

From the Divine Office for the Nativity of the Forerunner (June 24)

Today from the fruitless womb of Elizabeth the great Forerunner appears, the greatest of all the prophets: none is or will ever be greater than he. For the exceedingly bright Light followed the Forerunner, who was the lampstand; and the Word, the Bridegroom, followed the Voice of him who led the bride and made the multitude ready for the Lord, cleansing them first through water in the presence of the Spirit. He is the son of Zechariah, the dweller in the wilderness, the preacher of repentance, the cleanser of errors. It was he who announced to those in Hades the good news of the Resurrection from the dead, and he intercedes for our souls. (Vespers)

The woman who had been barren becomes fertile and gives birth today to the Forerunner of Christ. He is the greatest and last of the prophets, for standing in the waters of the Jordan River, he placed his hands on Christ whom all the prophets had announced; and in so doing, he became a prophet himself, a preacher and a forerunner of the Word of God. (Kontakion)



**THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
JUNE 18, 2023**



**NATIVITY OF THE FORERUNNER
JUNE 24**

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church
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Worcester, MA 01604
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Email: olphmelkite@gmail.com/Website: olphworcester.org
Rev. Bryan McNeil, Pastor
Cell: (774) 502-8547
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!”

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 (Tone 2) Pg. 16

O never failing Protectress of Christians and their ever-present intercessor before the Creator, despise not the petitions of us sinners, but in your goodness extend your help to us who call upon you with confidence. Hasten, O Mother of God, to intercede for us, for you have always protected those who honor you.

The Feast of the Visitation

This festival has a unique history. We know that it was observed in the early Church, at least in Ain Karim. The pre-Islamic Jerusalem Calendar notes that a festival was kept there yearly on August 28.

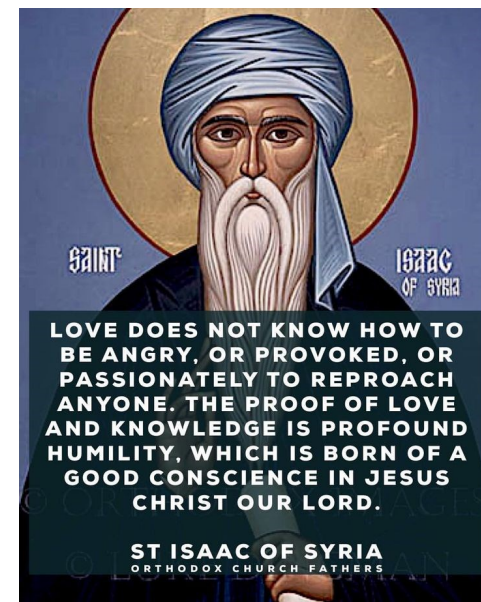
The 11th-century Muslim scholar Muhammad al-Biruni (abu-RaiHan) documented the practice of the Syriac Melkite community in northeastern Persia. There May 4 marked the “Feast of Roses, according to the ancient rite as it is celebrated in Khwaarizm. On this day they bring Juri-roses to the churches, the reason for which is this, that on this day Mary presented the first roses to Elizabeth, the mother of John.” He then notes that May 15 “is the Feast of Roses according to the new rite (postponed to this date because roses are still very scarce on the fourth). It is celebrated on the same date in Khorasan, not on the original date.”

Today the Syriac Churches observe May 15 as the feast of Our Lady of the Harvest. They remember the Visitation on the third Sunday of the Announcement, their six week pre-Christmas cycle.

There is no mention of this feast in any Byzantine Church until the nineteenth century. In 1844 the Melkite Patriarch Maximos III decreed that this feast should be kept on the Friday after Pascha. The Greek Church honors a miraculous spring in Constantinople on this date as the Feast of the Theotokos, the Life-Giving Spring. The patriarch, however, was embroiled in a conflict with the Ecumenical Patriarchate at this time. He had recently achieved civil emancipation from the control of the Patriarch of Constantinople. In retaliation the Greeks insisted that this new Catholic community be obliged to wear clerical headgear that was clearly different from that of the Greeks.

Maximos reacted by suppressing the Greek feast: “We recognize the desire of many people from our Rum Catholic parishes to honor Our Lady the Mother of God on the aforementioned day with a special service to the point that some of them take part in vainly celebrating this feast to Our Lady. From another perspective, we cannot participate in honoring the consecration of a church for people who have left the communion of the Catholic Church.” In the most recent revision of the liturgical books of the Melkite Greek-Catholic Patriarchate the Feast of the Visitation has been transferred to June 23, one day before the Feast of St. John the Baptist’s Nativity.

The Feast of the Visitation was added to the calendar of the Russian Orthodox Church in 1883 when the Russian representation in Jerusalem consecrated a church in Ain Karim named “The Meeting of the Most Holy Virgin and St. Elizabeth.” Its feast was set for March 30 and extended to the entire Russian Church. In an ironic twist, the typikon transfers this feast, if March 30 occurs during Great Week, to... the Friday of Bright Week



**HAPPY FATHER'S DAY TO ALL OUR FATHERS!
MAY GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS YOU FOR ALL YOU DO!**

DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today **Our Fathers living and deceased**
June 25 **+Nick and Dora Barouk, Requested by Karen & Antonio Solitro and Michael and Virginia Mischitelli**

Today's Coffee Hr. is hosted by ladies of the parish
Next Sunday's Coffee Hr. will be hosted by Ginny & Mike Mischitelli and Karen & Antonio Solitro

June 4 Collection

Weekly **\$1,114**
Candles **\$ 19**
Coffee Hr. **\$ 26**
Flowers **\$ 60**
TOTAL **\$1,219**

God bless you for your generosity!

Last Week's Collection

Weekly **\$ 857**
Candles **\$ 39**
Coffee Hr. **\$ 29**
Bookstore **\$ 615**
TOTAL **\$1,540**

God bless you for your generosity!

FINANCIALS

MAY 2023

Income **\$6,075**
Expenses **\$9,968**
Net **(\$3,893)**

YTD (10.2022-5.2023)

Income **\$59,926**
Expenses **\$70,357**
Net **(\$10,431)**



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.

100th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Our 100th Anniversary will be celebrated on **November 4-5**. We will have 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 **Tuesday June 27 at 6:30pm**.

We are looking for donations to offset some of the costs for the anniversary celebration. If you can donate, please let us know.

Thanks in advance for your generosity!

2023 FAMILY PICNIC

This year's Family Picnic will be **Sunday September 10**. Our first organizational meeting will be on Wednesday June 21 at 6:30pm. We need plenty of volunteers. Please plan to attend.

NEW COMMUNICATION TOOL

You may have recently received emails that look a little different. We are now communicating with the parish via a program called Flocknote. It is used by all the parishes in the Eparchy. It allows us to send emails and texts with the click of a button. If you are not getting these emails and texts, please reach out to Fr. Bryan and provide your email address and cell phone number so that you don't miss out!

Thanks for your cooperation!

June 23 – Feast of the Visitation of the All-holy Theotokos “Blessed Are You Among Women”

TWO OF THE MOST FREQUENTLY used prayers in our tradition are taken from the same Gospel narrative: the visit of the Holy Virgin to her older cousin Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist (Lk 1:39-56). Both the Angelic Salutation (“Hail, O Theotokos...”) and the Canticle of the Theotokos (“My soul magnifies the Lord...”) are taken from this passage. The event which it describes is generally called the Visitation.

According to Luke, the angel Gabriel who told her that she would bear a son also told her that *“Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren”* (Lk 1:36). Mary then travelled the nearly hundred miles from Nazareth to the little town in the hills of Judea where Zachary and Elizabeth lived. According to tradition this town was Ain Karim, which then was five miles from Jerusalem, but is today incorporated in that city’s municipal boundaries.

The Holy Virgin greeted her cousin, *“And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord”* (Lk 1:41-45).

The Holy Virgin replied with the Canticle which we sing daily at Matins/Orthros: *“My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior”* (vv. 46-47). This canticle is clearly modeled on the Song of Hannah (1 Sam 2:1-10), which that mother prayed when she learned that she would have a son. This led many modern scholars to assume that Luke put these words in Mary’s mouth, using 1 Samuel as his model. They did not realize that people steeped in Scripture as Mary was would naturally weave the sacred text into their speech when they spoke of the things of God.

Mary, the Ark of God

It may be that St Luke had another Old Testament passage in mind when he wrote the story of the visitation. Note the highlighted parallels from the story of David’s visit to the Ark of the Covenant described in 2 Samuel: *“David arose and went ... to bring up from there the ark of God, ... and he said, ‘How can the ark of the LORD come to me?’ ... The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite three months. ... So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with gladness. Then David danced before the LORD with all his might...”* (2 Sm 6:2-16).

The Holy Virgin is the new Ark of God, bearing within her – not the words of God’s commandments, the tablets of the Law, but the Living Word of God Himself. Before Him the unborn son of Elizabeth leaps in her womb as David danced before the Ark.

St Gregory the Wonderworker (213-c. 270) would develop this image of Mary as the Ark to describe the Virgin as full of grace (“Wrought with gold both within and without”): “Come also, dearly beloved, and chant the melody taught us by the inspired harp of David, saying ‘Arise, O Lord, into Your resting place – You and the Ark of Your holiness.’ For the Holy Virgin is truly an ark, wrought with gold both within and without, that has received the whole treasury of the sanctuary.”

Prokimenon

Reader: My strength and my courage is the Lord, and He has been my Savior.

People: My strength and my courage is the Lord, and He has been my Savior.

Reader: The Lord has chastised me through His teaching, yet He has not delivered me to death.

People: My strength and my courage is the Lord, and He has been my Savior.

Reader: My strength and my courage is the Lord,

People: And He has been my Savior.

Epistle: Rom 5:1-10

Alleluia Verses

The Lord shall hear you on the day of distress; may the name of the God of Jacob defend you.

Verse: O Lord, save Your people and bless Your inheritance.

Gospel: Mt 6:22-33

Upcoming Liturgical Schedule

Wed June 28, 6PM - Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Apostles Peter & Paul

Wed July 19, 6PM - Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Prophet Elijah followed by the blessing of cars

Please remember in your prayers: Lorraine Lian, 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.