

From the Divine Office for the Ascension

came down from Heaven to earth, O Christ, in order to lift up through Your Ascension the O Christ, You have gone up to Your eternal Father, whose ineffable bosom You had never left. The heavenly powers did not receive an addition to their praises of the Thrice-Holy Hymn, for even after the Incarnation, they acknowledged You, O Lord, as the Only-begotten Son of the Father. In the abundance of Your love, O Lord, have mercy on us. (Vespers)

You came down from Heaven to earth, O Christ, in order to lift up through Your Ascension the race of Adam which lay in the depths of Hades. Having raised it up to heaven with You, You seated it on the Father's throne with You, in Your love and mercy toward mankind.

(Orthros)



SUNDAY OF THE FATHERS OF NICEA I

Commemoration of the Holy and Glorious Sovereigns, the Equals of the Apostles

Constantine and Helena

MAY 21, 2023



CONSTANTINE & HELENA

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Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM

Antiphon (Feast)

1: All you peoples, clap your hands: shout to God with cries of gladness.

O Son of God, who ascended in glory to Heaven, save us who sing to You. Alleluia!

2: For the Lord, the Most High, the Awesome One, is the great King over all the earth.

O Son of God, who ascended in glory to Heaven, save us who sing to You. Alleluia!

3: He brings peoples under us, nations under our feet.

O Son of God, who ascended in glory to Heaven, save us who sing to You. Alleluia!

Entrance Hymn

Priest: God ascended amid shouts of joy, the Lord amid trumpet blasts.

People: O Son of God, who ascended in glory to Heaven, save us who sing to You. Alleluia!

Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 6) pg.41

The angelic powers were around Your tomb, and the guards became as dead, and Mary stood at the tomb, seeking Your spotless body; Then You despoiled Hades without being tried by it, and You met the Virgin O Bestower of life. O Lord, who rose from the dead, glory to You!

Troparion of the Ascension (Tone 4)

You ascended in glory, O Christ our God, and gladdened Your disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit. Through Your blessing they were confirmed in their belief that You are the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world.

Troparion of the Fathers (Tone 8)

O Christ our God, You are infinitely glorified, for You established our Fathers as radiant stars on earth: You led us to the true faith through them. O Most Merciful One, glory to You!

Troparion of Sts. Constantine and Helen (Tone 8)

O Lord, Your disciple, Emperor Constantine, who saw in the sky the sign of Your Cross, accepted the call that came straight from You, as it happened to Paul, and not from any man. He built his capital and entrusted it to Your care. Preserve our country in everlasting peace, through the intercession of the Mother of God, for You 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.

Kontakion of the Ascension (Tone 6)

After fulfilling for us Your plan of redemption and joining the things of earth with those of heaven, You gloriously ascended O Christ our God, without abandoning us, but remained with us forever and proclaimed to those who love You: “Behold, I am with you: no one has power against you.”

Prayer That His Disciples Be One – The prayer continues: “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given me out of the world.... and they have believed that you sent me” (verses 6, 8). The apostles had been called forth by Christ to leave their families and their livelihoods to follow Him. They were about to see Him arrested, humiliated and killed. They in their turn would face similar ends. Yet He prays, not that they remain steadfast, but that they remain one. “Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given me, that they may be one as we are” (verse 11). The unity of the apostles in Christ would be more significant than the physical lives of any one of them, because from that communion would come the ongoing life of the entire Church.

Prayer for the Church and the World – A few verses later we find a similar prayer for the whole Church and the world as well: “I do not pray for those alone, but also for those who will believe through their word that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I in You that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me” (verses 20-21).

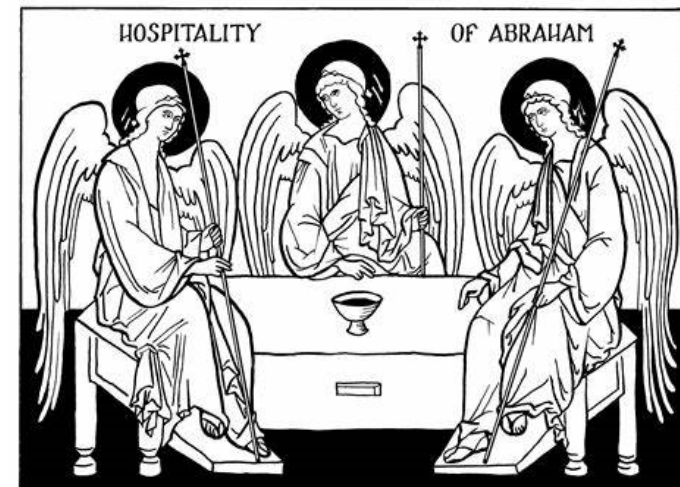
This mutual interaction of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the Trinity is extended to humanity in the Church. The bond we have with God is no longer simply that of creature to Creator; it is the filial relationship of the Son to the Father. “as You, Father, are in Me and I in You.” The Church, then, is not simply an human association of Jesus’ followers but an organic union of those who are “one in Us.”

Finally, the world’s conversion to Christ is tied to the communion of the Church with God. This passage is often explained to mean that when Christians are united to one another the rest of the world will believe. It is perhaps more accurate to say that when the Church in “one in Us” – finding the source of its unity in the life of the Trinity rather than in authority, political power or other external factors – people will be drawn to it.

The Icon of Our Communion with God

The icon which most perfectly expresses this vision for the communion of the Church as being “one in Us” is the adaptation by St Andrei Rublev of the traditional image, “The Hospitality of Abraham.” The patriarch himself and other details from the Genesis story are deleted and all we see are the three guests whom he entertained, seated around a table. In Gen 18:2 these visitors are described as “three men” but Rublev depicts them as angels. In fact Gen 18:13 and verses following refer to Abraham’s company as “the LORD,” causing the Fathers to see this visitation as an early indication of the Trinity. Their eternal relationship is expressed by the fluid motion of their gestures.

The fourth place at the table, included in these gestures, is set for us. Through baptism we have been brought into the eternal relationship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The single vessel on the table suggests the means of our ongoing communion with God, the Eucharist.



DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today +Violet Gazal. Requested by Antoinette Arraj
+Br. Alphonsus Maria MacGovern, M.I.C.M. Requested by Tom Syseskey

Today's Coffee Hr. is hosted by the Dumont family
Next Sunday's Coffee Hr. will be hosted by Houda Daou

Please remember in your prayers: George Arraj, Jr., Ron Abraham, Peter Abraham, Robert Ghiz, Sadie Mirante, Archie Opatka, Anthony Poti, Katherine Thomas, Charlotte Stockhaus, Ruth Welsh, Richard Abraham, Sr., Frank Boyda, Carol Boyda, Bob Lynch, Joe Najemy, Michael Mooradian, Michael McNeil, Jeff McNeil, Wyatt William Rahall, Lauren Abraham, Nicholas Haddad, Elaine Foley, David Ahlin, Elio Kanaan, all those affected by the earthquakes in Syria and Turkey, 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.

Last Week's Collection

Weekly	\$ 827
Candles	\$ 34
Coffee Hr.	\$ 69
Stole	\$ 250
Other	\$ 450
TOTAL	\$1,630

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.

MIDDLE EASTERN FESTIVAL

St. George Orthodox Cathedral is having a Middle Eastern Festival June 9-11. Please plan to attend and support our brothers and sisters! See the sign in front of the church for more details.

SAVE THE DATE

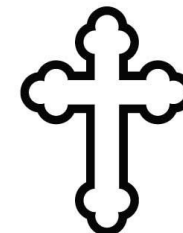
As you may know, 2023 is the 100th anniversary of the parish. We will mark the occasion on **November 4-5**. We will celebrate Great Vespers followed by a banquet on November 4. On November 5, we will celebrate a hierarchal Divine Liturgy followed by lunch in the parish hall. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend. More information will be forthcoming. Please contact Fr. Bryan if you would like to help with the planning and preparation for the occasion. Our next planning meeting will be **Wednesday May 24 at 6:30pm**.

NEW WEBSITE

We have a new website:

olphworchester.org

It is still a work in progress. Take a look and let us know what you think.



Being “One in Us” (John 17:1-13)

IN MONASTIC OR RELIGIOUS CIRCLES it is common for spiritual leaders to leave their followers a “spiritual testament,” an outline of the teachings and instructions which they want uppermost in their disciples’ minds. Christ’s prayer in John 17 is a kind of spiritual testament. In it the Lord expresses His holy will for Himself, for His apostles, for the Church and for all mankind on the eve of His crucifixion.

The Time of His Glorification – The prayer begins with Christ praying for Himself: “*Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify You*” (verse 1). What the Scripture calls Christ’s “hour” refers to the time of His redeeming sacrifice. Christ prays that He would be glorified by the completeness of this self-emptying. He totally enters into our experience of suffering and death in order to be one with us in all things except sin. His glory would not be the earthly idea of glory – power and might – but the glory of absolute and unconditional love.

Jesus as the Eternal Word Made Flesh – The prayer continues: “*glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with You before the world began*” (verse 5). The heavenly glory, known to the angels, was to be manifested to us on earth through the cross. This reference brings us back to the proclamation of who Jesus is which is found in the very first verse of John’s Gospel: “*In the beginning was the Word...*” The Gospel proclaims Jesus as the pre-eternal Word of God who is glorified with the Father before all ages. Jesus is not simply a prophet or inspired teacher – He is the One whom the Gospel says “*...was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him and without Him nothing was made that was made*” (John 1:2, 3).

This portrait of the eternal Word as one with the Father shows us a God who is in an eternal relationship and who is, therefore, love by His very nature (see 1 John 4:8). God’s relationship is, first of all, with the true and entirely appropriate object of His love: His divine Word who is glorified with Him from all eternity. Based on the words of this prayer the Church would go on to speak of Christ as “equal in glory with the Father.” Combining this with Christ’s teaching on the Holy Spirit, later believers would express this relationship as the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

Our Re-creation is in Christ – Between verses 1 and 5 we find a third concept recorded in the Gospel: “*...You have given Him authority over all flesh that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him*” (verse 2). The Word of God, through whom all things were made, is now incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth as the agent of a new creation. Mankind is given a new life which is, in fact, a second chance at the life intended for him from the beginning as described in the book of Genesis.

This life is then described: “*And this is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent*” (verse 3). Eternal life, authentic life is communion: that knowledge which flows from a relationship with God. It was a relationship of communion which Genesis describes as God “walking with Adam” in the Garden. That fellowship, once lost, is restored through Christ.

Some scholars believe that this verse is the Evangelist’s commentary on Christ’s prayer, an aside in the text, since it refers to the Lord in the third person. There were no quotation marks, punctuation or even paragraphs in first-century Greek manuscripts so it is possible that this is so.

This verse does make an excellent commentary, a kind of liturgical refrain not only to this prayer but to our entire life in Christ. All of the Church’s life – our liturgies, icons, practices – draws its power from the relationship which we have with God. When we are in a living communion with Him, all that we do as Christians shows forth that life. Our interior eyes gain the power to see what is present in the Scriptures, the Eucharist or the saints. They become means for us to deepen the life which comes from our relationship with God in Christ. If we are not living in that relationship then these practices are simply outward forms which will increasingly bore us.

Prokimenon

Reader: Through all the earth, their voice resounds, and to the ends of the world their message.

People: Through all the earth, their voice resounds, and to the ends of the world their message.

Reader: The heavens declare God’s glory, and the firmament proclaims the work of his hands.

People: Through all the earth, their voice resounds, and to the ends of the world their message.

Reader: Through all the earth, their voice resounds,

People: And to the ends of the world their message.

Epistle: Acts 26:1; 12-20

Alleluia Verses

I have exalted one chosen out of My people. I have found David My servant and anointed him with holy chrism.

Verse: For My hand shall support him, and My arm shall make him strong.

Gospel: Jn. 17:1-13, Sunday of the Fathers of Nicea I

Hirmos of the Ascension (5th Tone)

O you who have given birth in time to the One whom no limit of time can hold, You thus have become the Mother of God in a manner beyond understanding and beyond words: we the faithful magnify you in one mind.

Kinonikon

Praise the Lord from the heavens...

After Communion

Troparion of the Ascension