

From the Divine Office for the Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos (Sep. 8)

Today, God who dominates the Spiritual Thrones of Heaven, welcomes on earth the holy throne which He prepared for Himself. In His love for mankind, He who established the heavens in wisdom has fashioned a living heaven. From a barren stem He has brought forth for us His Mother as a branch full of life. O God of miracles, and hope of those who have no hope, Lord, glory to You! (Vespers)

Today the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, has shone upon us as a cloud of Light. For our glory, she is born from her just parents. Adam is no longer condemned; Eve is forever freed of her bonds. Thus, let us lift up our voices to say with confidence to the only pure one, "Your nativity heralds joy to the whole universe!" (Orthros)



**SUNDAY BEFORE THE HOLY CROSS
SEPTEMBER 10, 2023**



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Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM

Antiphon (Feast)

1: The Lord swore to David's firm promise from which He will not withdraw.

All: Through the prayers of the Mother of God, O Savior, save us.

2: Your own Offspring I will set up on Your throne.

All: Be shafa'ati Walidatil Eelah, ya Mukhallisu, khallisna.

3: The Lord has chosen Zion: He prefers her for His dwelling.

All: 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 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 Nativity of the Theotokos (Tone 4)

Your Nativity, O Mother of God, heralded joy to the whole universe, for from you rose the Sun of Justice, Christ our God. Taking away the curse, He imparted the blessings. And by abolishing death, He gave us everlasting life.

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!”

As Gentiles became more numerous in the Churches there was less need to defend their participation in the face of a Jewish majority. The Fathers would insist on not imitating the lifestyle of the godless, but on imitating Christ. Instructing newly baptized believers St John Chrysostom said:

“I exhort you – both you who have previously been initiated and you who have just now enjoyed the Master’s generosity – let us all listen to the exhortation of the apostle who tells us, *‘The former things have passed away; behold, they are all made new.’* Let us forget the whole past, and like citizens in a new world, let us reform our lives and let us consider in our every word and deed the dignity of Him who dwells within us” (*Baptismal Catechesis* 4,16).

The New Creation in Our Baptisms

As the Church structured its baptismal rites, it expressed this same dynamic in the ceremony of accepting a catechumen. Before the candidate is asked to profess the Christian faith in the Nicene Creed, he or she is told to face the West (i.e. the world outside) and is asked repeatedly to distance himself from that world which is controlled by *“the rulers of the darkness of this age”* (Ephesians 6:12):

Priest: Do you renounce Satan, all his works, all his angels, all his services, and all his pride? (Three times)

Priest: Have you renounced Satan? (Three times)

Priest: Then blow on Satan and spit upon him!

Only then is the candidate asked:

Priest: Do you unite yourself to Christ? (Three times)

Priest: Have you united yourself to Christ?

Priest: Do you believe in Christ?

Person: Yes, I believe in Him as King and God.

The Didache and other early texts refused to minimize the difference between the new creation and the ways of a broken world: “There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between these two ways” (*Didache* 1, 1). Today many people, including some religious leaders, are trying to deny this “great difference.” They seek to accommodate those with worldly lifestyles in what they call a “welcoming church” without asking them to make a choice between this age and the new creation. They sanitize what the early Church called a way of death, using terms like “choice,” “reproductive rights,” or “bringing the Church into the modern age.” The new creation, however, requires what St John Chrysostom called “A new and heavenly rule of life” (*Homily on Galatians, 6*); otherwise it is not new at all.

“Observe the power of the Cross, to what a pitch it has raised [Paul]! Not only has it put to death for him all mundane affairs, but has set him far above the Old Dispensation.

“What can be comparable to this power? For the Cross has persuaded him, who was willing to be slain and to slay others for the sake of circumcision, to leave it on a level with uncircumcision, and to seek for things strange and marvelous and above the heavens. “

He calls this, our rule of life, a ‘new creature,’ both on account of what is past, and of what is to come. Our soul, which had grown old with the oldness of sin, was all at once renewed by baptism, as if it had been created again. Wherefore we require a new and heavenly rule of life. But the Christian life also points to things to come, because both the heaven and the earth, and all the creation, shall with our bodies be translated into incorruption.

“Do not talk to me then, he says, of circumcision, which now avails nothing; (for how shall it appear, when all things have undergone such a change?) but seek the new things of grace. For they who pursue these things shall enjoy peace and amity, and may properly be called by the name of Israel. While they who hold contrary sentiments, although they be descended from [Israel] and bear his name, have yet fallen away from all these things, both the relationship and the name itself. But it is in their power to be true Israelites, by keeping this rule: desist from the old ways, and follow after grace.” (St John Chrysostom, *Homily on Galatians 6*)

DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today **Ruth Welsh**
HS of all our Picnic workers
Sep 17 **+Habib & Miriam (39 yr.) Rahall, William & Bertha Rahall, James (JR) Rahall.**
Requested by Nick Rahall & Family

There is no Coffee Hr. today due to the Picnic

Next Sunday's Coffee Hr. is hosted by Nick Rahall & Family

Last Week's Collection

Weekly	\$ 544
Candles	\$ 7
Coffee Hr.	\$ 51
TOTAL	\$ 602



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!

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, Melissa Kalpakgian, 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.

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.

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. We will continue to accept ad until **September 15**. You can use the QR code below 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.

100th Anniversary QR Code



FAMILY PICNIC

The picnic is today from 12-6pm. Please join us for an afternoon of food, music, dancing, and fun!

It's not too late to volunteer! Please see Anthony Esper if you can help.

We will be selling 100th Anniversary t-shirts for \$15. Sizes S-XXL. Be sure to get one while they last!

The New Creation

“FOR IN CHRIST JESUS neither circumcision nor un-circumcision avails anything, but a new creation” (Galatians 6:15).

As St. Paul was fond of pointing out, he had been raised as an observant and committed Pharisee, devoted to the observance of the Law. Yet he came to believe that the Law had served its purpose: to prepare the way for the life in Christ. The Law set forth a way of life for Israel that would be pleasing to God, in contrast to the ways of the pagan nations around them. It also showed that fallen man was unable to perfectly observe this Law. It would be for Another to reveal in His life, death and resurrection the goodness and mercy of God His Father.

The Law – epitomized by its first precept, circumcision – served to divide Jews from Gentiles in the eyes of its adherents. In their view Jews, recipients of the Law, were godly; Gentiles outside the Law were impure. In Christ, St Paul insisted, that division no longer matters. Jews and Gentiles who united themselves to Christ were now one in Him, a new creation. As he wrote to the Corinthians, *“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new”* (2 Cor 15:17).

This new creation was accomplished when a person – Jew or Gentile – believed in Christ and was baptized. He was recreated as a person in communion with God through Christ and in communion with Christ’s Body, the Church. His identity was no longer based on race, ethnicity or class, but on the newness of life in Christ.

Communion, Not Separation

St Paul’s conviction that anyone could become this new creation in Christ by faith led him to see unity rather than separation as the paramount sign of holiness. As Christ has brought God and humanity together by His cross, so too He made it possible for His people to transcend any divisions of race, ethnicity or any human limitations.

As St Paul brought the Gospel to the great centers of the Roman Empire he preached Christ’s work as a *“ministry of reconciliation”* (2 Cor 5: 18) between God and all mankind. Tradesmen, military commanders, patricians and slaves all came to be united to God in Christ in one baptism to share in the one Eucharist. When, as in Corinth, new Christians assumed their distinctions of class and wealth still applied, St Paul was quick to correct them. *“Do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing?”* (1 Cor 11:22) he wrote to those who accorded preferential treatment to the well-to-do.

Communion, Not Inclusiveness

While St Paul fought to include Gentiles as well as believing Jews in the Church, he did insist on one criterion of separation: the members of the Church were to follow the Gospel way of life rather than the godless practices of the wider society. Paul quotes the Law and the prophets in favor of separating, not Jews from Gentiles but unbelievers from believers: *“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you’”* (2 Cor 6:14-18).

So even in the first century AD the Church distinguished between those who followed the Gospel way of life vs. those who followed the way of the unbelieving society in which they lived. The first-century instruction manual called *The Teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles* (The Didache) shows what the first Christians saw to be godless behavior in the wider society: “The second commandment of the Teaching is Do not murder; do not commit adultery; do not corrupt boys; do not fornicate; do not steal; do not practice magic; do not go in for sorcery; do not murder a child by abortion or kill a newborn infant. Do not covet your neighbor’s property; do not commit perjury; do not bear false witness; do not slander; do not bear grudges. Do not be double-minded or double-tongued, for a double tongue is a deadly snare. Your words shall not be dishonest or hollow, but substantiated by action. Do not be greedy or extortionate or hypocritical or malicious or arrogant. Do not plot against your neighbor. Do not hate anybody; but reprove some, pray for others, and love still others more than your own life.”

Prokimenon

Reader: O Lord, save Your people and bless Your inheritance!

People: O Lord, save Your people and bless Your inheritance!

Reader: To You, O Lord, I have called: O my Rock, be not deaf to me!

People: O Lord, save Your people and bless Your inheritance!

Reader: O Lord, save Your people

People: And bless Your inheritance!

Epistle: Gal. 6:11-18

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. 3:13-17, Sunday Before the Holy Cross

Hirmos of the Nativity of the Theotokos (Tone 8)

Mothers cannot be virgins, nor virgins mothers, and yet in you, O Mother of God, both virginity and motherhood were present and fulfilled: wherefore all the peoples of the earth proclaim you blessed.

Kinonikon

I will take the chalice of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. Alleluia.

UPCOMING LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

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!

