

NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS  
SUNDAY BEFORE THE HOLY CROSS  
SEPTEMBER 8, 2024

*Our Lady of Perpetual Help  
Melkite Catholic Church  
256 Hamilton St., Worcester*

**Middle Eastern Picnic  
September 8, 2024  
12-6pm**



**MENU**

- Chicken Shawarma*
- Kibbeh*
- Chicken Kabobs*
- Stuffed Grape Leaves*
- Tabbouli*
- Hummus*
- Pastries*
- And more ...*

**ENTERTAINMENT**

- Mitch Kaltsunas Band*
- Dancing*
- Bouncy House*
- Kids' Activities*
- And more ...*

**RAFFLES**





**Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church**

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Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM

**Antiphon (Feast)**

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

*Through the prayers of the Mother of God, O Savior, Save us!*

2: Your own offspring I will set up on your throne.

*Beshafa'ate Walidatil Eelah, ya Mukhalisu, khalisna.*

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

*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 7), Pg. 42**

You destroyed Death by your cross. You opened paradise to the thief. You changed the weeping of the myrrhbearers, and commanded your apostles to proclaim that You, O Christ God have risen, granting to the world great mercy.

**Troparion of the Nativity (4th Tone) (Twice)**

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.

**Kontakion 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!"

**The Place of Mary's Birth**

The Protoevangelium does not identify the place where Mary was born. Different local traditions claim at least two possible locations: the village of Sepphoris, a few miles from Nazareth, and the neighborhood of the "shepherd's pool" in the old city of Jerusalem. Byzantine basilicas were constructed in both places in the fifth century with the Jerusalem basilica designated as "the place where Mary was born."

Mary's birth is celebrated by most of the historic Churches on September 8 (Copts and Ethiopians observe it on May 9). The first mention of this feast is at the beginning of the sixth century when a new church, dedicated to St Ann, replaced the basilica at the Shepherds' Pool. The present Church of St Ann, constructed by Crusaders in the twelfth century, occupies this site today. A shrine in the church's crypt commemorates the conception and birth of Mary.

**Our Celebration of This Feast**

The principal theme of our feast is that "Today grace begins to bear fruit, showing forth to the world the Mother of God, through whom earth is united to Heaven for the salvation of our souls" (vespers).

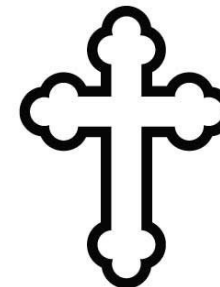
Other than the names of Mary's parents, almost none of the narrative details from the Protoevangelium find their way into the hymns of this feast. Rather the focus of our prayer is that now the mystery of our salvation in Christ is beginning to unfold. "Today the barren gates are opened and the virgin, the Gate of God, comes forth... Today ends our nature's barrenness" (Orthros). Mary will become the one through whom the ancient prophecies will be fulfilled when Christ is incarnate in her. As St Andrew of Crete (650-740) expressed it: "Today's solemnity is a line of demarcation, separating the truth from its prefigurative symbol, and ushering in the new in place of the old... This day is for us the beginning of all holy days. It is the door to kindness and truth. Today an inspired Temple is provided for the Creator of all, and creation prepares itself to become the divine dwelling place of its Creator."

Andrew's contemporary, St John of Damascus (676-749) says, "The day of the Nativity of the Theotokos is the feast of joy for the whole world, because through the Theotokos the entire human race was renewed and the grief of the first mother Eve was changed into joy."

**Hymns of Mary's Nativity**

Today, God who dominates the Spiritual Thrones of Heaven, welcomes on earth the holy throne which He had prepared for Himself. In His love for mankind, He who established the heavens in wisdom had 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!

Today glad tidings go forth to the whole world. Today sweet fragrance is wafted forth by the proclamation of salvation. Today is the end of the barrenness of our nature, for the barren one becomes a mother, the mother of the one who by nature will not cease to be a virgin, even after giving birth to the One who by nature is Creator and God. He it is who took from her His flesh by which He wrought salvation for the lost: He, the Christ, the Lover of Mankind and Savior of our souls! ( *Stichera at Vespers*)



## DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today            +**Ruth Welsh (1yr.)** Requested by her children  
                      +**Steven McNeil.** Requested by Fr. Bryan & family

There will be no Coffee Hr. today due to the Picnic

Next Sunday's Coffee Hr. will be hosted by Maria Filewicz

**Please remember in your prayers:** George Arraj,Jr., Peter Abraham, Mark Bashour, Robert Ghiz, Sadie Mirante, Charlotte Stockhaus, Richard Abraham, Sr., Frank Boyda, Carol Boyda, Bob Lynch, Joe Najemy, Michael Mooradian, Dennis Desplaines, Michael McNeil, Jeff McNeil, Billy Rahall, Dan Rahall, Lauren Abraham, Nicholas Haddad, Nicholas Halal, Elaine Foley, David Ahlin, Elio Kanaan, Susan Bailey, Jacqueline Ventriglia, those affected by the natural disasters throughout the world, the people of Gaza, and for peace in the Middle East.

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	\$ 1,450
Candles	\$ 11
Coffee Hr.	\$ 26
Flowers	\$ 20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 1,507</b>

God bless you for your generosity!  
Just a reminder that we need at least \$2,000 per week to meet our financial obligations.



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.

## ANNUAL MIDDLE EASTERN PICNIC

Our annual Middle Eastern Picnic is today from Noon to 6PM. *We still need volunteers!!*

PLEASE plan to spend a couple of hours helping out in some capacity. We need volunteers to serve food and clean up. The proceeds from the picnic provide a much needed boost in our annual revenue.

Please see *David Johnson* if you have not yet signed up to volunteer. Thank you in advance for your generosity to your parish!

**We have trays of Kibbeh for sale. \$100 for a large tray and \$50 for a small tray. Please see Joanne Kanaan (508) 868-7254 if you'd like to buy one.**

## UPCOMING LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

**Sun, Sep 8, 10AM Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos**

**Fri, Sep 13, 6PM Great Vespers for the Exultation of the Holy Cross**

**Sat, Sep 14, 10AM Divine Liturgy for the Exultation of the Holy Cross followed by procession**

## THE BARREN ONE BECOMES A MOTHER

SEPTEMBER 1 MARKS THE BEGINNING of the Byzantine Church Year. An important part of this annual cycle of feasts and fasts is the sequence of the Twelve Great Feasts which, together with the “Feast of Feasts,” Pascha, commemorates the major events in the life of Christ.

The first of the feasts in this annual cycle is observed on September 8, the Nativity of the Theotokos. Our “life of Christ,” then begins with the birth of His Mother, just as it concludes with the commemoration of her Dormition. “This day is for us the beginning of all holy days” (St Andrew of Crete) because the birth of Mary is the overture to the coming of Christ. The Church Year thereby affirms that one cannot glorify Christ apart from His Mother nor can we honor the Theotokos apart from her Son.

This connection is made clear in the troparion of the feast, which moves quickly from honoring Mary to proclaiming Christ: “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.”

### **The Source of Our Celebrations**

The Gospels do not record anything about the Holy Virgin prior to the Annunciation. The account of her birth on which our feast is based is found in the *Protoevangelium of James*, a second-century collection of “infancy narratives,” stories describing the births of Jesus and Mary. The first part – which early manuscripts call *The Story of the Birth of Saint Mary, Mother of God* – describes her nativity and her dedication to the temple, an event which we also celebrate in our Church Year (November 21).

Written in Greek, the Protoevangelium was translated into a number of languages and was known throughout the early Christian world. In the early third century, the Alexandrian scholar Origen referred to it as a dubious and recent composition, despite its claim to have been written by James, the brother of the Lord. Today it is thought that the Protoevangelium contains a mixture of apostolic traditions coming down from the first Christians along with narrative embellishments to “fill in the blanks” in the stories of the Lord and His Mother.

This desire to shed light on the hidden lives of Christ and His Mother is especially evident in another work popular in the first millennium, known as *The Book of the Nativity of Mary and the Childhood of the Savior* or the *Infancy Gospel of Matthew*. It combines the story of Mary from the Protoevangelium and apocryphal stories of Jesus from the second-century *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*.

### **The Story of Mary’s Birth**

The tradition preserved in the Protoevangelium is that Mary was the daughter of Joachim and Ann, born to them late in life. The literary embellishment in this work tells how Joachim, although a generous donor to the temple, was mocked for being childless. Recalling how Abraham had been given a child in his old age, Joachim retired to the wilderness to pray for a similar blessing. In response angels appeared to Joachim and Ann promising that their prayers have been heard and that Ann would conceive. Our feast of the Maternity of St Ann (December 9) recalls her conception of the Virgin Mary.

Then, “When her time was fulfilled, in the ninth month, Ann gave birth. And she said to the midwife: ‘What have I brought forth?’ And she said: ‘A girl’. Then Ann said: ‘My soul has been magnified this day.’ ... when the days were fulfilled, Ann was purified, and gave her breast to the child, and called her name Mary” (Protoevangelium 5).

### **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 –Sunday before the Holy Cross**

### **Alleluia**

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 feast of the Holy Cross**

### **Hirmos of the Feast**

Mothers cannot be virgins, nor virgins mothers; and yet in you, O Mother of God, both virginity and motherhood were planned and fulfilled. Wherefore all the peoples of the earth unceasingly extol you.

### **Kinonikon**

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

