

From the Divine Office for the Prophet Zechariah (Sep. 5)

O wonder which fills us with amazement! The Archangel who stands before God in the heights of Heaven comes to the holy servant Zechariah to announce the conception of the Forerunner, born of a barren woman in her old age. Ineffable is Your Providence, O Lord! By it, save our souls, O compassionate Christ! (Vespers)

The great priest accepts the silence of the Law until, at the voice of the angel, he and the sterile and chaste Elizabeth receive the Forerunner and Prophet of the coming of Christ. Behold, his birth marks the beginning of grace, redemption and universal reconciliation. For the Lamb and Creator who renews nature and gives fruit to the barren one, the Son, born of the Virgin, is announced by the mystical seer of God's grace. (Orthros)



**FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
SEPTEMBER 3, 2023**



PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church
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Email: olphmelkite@gmail.com/Website: olphworchester.org
Rev. Bryan McNeil, Pastor
Cell: (774) 502-8547
Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM

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.

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 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.

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 Nativity of the Theotokos (Tone 4)

Through your holy birth, O Immaculate One, Joachim and Anne were delivered from the shame of childlessness, and Adam and Eve from the corruption of death. Your people, redeemed from the debt of their sins, celebrate your birth crying out to you: “the barren one gives birth to the Mother of God the Sustainer of our life!”

Those Who Accept the Invitation

The messengers seek out – not the pillars of society at their farms and businesses – but the insignificant on the highways, representing the Gentiles. According to the Jewish opinion of the day, the Gentiles are inferior in God’s eyes to the Chosen People. Nevertheless, they respond to the king’s invitation where the important people did not.

Churchmen are often criticized for catering to the well-to-do: landowners, benefactors, etc. Pope Francis of Rome has repeatedly pushed Catholic leaders to focus their efforts on the poor without ignoring the leaders of society. In fact he notes, what generally happens in our world is the opposite. “If investments in the banks fail, ‘Oh, it’s a tragedy,’” he said at a Pentecost vigil in Rome; “But if people die of hunger or don’t have food or health, nothing happens. This is our crisis today.” In the language of Mt 22, Pope Francis might be called the Bishop of the Highways.

The Wedding Garment

In the second part of this parable the people from the highways have come to the banquet, but one is not wearing the appropriate “wedding garment.” In Jewish tradition this meant finery, one’s best clothing. A Jewish parable tells of a king inviting people to a banquet. Some went home and prepared immediately; others continued working and therefore arrived still in their work clothes and so were not allowed in. In the Gospel this theme of readiness is frequently found in Jesus’ teachings, particularly in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins (Mt 25:1-13).

Many Fathers interpreted the “appropriate garment” to mean a virtuous life. The Gentiles may have replaced the leadership of Israel in the People of God, but if they ignored the Gospel way of life, they too would be excluded. St Gregory the Dialogist saw the garment as woven out of love of God and love of others. “These are great precepts,” he wrote, “sublime precepts, and for many they are hard to fulfill: nevertheless this is the wedding garment. And whoever sits down at the wedding feast without it, let him watch with fear, for when the King comes in, he shall be cast forth.”

The “Bridegroom Matins” of Holy Week uses this interpretation as the basis of its beloved exapostilarion, “I see Your bridal chamber adorned, O my Savior, but I do not possess the right garment that I may enter therein. Brighten the robe of my soul, O Giver of light, and save me!” We much acknowledge our own spiritual emptiness (“I have no garment”) and seek God’s grace (“Brighten the robe of my soul”) to be made worthy of a place at the banquet.

How shall I enter the splendor of Your holy place, for I am unworthy? If I dare to enter the bridal chamber, my clothing will accuse me, since it is not a wedding garment, and I shall be chained and cast out by the angels. O Lord, cleanse the stain of my soul and save me, for you are the Lover of Mankind.

O Bridegroom more beautiful than all men, who have called us to the spiritual banquet of Your bridal chamber, remove from me the ill-clad image of my iniquities by this sharing in Your sufferings. Adorn me with the glorious robe of Your beauty and manifest me as a radiant guest of Your Kingdom, for You are compassionate.

(From the Bridegroom Matins of Holy Week)

DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today HS Sandra Hanlan. Requested by Susan Arraje
Sep 10 HS of all our Picnic workers
Sep 17 +Habib & Miriam (39 yr.) Rahall, William & Bertha Rahall, James (JR) Rahall.
Requested by Nick Rahall & Family

Today's Coffee Hr. is hosted by Andy & Jocelyn Aulo
There will be no Coffee Hr, next Sunday due to the Picnic

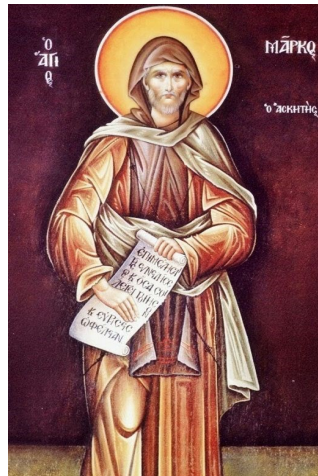
Last Week's Collection

Weekly	\$ 1,427
Candles	\$ 51
Coffee Hr.	\$ 44
Stole	\$ 50
TOTAL	\$ 1,572



FOOD DONATION BOX

There is a green box in the narthex for food donations. Once a month, we will deliver whatever we collect to a local charity that helps those with food insecurity. Our first delivery was to Mustard Seed Ministries on August 4. Please buy a couple of extra items when you go the grocery store and put them in the box on your way into the church on Sunday. Thank you in advance for your generosity in helping those who need a little extra assistance!



We must always remember that we are not condemned for the multitude of our evils, but because we do not want to repent and learn. And those who have sinned must not despair. Let that never be.

St. Mark the Ascetic

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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 & FAMILY PICNIC

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.

You should have received a letter and form to use if you want to place an ad in the commemorative book. The deadline for submitting ads was **September 1**. You can use the QR code on the right to submit your ad if you prefer.

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

Our Family Picnic is next Sunday, **September 10**. We need your help to make the Picnic **successful!** Please volunteer to help in some capacity. Too much of the work is being done by too few people. If each of us does a little, no one is overwhelmed.

Please use the following link or QR code on the left to sign up to volunteer:

www.olphworchester.org/picnic

Picnic Volunteer QR Code



100th Anniversary QR Code



Are You Invited? (Mt 22:2-14)

THE GOSPEL PARABLE READ at today's Divine Liturgy is actually two stories with two different if complementary points. The first concerns those invited to the banquet and those who finally came. The second is the issue of the so-called "wedding garment."

The Gospel of Matthew depicts Christ encountering increasing opposition the closer He came to the center of the Jewish establishment, Jerusalem. In Matthew 21:1-17 Jesus enters the Holy City, ejects the money changers from the temple and confronts the chief priests. Then we read four vignettes, each criticizing the Jewish leadership in the harshest of terms.

The first such condemnation is the episode of the withered fig tree (Mt 21:18-22). Then, in Mt 21:28-32, we read about the two sons: one who professed obedience to his father but in words only – a veiled criticism of the Pharisees who claimed to know the will of God – and the second who actually did the father's will.

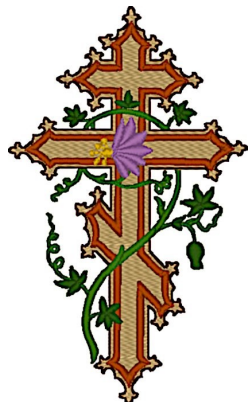
In the words of St Hilary of Poitiers, the religious leaders "...put their faith in the Law and despised repentance from sin, glorying instead in the noble prerogative that they had from Abraham" (*Homily on Matthew 21, 13*). The second son recalls the sinners who repented at the preaching of John the Baptist: the tax collectors and harlots who enter the kingdom of God before "the righteous" because one can repent of greed and lust, but not of the denial for the need of repentance. Finally in verses 33-46 we read the parable of the wicked vinedressers whose infidelity leads the owner of the vineyard to lease it to others. And, as the Gospel reminds us, "*When the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them*" (Mt 21:45).

The Royal Wedding

The story of the wedding banquet is in many ways an echo of the parable of the vinedressers. In each story an important person reaches out to his people; he is rebuffed, and finally turns to others. The vineyard owner in the first parable and the king in the second represent God. The disdainful tenants and the invited guests signify the people of Israel. The new tenants of the first story and the new guests of the second represent the Gentiles who would respond in faith.

It may be hard for us to imagine the reaction of the invited guests to the banquet. An invitation to such an occasion would be esteemed, even coveted. "But," as the Gospel says, "*they made light of it and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business*" (Mt 22:5). It is as if Matthew were describing our own day rather than his. This is the way many Christians – our own friends and relatives sadly among them – react to their invitation to the Eucharistic Banquet week after week. But how could an invitation to a royal wedding be dismissed so easily?

Couching this parable in terms of a royal wedding is a way of saying that the initiative of God in sending the prophets to Israel, announcing the coming Messiah was at least as compelling as a kingly gala. One after another, prophets came and were recognized in some way as foretelling what was to come. At last the Forerunner came and proclaimed "Everything is ready – this is the Lamb of God" but was ignored by many who heard him. Those invited had so lost themselves in the concerns of the everyday world that they treated the invitation like junk mail.



Prokimenon

Reader: You, O Lord, will keep us and preserve us always from this generation

People: You, O Lord, will keep us and preserve us always from this generation

Reader: Save me, O Lord, for there is no longer any holy man, for truthfulness has vanished from among the children of men

People: You, O Lord, will keep us and preserve us always from this generation

Reader: You, O Lord, will keep us

People: And preserve us always from this generation

Epistle: 2 Cor. 1:21-24; 2:1-4

Alleluia Verses

Your favor, O Lord, I will sing forever; from generation to generation, my mouth will proclaim Your faithfulness.

Verse: For You have said, "My kindness is established forever." In heaven You have confirmed Your faithfulness

Gospel: Mt. 22:2-14

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, Dennis Desplaines, Michael McNeil, Jeff McNeil, Wyatt William Rahall, Billy Rahall, Dan Rahall, Lauren Abraham, Nicholas Haddad, Elaine Foley, David Ahlin, Elio Kanaan, Tom Sarrouf, Sandra Hanlan, all those affected by the wildfires in Maui, 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.

UPCOMING LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Fri. 9.8 6PM-Divine Liturgy for the Nativity of the Theotokos

Wed. 9.13 6PM-Great Vespers for the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Thu. 9.14 6PM-Divine Liturgy for the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Please plan to join us!