch, His Grace Bishop Irinej, on April 4, 2021, the Third Sunday of Great and Holy Lent.

Along with parish priest, Protopresbyter Milorad Orlic, and Protodeacon Milos Zdralic, His Grace was assisted in celebrating the Divine Liturgy by Archpriest John Parker, Dean of St. Tikhon's Theological Seminary in South Canaan, Pennsylvania. Our parish was honored to have Fr. John and Matushka Jeanine Parker in our midst. Diocesan Secretary Milovan Jovanovic and graduate student of theology, Radovan Micic, led the chanters in chanting responses.

His Grace was greeted at the entrance of the church by altar servers Milutin and Sava Stojmirovic. Upon vesting, and to the chanting of the Great Doxology, His Grace processed with the Holy Cross to the central analogion, blessing all four sides of the church.

In his most edifying homily, His Grace emphasized the integral significance of the Holy Cross to the entire season of the Great and Holy Lent – how the preparatory Sundays lead us to the beginning of Great Lent where, in the course of the first week, we read of the two trees planted by God in Eden – the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and the Tree of Life. The latter was the Cross, from which humankind was not only to draw eternal life but deification – becoming by God’s grace all that God is by nature. But attempting to realize this without God, by the taking and eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, humankind brought mortification upon itself instead of deification. As a therapy, not punishment, God withdrew the Tree of Life in Eden from humankind, deigning by His providence that it re-emerges on Golgotha, restoring us to life “...in all its fullness” (Jn. 10:10). Thus, in itself, the Holy Cross encompasses the entire season of the preparation Sundays, the Great Lent, Holy Week, and the Resurrection.

Following Divine Liturgy, at the request of Mrs. Dushanka (Glumac) Keane, a life-long member and benefactor of St. Nicholas Church, His Grace blessed a beautiful antique icon of the Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos. A magnificent Lenten luncheon was provided by the dedicated sisters of the Kolo Sestara – “St. Petka” Circle of Serbian Sisters – President Stojana Lackovic, Milena Jurcak, Mitra Bratic, Mila Lilic, Andrea Maier, and Popadija Jan Orlic.

The family of St. Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church of Greater Philadelphia is very grateful to our Father and Hierarch for taking the time from His very demanding schedule to celebrate the Divine Liturgy for us on this most significant Sunday of the Great and Holy Lent, whose Katavasia at Matins already heralds our Lord’s Triumph over Death, and to impart to us his Paternal and Archpastoral blessings.







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Saint Joseph the Hesychast

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