



SERBIAN ORTHODOX DIOCESE OF EASTERN AMERICA
SAINT NICHOLAS SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
2110 Haymaker Road • Monroeville • PA • 15146
Very Reverend Fr. George Veselinovic, Parish Priest

Today doth Bethlehem receive Him Who sitteth with the Father forever. Today the angels glorify, as worthy of God, the babe that is born, shouting: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth be peace, and goodwill among men!



To you, my dear parishioners,

One of the many things that make our Serbian Orthodox Christian faith unique, together with the Russian Orthodox Church, Orthodox Christians of the Jerusalem Patriarchates, and the holy monastics on Mount Athos, is we follow the Julian Calendar, unlike our brother Western Christians who follow the Gregorian Calendar. It is because of this that we celebrate Christmas on January 7th with Divine Liturgy at 10:00 a.m. Nevertheless, we eagerly await our feast of the Birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

On the eve of Christmas, it is a Serbian tradition to attend church where a service called Vespers is held. During this service, the faithful participate in the evening prayers to give thanks for the day just past and make an evening sacrifice of praise to God. At the end of the service, the parishioners gather outside the church around the Badnjak, an oak log or branch. This tradition is similar to that of other European Christians and their Yule Log. The priest blesses the Badnjak and chants the following prayer:

“O Lord Jesus Christ, our God, who did plant the Tree of Life in paradise so that it might bestow upon us eternal blessedness, bless also now this tree which is a symbol of Thy cross and the Tree of Life in paradise, and which reminds us of Thy holy birth and of the logs which the shepherds of Bethlehem kindled to warm themselves when they came to worship Thee, the divine infant, and thereby prefigured Thy salvation-bearing cross.”

The congregation gathers around a fire, to which the priest adds the Badnjak. The priest, together with his congregation, shares the warmth of the Badnjak. The Badnjak, a tree of happiness and sweetness, a tree of health, strength and youth, and a tree of life and love represents Christ our God. As a young and powerful tree, the King of Love gave Himself to be slain on the Cross in order to rejuvenate the world by the fragrance of eternal youth. Christ God thawed a frozen mankind by the fire of His love. Christ God enlightens and brings joy to all men by the flame of His Divine Revelation.

We invite you, our dear parishioners, to this festive celebration. The service of Vespers will start at 6:00 pm on January 6, 2019. Following the service, we invite you to join us for a traditional Christmas Eve supper in the church hall.

We pray that the warmth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ strengthen and protect you, and may you carry the joy of His birth with you always.

Yours in Christ,

Very Reverend Father George Veselinovic
and the Church Board of St. Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

