

Sharing in the Mystery of the Cross

“The Lord accomplished our salvation by His death on the Cross: on the Cross He tore up the handwriting of our sins; through the Cross He reconciled us with our God and Father; and through the Cross He brought down upon us grace-filled gifts and all heavenly blessings. But this is the Lord’s Cross itself. Each of us becomes a partaker of its salvific power in no other way than through our personal cross.

“When the personal cross of each of us is united with Christ’s Cross, the power and effect of the latter is transferred to us and becomes, as it were, a conduit through which ‘*every good gift and every perfect grace*’ (James 1:17) is poured forth upon us from the Cross of Christ.

“From this it is evident that the personal cross of each of us is as essential to the work of salvation as the Cross of Christ.”

St Theophan the Recluse

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Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM



Sunday after the Exultation of the Holy Cross

September 15, 2019

Antiphon (Feast)

1. The Lord is King: let the people tremble.

O Son of God, who were crucified in the flesh, save us who sing to You, Alleluia!

2. He is enthroned upon the Cherubim: let the earth quake.

O Son of God, who were crucified in the flesh, save us who sing to You, Alleluia!

3. Let them praise your magnificent name: it is awesome and holy. The honor of the King is to love justice.

O Son of God, who were crucified in the flesh, save us who sing to You, Alleluia!

Entrance Hymn:

Priest: Extol the Lord our God, and bow down before His footstool, for He is Holy.

People: **O Son of God, who were crucified in the flesh, save us who sing to You, Alleluia!**

Resurrectional Troparion (Tone 5, Pg. 40)

Let us, O faithful, praise and worship the Word, coeternal with the Father and the Spirit, born of the Virgin for our Salvation, for He was pleased to be lifted in the flesh upon the cross, and to endure death, and to raise the dead by His glorious resurrection.

Troparion of the Cross (Tone 1)

“O Lord, save Your people and bless Your inheritance, granting peace to the world. And preserve Your community by the power of Your Cross.”

Kondakion of the Cross (Tone 4)

O Christ God, who chose by Your free volition to be elevated upon the holy cross, grant Your mercies to Your new people who are called by Your name. In Your power gladden the hearts of our public authorities. Strengthen them in every good deed so that Your true alliance may be for them a weapon of peace and a standard of victory.

Our most basic reason for feasting on this day, however, is what took place on the Cross. As St. John Chrysostom described it, “The Cross has taken away sin. It was an expiation for the world, a reconciliation of the ancient enmity. It opened the gates of heaven, changed those who hated into friends; it took our human nature, led it up to heaven, and seated it at the right hand of God’s throne. And it brought to us ten thousand other blessings” (*Homily 3 against the Judaizers*).

The first sticheron sung at vespers on this feast echoes this festive sentiment: “By its elevation, the Cross is like an appeal to the whole creation to adore the blessed Passion of Christ our God who was suspended on it, for Christ destroyed by this Cross the one who had destroyed us. In His great goodness, He brought us back to life after we had been dead, and He beatified us and made us worthy of Heaven, for He is merciful. Wherefore, we exalt His name with great rejoicing and glorify His infinite condescension.”

Our Reason for Fasting

We also observe the feast of the Cross by fasting – not in anticipation of the feast but on the feast itself. Church directives say that September 14 is a strict fast day, on whatever day of the week it falls. So we may be called upon to fast on Saturday or even on Sunday. The fast is mitigated on weekends (wine and oil are permitted) but not completely abolished. Since Sunday is always a Eucharistic day, today’s fast means that we do not eat until we receive Holy Communion. After that, we do not eat meat, fish or dairy products.

The Church’s reason for fasting on this day is not to lament the death of Christ, which as we have seen is a source of blessings. Rather we fast because of our sins, committed despite the fact that we know what Christ has done for us on the cross and still prefer to follow our own egos rather than following His way. We do well to be distressed when we look on the Cross – not for the Lord’s sake (He is risen!) – but because our salvation, brought about on the Cross, means so little to us.

The mention of fasting usually prompts two reactions. Some overly meticulous people tend to overemphasize fasting rules in a legalistic way. Others, imbued with a pietistic ideas about devotion, see fasting and any discipline involving the body, such as prostrations, kissing icons, etc. as unspiritual.

St Paul would not agree. He definitely saw that the body becomes an important component in worship when we use it in a sacrificial way. “*I beseech you therefore, brethren,*” he wrote, “*by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service*” (Romans 12:1). When we refrain from food and drink, from sleep, from sexual activity or from any normal physical activity we make our longing an offering to God. In this way we push the physical beyond itself into the spiritual realm. Surrendering our physical desires becomes a *logike latreia*, a reasoned or conscious act of worship of the One who has given us all things.

DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today -Health and Salvation of Lidia Assali & Ansara Families. Requested by Lidia Assali

September 22 +Mary and Habib Rahal, Bertha (35 yr) & William (20 yr) Rahall, Rahall & Reeks Families. Requested by Nick Rahall & Family. Coffee Hour sponsored by Nick Rahall and Family. Coffee Hour sponsored by Nick Rahall and Family.

September 29 +Donald Halal. Requested by his wife, Jeannette

October 6 +Catherine Delnore (40 Day). Requested by her family. Coffee Hour sponsored by the Family. Coffee Hour sponsored by the Family



ANNOUNCEMENTS

- ◆ Last Week's Attendance/Donations: **82/\$655**
- ◆ The Parish Picnic was a huge success! Thank you to all who worked so hard to make it a wonderful day of food and family: Those who organized, those who donated, those who cooked, those who served, and all those who did everything else necessary to make the day special. Bishop Nicholas and the other area clergy all had very complementary comments about the picnic. Please join us for lunch after this morning's Divine Liturgy. We will have kibbeh and grape leaves while we hear a report on the picnic; what went well and opportunities for improvement. Your comments will be most helpful.
- ◆ **Clean-up Day** - We are planning a Parish Clean-Up Day on Saturday **September 28** from 9AM till Noon (weather permitting.) We'll do some sprucing up inside and outside the church. Bring your rakes, etc. and join us. Lunch will be served.
- ◆ You should have received a mailing that included a Contact Form. Please return the form in person, via regular mail, or email. Having an up to date contact list makes it easier for Fr. Bryan to reach out to the Community. If you did not receive the contact form, please see Fr. Bryan and he will give you one.
- ◆ The deadline for purchasing tickets to Bishop Nicholas' Jubilee Celebration is this Friday (9/20. Please see announcement). If you wish to attend but have not sent in your ticket form and payment, please contact Fr. Bryan so that he can let the Jubilee Committee know you are coming.

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.

If you or your children have graduated from high school, college, or a post secondary program, please let Fr. Bryan know. He would like to include their names in the bulletin to acknowledge their accomplishments. He would like to do this in September. Notice may be sent to olphmelkite@gmail.com or by calling (978) 314-1962. Better yet, come and see Fr. Bryan after the Divine Liturgy.

Bishop Nicholas' 30th Anniversary Celebration

On Thursday, **October 3rd**, Our Lady of Annunciation Cathedral will host a celebration in honor of Sayinda Nicholas' 30th Anniversary of episcopal ordination, 50th Anniversary of priestly ordination, as well as his 75th Birthday. The Divine Liturgy will begin at 5:00pm followed by a banquet at 7:00pm. Tickets are \$50 per person and must be purchased in advance. **No tickets will be sold at the door.** Please see the flyer in the most recent edition of **Sophia** for more details. There are also copies of the flyer in the narthex of the church. The deadline to purchase tickets is **September 20, 2019**. It would be wonderful to have a strong representation from OLPH at the Liturgy and Banquet.

September 15 - Second Day of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

THE GREAT FEASTS OF THE CHURCH are each celebrations of an aspect of the mystery of Christ: Of these feasts Pascha is considered “the Feast of Feasts,” the center of our Church life, the mystery of Christ’s resurrection. While Pascha is celebrated with feasting, the Great and Holy Week which leads up to Pascha observes the last events of Christ’s earthly life along with His death and burial by fasting.

Each Sunday celebrates the resurrection with the Eucharistic banquet, while each Wednesday and Friday remembers Christ’s betrayal and death – again, with fasting.

Next in importance to Pascha are “the Twelve Great Feasts” which celebrate events of Christ’s life, of His Mother, of His ascension and the coming of the Spirit. Several of these are preceded by days or seasons of fasting. The feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross is the only one observed by simultaneous feasting and fasting!

Our Reasons for Feasting

The immediate historical events celebrated on this feast are, first of all, the unearthing of the Cross in the fourth century during the expedition led by St Helena to adorn the Holy Land with fitting shrines to Christ. The second event remembered is the recovery of the cross in the seventh century by Byzantine forces fourteen years after it had been captured by Persian invaders.

Two traditions common among Eastern Christians celebrate the discovery of the cross. It is said that St. Helena’s workmen were led to the site of the cross by the fragrant aroma of basil growing there. It is customary to adorn the cross and, in some places, the entire church with sprigs of basil. Some basil would be given to people when they venerate the Cross to take home and adorn their icons. In some parts of Greece basil would be ground and added to the dough used to make prosphora.

A second festive act observed throughout the Middle East in both Byzantine and Oriental Churches is the lighting of bonfires, usually after the vespers or vigil of the feast. When the cross was unearthed by St. Helena’s expedition, the news of this discovery was spread from Jerusalem to Constantinople by a series of bonfires set on the mountains along the coast through Asia Minor. Today’s bonfires are a popular re-enactment of that event.

The recovery of the Cross is remembered by another festive act – the one which gives this feast its name. When the victorious Byzantine army returned the Cross to Jerusalem, Patriarch Zachariah “exalted” the Cross, lifting it high for the veneration of the people who continually cried out *Kyrie eleison* as they gazed on the Cross. In our ceremony of the exaltation, the Cross is raised high in each direction – north, south, east and west – to bless the entire world as the people repeatedly chant *Kyrie eleison*.

Instead of Holy God:

- We bow in worship before Your Cross, O Master,

and we give praise to Your Holy Resurrection! (3 times)

- Glory to the Father and the Son, and to the Holy Spirit now and always and forever and ever, Amen. And we give praise to Your Holy Resurrection!

- We bow in worship before Your Cross, O Master,

And we give praise to Your Holy Resurrection

Prokimenon

Reader: How great are Your works, O Lord! In wisdom You have wrought them all.

People: How great are Your works, O Lord! In wisdom You have wrought them all.

Reader: Bless the Lord. O my soul! You are very great indeed, O Lord my God!

People: How great are Your works, O Lord! In wisdom You have wrought them all.

Reader: How great are Your works, O Lord!

People: In wisdom You have wrought them all.

Epistle: Galatians 2:16-21

Alleluia Verses

String Your bow, go forth, reign for the sake of truth, meekness and righteousness, and Your right hand shall lead You wonderfully.

Verses: You loved righteousness and hated iniquity: therefore God, Your God, anointed You with the oil of joy above Your companions.

Gospel: Mark 8:34-38 9:1

Kiss of Peace (Pg. 23)

Priest: Christ is among us!

People: He is and always will be!

Then offer the kiss of peace to the person on your right and left using the greeting above.

Hirmos (Tone 8) - O Mother of God, you became a Mystical Paradise, when without tilling you brought forth Christ our God, by whom the life-giving Tree of the Cross was planted on earth. Therefore seeing Him on the Cross, we adore Him, and we magnify you.

Kinonikon: “Praise the Lord...” (Pg. 32)

After Communion: O Lord, save Your People...