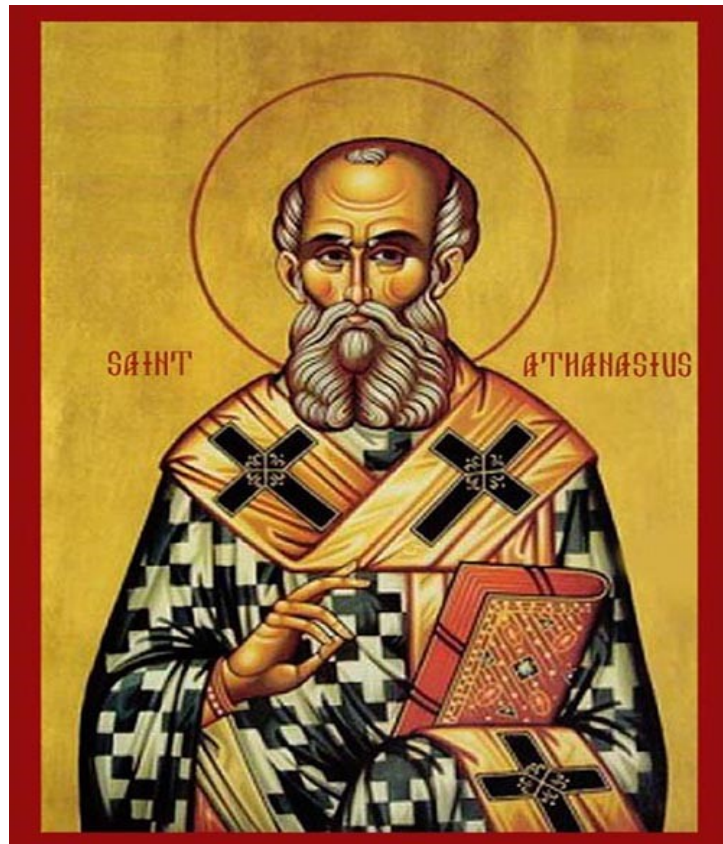


### St. Athanasius on the Incarnation

“What, then, was God to do? What else could He possibly do, being God, but renew His Image in mankind, so that through it we might once more come to know Him? And how could this be done save by the coming of the very Image Himself, our Savior Jesus Christ? We could not have done it, for we are only made after the Image; nor could angels have done it, for they are not the images of God. The Word of God came in His own Person, because it was He alone, the Image of the Father, Who could recreate man made after the Image.

“The Word perceived that corruption could not be got rid of otherwise than through death; yet He Himself, as the Word, being immortal and the Father’s Son, could not die. For this reason, therefore, He assumed a body capable of death, ... By surrendering to death the body which He had taken, as an offering and sacrifice free from every stain, He abolished death for His human brethren ... Naturally also, through this union of the immortal Son of God with our human nature, all men were clothed with incorruption in the promise of the resurrection. For the solidarity of mankind is such that, by the Word’s indwelling in a single human body, the corruption which goes with death has lost its power over all” (*On the Incarnation* 34, 35).



### SUNDAY OF THE HOLY ANCESTORS DECEMBER 13, 2020



**Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church**  
256 Hamilton St.  
Worcester, MA 01604  
Rectory: (508) 752-4174 Hall: (508) 755-2199  
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Rev. Bryan McNeil, Pastor  
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Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM

### **Antiphon (1st)**

1: Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth, 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.

**Be shafa'ati Walidatil Eelah, ya Mukhallisu, khallisna.**

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 3, pg. 39)**

Let all in heaven rejoice, and all on earth be glad, for the Lord has exerted power with His arm: By death He has trampled upon Death and has become the firstborn from the dead. He has delivered us from the bosom of Hades and has granted to the world great mercy.

### **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.

### **Troparion of the Dormition (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 intercessions, 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.

Again, we must turn to St Paul, who gives us an entry into the mind of Christ, particularly in regard to the Incarnation. “*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*” (Phil 2:5-11).

The *why* of the Incarnation, according to the Apostle Paul is our deification. The *how* of the Incarnation is what has been called the *kenosis* (self-emptying) of Christ: His voluntary putting aside of divine glory and putting on “the form of a bondservant” (our humanity). As man He further humbled Himself by submitting to all the circumstances of time, place and state of life which we find described in the Gospels. He put on the condition of a village carpenter who became an itinerant preacher, challenging the religious status quo of the Jewish establishment supported by Rome. Little wonder that His path led to the death of the cross.

When St Paul says that we should “*let this mind be in you*” as it was in Christ, He is echoing the Lord Jesus, who proposed humility as the hallmark of the Christian. After the Lord had washed His disciples’ feet, He told them, “*If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you*” {Jn 13:14, 15). The Lord was not proposing that His disciples be characterized by actual foot-washing, but by humble service to one another.

As the Word of God exchanged His heavenly glory for the manger in a Bethlehem cave, His followers must learn to exchange their views of their own self-importance for the “*form of a bondservant.*” In this way, the humility of Christ rather than human “wisdom” will direct our actions.

In addition to humility, the mind of Christ according to the Scriptures is characterized chiefly by dependence on God and compassion toward others. Developing a mindset of humility, dependence and compassion is contrary to the way of thinking most people learn from the society and culture that surrounds us. It requires continual attention and effort to maintain our focus on the mind of Christ. “*Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and be holy in all your conduct ... as He who called you is holy*” (1 Pt 1:13, 15).





### DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today **Those infected with the coronavirus and those who care for them**  
**The people of Beirut**  
+**Those who have lost their lives to the coronavirus**  
+**Those who lost their lives in the Beirut explosion**

### CHRISTMAS DIVINE LITURGY

Due to the pandemic, we will have **one** Divine Liturgy for Christmas on **December 24 at 5PM**. God willing, we will have a more robust liturgical schedule next year in preparation for the Nativity of Christ.



The Nativity begins this Thursday **December 10** in the Melkite usage. We use this time to prepare ourselves for the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ. Like all of the fasts during the church year, we abstain from meat, meat products, fish, oil and wine. During this fast, fish is allowed on Saturdays, Sundays, and certain feasts, such as the Presentation of the Theotokos in the Temple (Nov. 21). Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are tools to help us grow closer to Christ. A bodily fast without a spiritual one is just a diet. We are called to pray more, be more humble and repentant. We are also called to be more charitable.

Everyone is called to fast, but we must do so in accordance with our individual circumstances. If you have not fasted before, start slowly. Abstain from meat & meat products on Wednesdays and Fridays. You can then slowly expand your fasting. Fasting is an ascetical labor that takes practice and guidance. If you have any questions about fasting, please reach out to Fr. Bryan.



### **The Bishop's Appeal 2020 Building A Better Life On A Solid Foundation Through Faith & Family**

As we travel with the Virgin to Bethlehem where she will give birth to the Only-Begotten Son of God—let us not forget our Melkite Catholic Church by which Christ comes to our families and loved ones. **Please give an end-of-year, tax-deductible gift to the Melkite Church** in America and help our Church in countless ways. Help produce *SOPHIA* magazine, assist in the faith education of our young people, support the training of new priests and deacons, expand our missions and start new ones, give support to our elderly priests. Please give generously so these vital works can continue and grow. Appeal Pledges are available in the narthex. May God bless you for your generosity.

### Last Week's Collection

|                     |                |
|---------------------|----------------|
| Regular             | \$1,088        |
| Candles             | \$ 13          |
| Christmas Flowers   | \$ 185         |
| Christmas Donations | \$ 5           |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>\$1,291</b> |

### FINANCIALS

| <u>Nov 2020</u> | <u>YTD (10/20-11/20)</u> |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Income 5,307    | Income 10,126            |
| Expenses 7,692  | Expenses 11,187          |
| Net (2,385)     | Net (1,061)              |

**Remember the Melkite Church in Your Will:** Give a lasting gift for future generations of Melkites and help to ensure that our beautiful Melkite heritage continues to grow and flourish for your children's children. Simply add the following statement to your last will and testament: ***I hereby bequeath to the Melkite Eparchy of Newton the following sum: \$\_\_\_\_\_.*** Contact Bishop NICHOLAS personally to inform him of your generous bequest: 3 VFW Parkway, West Roxbury, MA 02132.

BEGINNING STUDENTS OF JOURNALISM or other disciplines involving research are taught the importance of the “Five Ws” in compiling information. Fact-finders must be able to answer the following questions on any subject they are investigating: **Who** (was involved)? **What** (happened)? **When** (did it take place)? **Where** (did it take place)? And **Why** (did that happen)?

In reflecting on the incarnation of the Word of God, we focus on the last question: *why* did Christ become man? Our answer is that the reason He assumed our human nature – His incarnation – is to change us by making us partakers of the divine nature (theosis). As the Church Fathers never ceased to repeat, God became human so that man might be deified.

But the answer to that question brings us to ask another one: *how* do we become deified? The Scriptures give us a two-part answer: our deification results initially from being united to Christ at baptism. We maintain this gift of our deification by “*putting on the Lord Jesus Christ*” (Rom 13:14) in the way we conduct our lives.

### **We Have Put on Christ in Baptism**

The hymn sung repeatedly at baptisms – drawn from St Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians – affirms the teaching that we “put on” Christ at our baptism. As the Incarnation began with a concrete, physical act, the conception of the Lord Jesus, so our deification begins with the concrete, physical act of baptism. In this mystery, the earthly humanity of a believer is joined to the divinized humanity of Christ. The believer is organically united to Christ, immersed in Him, just as he or she is immersed into the water. The believer has clothed himself with Christ, a spiritual reality symbolized by the white baptismal garment.

St Paul frequently reminds his readers how their likeness to God has been restored in baptism through the image of “putting-off” and “putting-on.” He tells the Ephesians, “... *you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness*” (Eph 4:24). He tells the Colossians, “*you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him*” (Col 3:10). Their divinization is a restoration of their likeness to God which was lost in Eden.

According to the Scriptures, that “putting-on Christ” also connects us to the eternal God in a new way. As St Paul says, “*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*” (Gal 3:26, 27). A person renewed in baptism is, in fact, no longer simply related to God as creature to Creator; the baptized is now an adopted child of God. Because of our baptism it is realistic to call God “Father.”

### **We Must Put on Christ in Our Actions**

In baptism we *ontologically* put on Christ. We are connected to Him on the level of our deepest nature. We must also put on Christ *psychologically*, on the level of our actions and perceptions. In other words, we must strive to think and act like Him. To do that, we must study the actions of Christ as revealed in the Scriptures and begin to know His mind.

### **Prokimenon**

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

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

**Verse:** 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 of praise and glorious forever.

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

**People:** And Your name is worthy of 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 - The Great Banquet**

### **Special Petitions for the Ecumenic Prayer (Inserted after the third petition)**

- For all your people who have proven positive with the coronavirus, that they may be restored to full health and offer you their praise and thanksgiving, we pray to you, Lord, hear us and have mercy.
- For all those who have died as a result of the coronavirus that they may be granted rest with the Saints and the mercy of God in the Heavenly Kingdom, we pray to You, Lord, hear us and have mercy.
- For doctors, nurses, and all in health care, risking their lives to minister to those afflicted with the coronavirus, that they remain safe, and in good health as they serve others, we pray to You, Lord, hear us and have mercy.
- For all your people in Lebanon who were hurt during the disastrous explosion, that they may be restored to full health, and for those who died that they may be granted rest among the Saints, we pray to You, Lord, hear us and have mercy.
- For peace throughout the Middle East, especially in Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and Iraq, we pray to You, Lord, hear us and have mercy.