

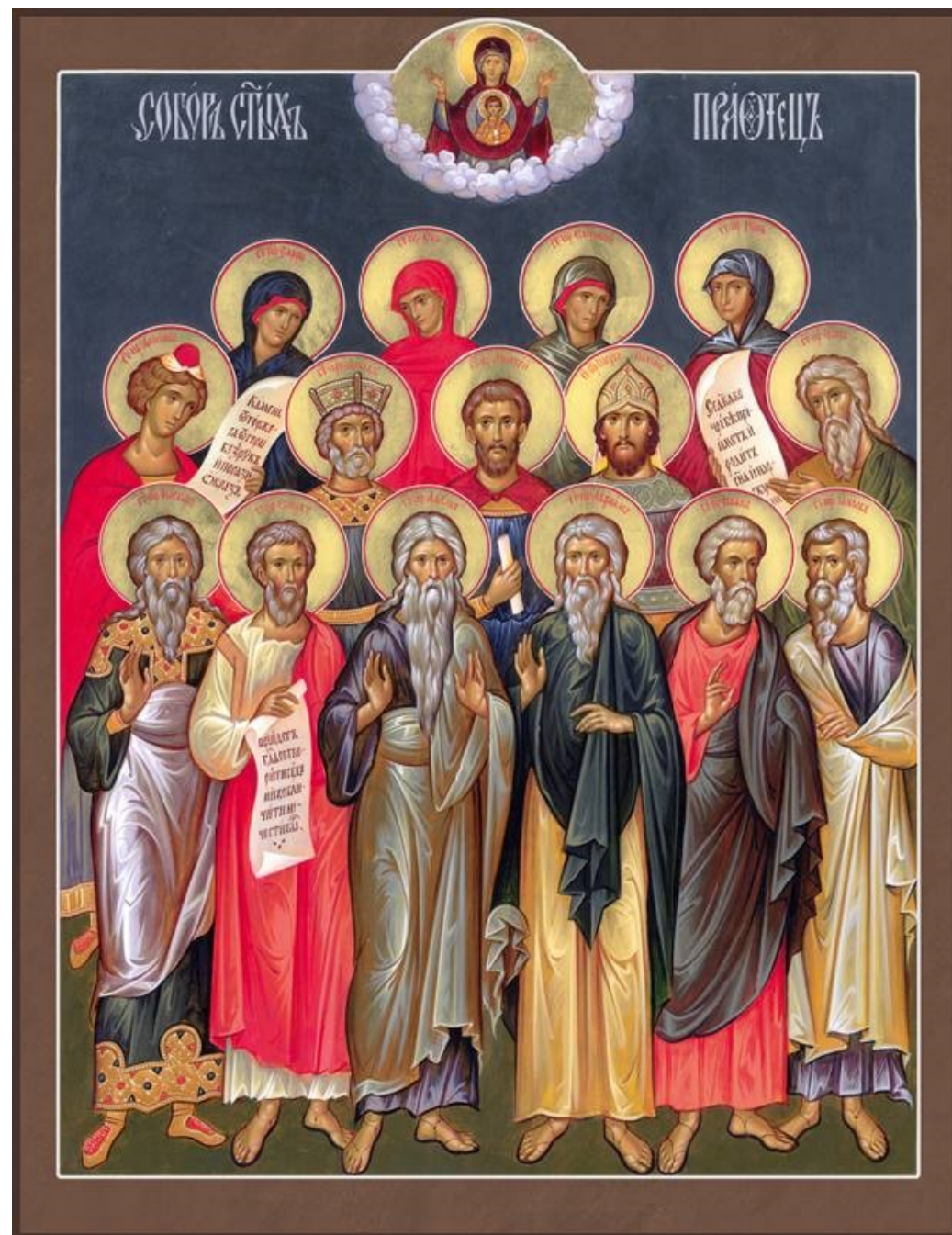
*From the Divine Office for the Sunday of the Forefathers*

*Today we celebrate the memory of the Ancestors of Christ. Sing with fervor a hymn of praise to Christ the Savior who magnified them among the nations. He is the Lord who does wondrous deeds because He is powerful and mighty, and who shows us His strength through these Ancestors. Among them is Mary,, the spotless handmaid of God, the undefiled one. From her Christ came forth to give life to all: eternal salvation and Paradise without end. (Vespers)*

*Armed with God's invincible power, you shunned the adoration of the man-made idols, O thrice-blessed young men. Strengthened with this power beyond words, you stood in the midst of a devouring fire and called upon God, saying, "Hasten, O Merciful One, and speed to our help, for You are good and have the might to do as You please!" (Kontakion)*



**SUNDAY OF THE FOREFATHERS  
DECEMBER 11, 2022**





**Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church**  
256 Hamilton St.  
Worcester, MA 01604  
Rectory: (508) 752-4174 Hall: (508) 755-2199  
Email: [olphmelkite@gmail.com](mailto:olphmelkite@gmail.com)  
Rev. Bryan McNeil, Pastor  
Email: [Brymc56@comcast.net](mailto:Brymc56@comcast.net) Cell: (978) 314-1962  
Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM

### **Antiphon (3rd)**

1: Come, let us sing joyfully to the Lord; let us shout with joy to God our Savior.

*O Son of God, who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You, Alleluia*

2: Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving and let us joyfully sing psalms to Him.

*Khallisna Ya-Bnallah, Ya Man qama min baynil-amwaat, nahnu muranneemeena Laka. Haleloueya.*

3: For God is a great Lord and a great King over all the earth.

*O Son of God, who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You, Alleluia*

### **Entrance Hymn**

**Priest: Come, let us worship and bow down before Christ!**

**People: O Son of God, who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You. Alleluia!**

### **Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 2) pg. 38**

When You descended to death, O immortal Life, You put Hades to death by the splendor of Your divinity. And when You raised the dead from below the earth, all the heavenly powers cried out to You: "O Giver of life, Christ our God, glory to You!"

### **Troparion of the Forefathers (Tone 2)**

Through faith, You have justified Your Ancestors, O Christ our God, and through them You have espoused in advance the Church set apart from the Gentiles. The saints rejoice in glory because, from the seed of these Ancestors, has come forth the glorious fruit, who gave You birth without seed. Through their intercession, O Christ God, save our souls.

### **Patronal Troparion (Tone 1) Pg. 15**

In giving birth, you have preserved your virginity and in falling asleep you did not forsake the world, O Mother of God. You have passed to life being the Mother of Life. Through your intercession, save our souls from death.

### **Kondakion of the Preparation of the Nativity of our Lord (Tone 3)**

Today the Virgin is on her way to the cave where she will give birth to the Eternal Word of God in an ineffable manner. Rejoice, therefore, O Universe, when you hear this news, and glorify with the angels and the shepherds, Him who shall appear as a new Child being God from all eternity.

The Orthodox Churches rejected the dogmatic nature of this teaching pronounced by the pope as an act of piety on his own authority. Many also objected to it because it defines Mary's holiness in terms of a certain understanding of original sin. What does "all stain of original sin" mean? Was the Mother of God exempted from the consequences of the ancestral sin (death, corruption, the effects of sin)? Some Western Catholics still believe that Mary did not (in fact, could not) die, but this has never been taught by their Church.

The "stain of original sin" was described by the sixteenth-century Council of Trent as "the privation of righteousness that each child contracts at its conception." There is no such understanding in Eastern theology and so to say that Mary was free of it has little meaning in the East. Perhaps this is why many Eastern Catholics, when they hear of "the Immaculate Conception" assume that it refers to the conception of Christ.

East and West agree that, the Theotokos was fully human like the rest of us: what Fr Thomas Hopko calls "mere human," unlike her Son who is a "real human" but not a mere human because He is the Word of God incarnate. In his book *The Winter Pascha* he writes, "We are all born mortal and tending toward sin. But we are not born guilty of any *personal* sin, certainly not one allegedly committed 'in Adam.' Nor are we born stained because of the manner in which we are conceived by the sexual union of our parents."

The Byzantine Churches celebrate the fact of Mary's conception on December 9, but commemorate her holiness on another feast: that of her Entrance into the Temple (November 21) In the kondakion for that feast we sing "The most pure Temple of our holy Savior, and the most precious and bright bridal chamber, the Virgin, sacred treasury of the glory of God, openly appears today in the Temple of the Lord, *bringing with her the grace of the Most Holy Spirit*. Wherefore, the angels of God are singing: This is the heavenly Tabernacle!" She did not become holy in the temple – she brought the grace of God with her. When and how did she acquire it? Human reasoning does not help us there. Nevertheless, we ceaselessly proclaim her as our "all-holy, immaculate, most highly blessed and glorious Lady, the Theotokos and ever virgin Mary.



### DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

**Today** + James Rahall (40 day), William & Bertha Rahall, Habib & Miriam Rahall. Requested by Nick Rahall & Family  
+Alice Esper

**Dec 18** +James Rahall. Requested by Lisa Jagielski & Antoinette Arraj  
+Alice Esper

**Today's Coffee Hr. is hosted by the Nick Rahall & Family**  
**Next week's Coffee Hr. will be hosted by**

Please remember in your prayers: George Arraj, Jr., Ron Abraham, Peter Abraham, Vi Gazal, Robert Ghiz, Sadie Mirante, Archie Opatka, Katherine Thomas, Charlotte Stockhaus, Ruth Welsh, Richard Abraham, Sr., Daneil Sarrouf, Bob Lynch, Michael Mooradian, Michael McNeil, Jeff McNeil, Wyatt William Rahall, and the people of Ukraine.

If there are people for whom you would like me to pray, please reach out and give me their names. Part of our vocation as Christians is to pray for each other, especially when someone is sick or suffering in any way.

### MEMORY ETERNAL

**Our sister, Alice Esper, reposed in the Lord on December 4. Her funeral service was held on Thursday, December 8. Our condolences to her family and friends!**

### Last Week's Collection

Weekly	\$ 857
Candles	\$ 37
Coffee Hr.	\$ 33
Christmas Flowers	\$ 30
Stole	\$ 25
Bookstore	\$ 40
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,022</b>

**God bless you for your generosity!**



**Welcome to any visitors we have with us this morning! We are happy to have you worship with us.**

**Please join us downstairs in the church hall for the coffee hour so that we can get to know each other better and answer any questions you may have about the parish or the Melkite Church.**

### CHRISTMAS FOOD/TOY DRIVE

Our Christmas Food & Toy Drive is in progress. There are two bins in the narthex: one for new, unwrapped toys/gifts and one for non-perishable food items. The cutoff is **next Sunday December 18**. We will deliver the items after the Divine Liturgy that day. All are welcome to come!

God bless you for your generosity in helping our brothers & sisters who are having a difficult time making ends meet!

### LITURGICAL SCHEDULE FOR THE NATIVITY & THEOPHANY

**TUE 12/20, 6PM** Anointing Service

**SAT 12/24, 4PM** Nativity Vespers/Liturgy of St. Basil

**SUN 12/25, 10AM** Nativity Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

**SUN 1/1, 10AM** Divine Liturgy - Sunday before Theophany/Feast of the Circumcision of the Lord

**THU 1/5, 6PM** Great Vespers—Feast of Theophany

**FRI 1/6, 6PM** Divine Liturgy-Feast of Theophany followed by the Great Blessing of Water

## December 9 –Feast of the Maternity of St. Anne

THE CHURCHES OF EAST AND WEST generally commemorate the saints on the day of their death, their “heavenly birthday,” as some describe it. In addition the Church remembers three conceptions: those of Christ (the Annunciation, March 25), of His Mother (December 9), and of St John the Forerunner (September 23). We celebrate these days as festivals recognizing that each was sanctified even before their birth in lieu of the tremendous role they played in salvation history: Christ by virtue of His divine nature and Mary and John by the grace of God given them.

In the Byzantine calendar, as in that of the West, Christ’s conception is celebrated exactly nine months before the festival of His birth. With the Theotokos and the Forerunner the nine months are not exact. Mary’s conception is remembered on December 9 and her nativity on September 8. St John’s conception is remembered on September 23 and his birth of June 24. This is a way of saying that the three conceptions were not identical: Christ’s was unique.

### The Story of Mary’s Conception

The conceptions of Christ and the Forerunner are recorded in chapter 1 of the Gospel of Luke. The story of Mary’s conception is not found in the canonical Scriptures but in the mid-second century *Protoevangelium* (or Pre-Gospel) of St James. This text tells that, for many years, Mary’s parents, Joachim and Anne, were childless and the couple suffered much reproach as a result. When they were in Jerusalem to offer sacrifice to God, the High Priest, Issachar, upbraided Joachim: “You are not worthy to offer sacrifice with those childless hands.” Both spouses gave themselves to fervent prayer, and the Archangel Gabriel announced to each of them separately that they would be the parents of a daughter who would bring blessings to the whole human race.

The icon of the feast shows Saints Joachim and Anne embracing after each had run to share the news of their daughter-to-be. The icon also very prominently displays a bed to indicate that this conception took place by the usual physical means, unlike the conception of Christ.

The first record of this feast being celebrated is from fifth-century Palestine. It spread to southern Italy during the eighth century and from there to England, France, Germany, and eventually Rome. In the East this feast has always been called “the Conception (or Maternity) of St. Anne,” stressing Anne’s conceiving of the Theotokos, just as the conception of Christ is revered as “the Annunciation to the Theotokos.” In the West the feast came to be called “the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary” and later “the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.”

### The Unique Holiness of Mary

All the Churches of East and West have always believed that the Virgin Mary was, from her conception, filled with every grace of the Holy Spirit in view of her calling as the Mother of Christ our God. This belief is even professed in Islam. Muslim lore records a *hadith* or tradition, which states that the only children born without the “touch of Satan,” were Mary and Jesus for God imposed “a veil” between them and Satan.

In the Middle Ages increasing devotion to the Mother of God in the West saw the rise of opinions on the holiness of Mary. Some came to believe that she was even conceived without human intercourse, as Christ was. Finally, in the 17th century, Pope Benedict XIV formally condemned this opinion.

While it was generally believed that the Theotokos was filled with divine grace from her conception, there was no general understanding on how this happened. The Eastern Church calls Mary *achrantos* (spotless or immaculate), but has never defined exactly what this meant. Following St. Augustine’s thought on original sin, the Western Church gradually came to accept the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception as defined by Pope Pius IX in 1854: “The most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instant of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin.”

### Prokimenon

**Reader:** Blessed are You, O Lord, God of our fathers, and Your name is worthy praise and glorious forever

**People:** Blessed are You, O Lord, God of our fathers, and Your name is worthy praise and glorious forever

**Reader:** For You are just in all You have done to us, and all Your works are true and Your ways right.

**People:** Blessed are You, O Lord, God of our fathers, and Your name is worthy praise and glorious forever

**Reader:** Blessed are You, O Lord, God of our fathers,

**People:** And Your name is worthy praise and glorious forever.

### Epistle: Col. 3:4-11

### Alleluia Verses

Moses and Aaron were among His priests, and Samuel among those who called upon His name.

**Verse:** The just cried out, and the Lord heard them, and He delivered them from all their trials.

### Gospel: Lk. 14:16-24

#### FINANCIALS

<u>11.2022</u>		<u>YTD (10.2022-11.2022)</u>
Income	\$7,444	Income \$13,339
Expenses	\$9,614	Expenses \$14,526
Net	(\$2,170)	Net (\$ 1,187)

**We are currently running a small deficit due to the painting work. When the work is complete, the funds will be transferred from savings to cover the expense. We received the donation of a used refrigerator for the hall kitchen from a local Dunkin Donuts franchisee. We also received a monetary donation to cover the cost of stripping, cleaning, and waxing the floors in the hall, kitchen, stairways, and sacristy. There have also been a number of people working hard to keep the hall, kitchen, and church clean. Also, thanks to all who have decorated the hall for Christmas! It is wonderful to see so many folks doing so much for the parish!**

**God bless you for your generosity!**