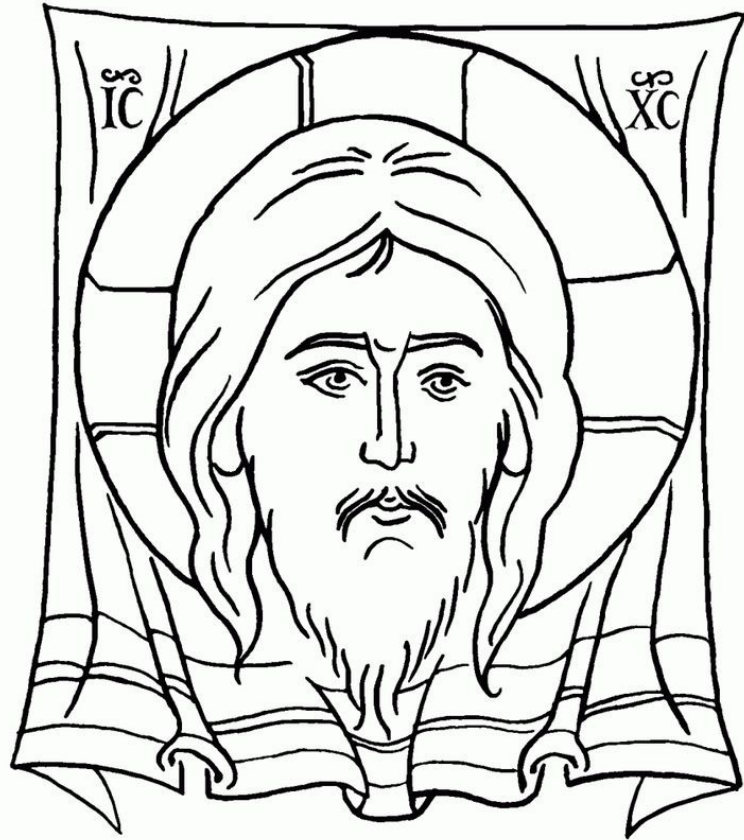


### Hymns on the Sunday before Christmas

“He has shared my poverty, becoming man so that I might become God-like and share in His riches” (*sticheron at vespers*).

“A strange mystery, wondrous, which causes amazement: the Lord of glory has come down upon earth! He has appeared in a cave, bearing our nature, in order to raise up Adam and to free from her pains the ancient mother of all the living” (*canon, ode 9*).



**Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church**  
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Rev. Bryan McNeil, Pastor  
Email: [Brymc56@comcast.net](mailto:Brymc56@comcast.net) Cell: (978) 314-1962  
Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM  
December 8, 2019



**St. Anna, Mother of the Theotokos**

**TENTH SUNDAY OF THE CROSS  
TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

**Antiphon (1st)**

1: Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth, and sing praise to His name.

**Through the prayers of the Mother of God, O Savior, save us.**

2: Say to God: How awesome are Your deeds! So great is Your power that Your enemies cringe before You.

**Through the prayers of the Mother of God, O Savior, save us.**

3: Let all the earth worship You and sing praises to You; let it sing praises to Your name, O Most High!

**Through the prayers of the Mother of God, O Savior, save us.**

**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 1, Pg. 38)**

After the stone was sealed by the Jews and the while the soldiers were watching Your spotless body, You rose, O Savior, on the third day, giving life to the world. Wherefore, the heavenly powers cried out to You, O Giver of life: “Glory to Your resurrection, O Christ! Glory to Your kingdom! Glory to Your economy, O You who alone are the lover of mankind!”

**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 (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 New Child, being God from all eternity.

With the Incarnation, this likeness was restored to mankind in the person of the Lord Jesus. He was a “new Adam,” the man that God intended. Christ communicated a share in this restored likeness to others after His death and resurrection. By being united to Him in baptism, we could become by God’s grace “*partakers of the divine nature*” (2 Pt 1:4). We no longer relate to God simple as creature to Creator, but as sharers in His own life.

Christ’s incarnation, then, is an invitation to believers to be what we have become, to live in accordance with this share we have in the divine nature. We can live in a close fellowship with God: the intimacy described in Genesis as “walking with God” in the Garden. When we struggle to conform to the image of Christ as depicted in the Gospels, our potential to reflect the likeness to God gradually becomes evident. This is the path to sainthood, made possible by the incarnation.

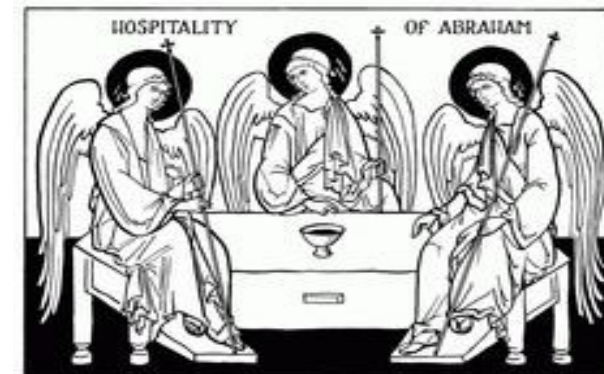
**Celebrating the Future: Transfiguration**

The word “incarnation” literally means “becoming flesh.” The Son of God took on the fullness of our human nature, including the body, and transformed it. He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven in the body. The result of the Incarnation is that there is a human body in heaven, seated at the Father’s right! The incarnation is unto the ages.

In several of his epistles, St Paul sets forth the Gospel teaching that the risen Christ is “*the firstborn among many brethren*” {Rom 8:29}, “*the firstborn from the dead*” (Col 1:18). As He is, so we are meant to be.

“*But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?’*” (1 Cor 15:35). After all, the dissolution of the dead body as it returns to the earth is visible to all. St Paul explains at length what the resurrection entails: “*When you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body... So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body ... And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man*” (1 Cor 15:37-49). This “image of the heavenly Man” was revealed to us in the transfiguration of Christ: the human body imbued with the presence of the divine life.

When we celebrate the Incarnation, then, we are celebrating the future of the body which the Son of God assumed – and that is our future as well. As Christ’s body is glorified now, so our bodies – our “spiritual bodies,” to use St Paul’s phrase – are meant to be glorified in the age to come. Because of the incarnation, our life in Christ lived in our earthly bodies is destined to be climaxed by an eternal life lived in bodies raised in glory and power – in the image of the heavenly Man.



## DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today +Archimandrite Joseph Francavilla  
+Shirley Syiek  
+Mary Margaret McCarthy

Jan. 5 +Amelia Filewicz, Michael Filewicz, deceased members of Filewicz & Harayda Families. Requested by the Filewicz Family

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- ◆ Last Week's Attendance/Donations: **38/\$891**
- ◆ The Melkite usage of the Nativity Fast begins this Tuesday **December 10**. The Fast runs through **December 24**, the Paramony of the Nativity, which is a strict fast day. In the Byzantine Tradition, we fast before most major feasts in preparation for our festal celebration. Our liturgical life is a series of fasts and feasts. If you have not previously kept the Nativity Fast, consider doing so this year. If you have questions about how to begin, please see Fr. Bryan.
- ◆ Fr. Bryan will be available for confessions on Saturdays from 9AM until noon.

## Memory Eternal

**Edward Szura**, father of Daneil Sarrouf, reposed on November 3. Condolences to Daneil, Tom, and the family.

**Mary Margaret McCarthy**, wife of Rev. Emmanuel McCarthy and mother of Erin McCarthy, reposed on November 24. Condolences to Fr. Emmanuel, Erin, and the family

**Shirley Syiek** reposed on November 17 in California. Condolences to her family

**MAY THEIR MEMORY BE ETERNAL!**

**If you would like to send Fr. Paul a note or card, his new address is:**

Rt. Rev. Paul G. Frechette  
St. George Melkite Church  
1617 State St.  
Milwaukee, WI 53233

## ICON & BOOK SALE

The Icon and Book Store is open on Saturdays from 9AM till Noon. Come and spend a little time with us and purchase a book and/or an icon or two!



Welcome to those who are visiting today. We are happy to have you worship with us. If this is your first time here, please come downstairs to the Hall, introduce yourself, have some refreshments, and get to know the Community. If you have any questions about the Melkite Church and its traditions, please don't hesitate to ask Fr. Bryan.

Weddings — One year notice. Contact Fr. Bryan for Sacramental Preparation.

Baptisms — One month notice. Contact Fr. Bryan for Sacramental Preparation.

Please let Fr. Bryan know about anyone who is sick, in the hospital, or homebound so that he can visit and bring them the Eucharist on a regular basis.

## Liturgical Schedule for the Holiday Season

Sunday December 8 @ 10:00AM- Divine Liturgy

Sunday December 15 @ 10:00AM- Divine Liturgy followed by St. Nicholas Celebration

Friday December 20 @ 7:00PM - Service of Holy Anointing

## Christmas Liturgies:

*Tuesday December 24 @ 5:00PM - Vesper-Liturgy of St. Basil*

*Wednesday December 25 @ 10:00AM - Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*

Sunday December 29 @ 10:00AM - Sunday after the Nativity



## Incarnate for Our Sake

EACH MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL may be said to have three dimensions: the past, the present and the future. To see the “past” of the Incarnation, we look to the Old Testament prophecies and their fulfillment in the New Covenant. For its “present,” we look to the fruits of the incarnation in our experience today. Its “future” shows the completion of this mystery in the life of the world to come.

As we approach the feast of the Lord’s Nativity, our Church “celebrates the past,” by commemorating the forefathers, the spiritual and physical ancestors of Christ, the holy prophets and patriarchs of the Old Testament. To some of them, the Scripture specifically attributes particular prophetic texts which point to Christ. Others, simply by their place in the Genealogy of Christ, point to the reality of His human nature and His connection to the people of Israel: “Son of David, son of Abraham.”

Finally, our celebration of the Nativity, built around the imagery of the infancy narratives in Matthew and Luke, takes us back to the time of His coming in the flesh, the event to which the Old Testament pointed. As we sing on the Sunday before Christmas, “O Mary, unwedded Mother, in your virginal womb you bore Christ, whom the prophets had once foretold in contemplation. By His Nativity He now makes the Fathers exult with joy!” (canon, ode 6).

### Celebrating the Present: Theosis

While the secular celebration of Christmas, with its crèches and carols, is often content to focus only on the past, the tradition of our Church is more interested in the present: the meaning of Christ’s coming for our life today. Our Byzantine hymns continually connect Gospel events from the past to the present by affirming that “*Today* the Virgin is on her way to the cave...” – “*Now* the prophecy is about to be fulfilled...” and “Christ *is* born...” Christ’s nativity – and all the mysteries of the Church year – are not are not a matter of looking back in time; we celebrate them because they are affecting us now.

The purpose of Christ’s coming in the flesh – His incarnation – is to change our life. The early Fathers expressed that purpose in this way: “Christ became human so that man might become divine.” As we sing at every Divine Liturgy, the “only-begotten Son and Word of God” took flesh, became incarnate, assumed our human nature. He took up our nature, becoming like us in all things, except sin, in order to give us a share in His divine nature. The fruit of His incarnation is our deification.

*Theosis*, the Greek term for deification, means that, because God has become one of us, we can become like Him. He is the only truly Holy One, yet we can become holy by sharing in His life. Because of the incarnation, the impossible has become possible: we can become perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.

Our celebration of Christ’s Nativity proclaims Theosis as the very purpose of the incarnation. During the week leading up to Christmas, we sing this troparion which portrays the Incarnation as fulfilling the original purpose of creation: “Bethlehem, make ready, for Eden has been opened for all... Christ is coming forth to bring back to life the likeness that had been lost in the beginning.”

This reflects the Genesis story of creation, in which “*God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness’... so God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them*” (Gen 1;26, 27). In the teaching of the Church Fathers, this “image” of God in us means the spiritual side of our nature, which distinguishes us from the lower orders of creation.

They explained the “likeness” to mean the ability to act in a holy, godlike manner. With the fall, the Fathers teach, we lost that likeness. We retained the image of God in us, but it was scarred, unable to function as God intended.

### Prokimenon

**Reader:** May Your kindness, O Lord, be upon us, for we have hoped in You.

**People:** May Your kindness, O Lord, be upon us, for we have hoped in You.

**Verse:** Exult, you just, in the Lord; praise from the upright is fitting.

**People:** May Your kindness, O Lord, be upon us, for we have hoped in You.

**Reader:** May Your kindness, O Lord, be upon us,

**People:** For we have hoped in You.

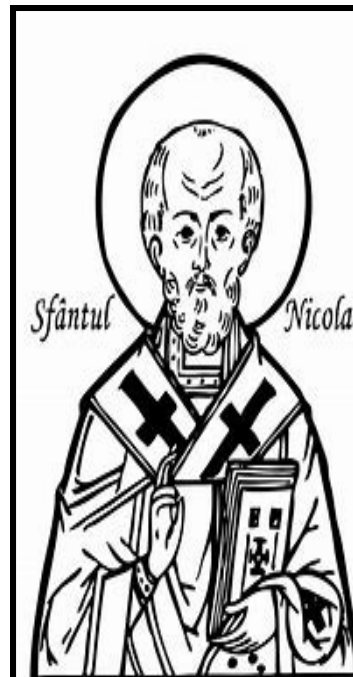
### Epistle: Eph. 5:8-19

#### Alleluia Verses

O God, You granted me retribution and made peoples subject to me and saved me from my raging enemies.

*Verse:* Therefore, I will proclaim You, O Lord, among the nations, and I will sing praise to Your name.

### Gospel: Luke 13: 10-17, 10th Sunday of the Holy Cross – The Stoopd Woman



#### ST. NICHOLAS CELEBRATION

Please join us next Sunday, **December 15** following the 10 AM Divine Liturgy as we celebrate our Father among the Saints, Nicholas the Wonderworker. St. Nicholas is beloved in both the East and West. It is from the Dutch for St. Nicholas, *Sinterklaas*, that we get *Santa Claus*. His feast day, December 6, was traditionally the day for giving gifts in honor of St. Nicholas’ great generosity and gift-giving.

During the coffee hour, we will have a short program, discussing the life of St. Nicholas. St. Nicholas will likely make an appearance, passing out the traditional gold candy coins and other goodies! The coffee hour is sponsored by the Aulo and Francis families. Please let us know how many children will attend by sending an email to [olphmelkite@gmail.com](mailto:olphmelkite@gmail.com) or calling the rectory at **(508) 752-4174**. We hope to see you all there!