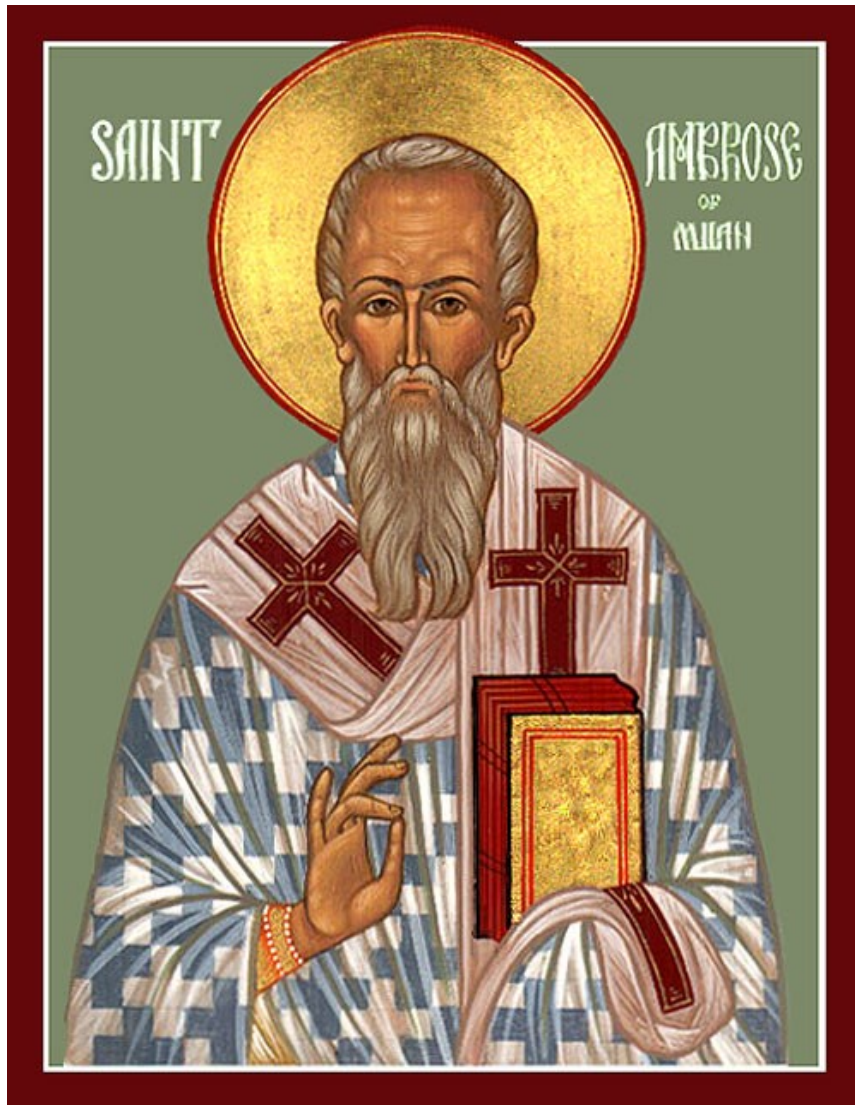


From the Divine Office for St. Ambrose of Milan (Dec. 7)

Let us all honor the glorious Hierarch Ambrose, the namesake of ambrosia, the instructor of Italy, the protector of Christ's Church, and leader of Milan, a son of his diocese, and the greatest supporter of the poor, for he intercedes with the Lord to have mercy on our souls. (Troparion)

Shining forth with godly doctrines, you drove off the darkness of the deception of Arius, O shepherd and initiate of the sacred mysteries. You worked miracles by the power of the Spirit, wisely healing various passions; O Righteous Father Ambrose, entreat Christ God to grant us great mercy. (Kontakion)



**FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER THE HOLY CROSS
DECEMBER 1, 2024**



Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church

256 Hamilton St.

Worcester, MA 01604

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Rev. Bryan McNeil, Pastor

Rev. Deacon Elias Bailey

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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 3) Pg. 39

Let all in heaven rejoice and all on earth be glad for the Lord has exerted power with His arm: By death, He has trampled upon Death and has become the firstborn from the dead. He has delivered us from the bosom of Hades and has granted to the world great mercy.

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 Preparation of the Nativity of our Lord (3rd Tone)

Today the Virgin is on her way to the cave where she will give birth to the Eternal Word of God in an ineffable manner. Rejoice, therefore, O universe, when you hear this news, and glorify with the angels and the shepherds Him who shall appear as a newborn Child, being God from all eternity.

The Fast Intensifies

As the feast draws nearer our liturgical prayer revolves around the time before the coming of Christ. Several Old Testament prophets are remembered individually, enabling us to focus on their role in preparing for the coming of the Messiah. On the two Sundays before the Nativity a general commemoration of the Israelites who came before Christ and a memorial of the actual ancestors of Christ are observed. During the fore-feast of the Nativity, the five days before the actual celebration, our liturgical hymns direct our attention to the mystery of the incarnation.

Unfortunately the Nativity Fast competes for our attention with the secular season of shopping, Christmas parties and gift exchanges. People seeking to observe the season as Eastern Christians might do well to view the question in light of the adage, “Enjoy the roses, but beware the thorns.” Employ the positive aspects of this season in our culture while avoiding the ones which endanger our Eastern Christian spiritual life.

“Enjoy the Roses” might include singing Christmas carols or watching faith-based films instead of our usual entertainment. Religious Christmas cards and decorations are still acceptable in our society and provide us with a chance to enter into the season in the spirit of the Nativity Fast. Perhaps most importantly, our secular society provides us with many opportunities for sharing with the needy during this season. Participating in such programs enables us to practice almsgiving in solidarity with our neighbors of other faiths.

“Beware the Thorns” takes us to the matter of Christmas parties. In some places these gatherings more resemble New Year’s Eve or a tailgate party than a Christmas celebration. Eastern Christians would do well to completely avoid participating in this kind of activity. If pressured to take part, especially in the workplace, an Eastern Christian may take the opportunity to explain that this is a fasting season for us and that it would be inappropriate for you to participate. Let them feel guilty for asking!

You may decide to attend a Christmas party which avoids excesses, particularly in the workplace, while still maintaining the fast. We can usually enjoy the conviviality while avoiding those foods from which we are fasting.

In any case Eastern Christian church groups should be expected to delay their own Christmas parties to the week after Christmas, when the fast is over and the Church is still celebrating Christ’s Nativity.

Most parishes have a children’s Christmas celebration which includes gift-giving. As a rule it is St Nicholas rather than Santa who presides at these events in Eastern churches. Still, there are few if any Eastern Christian parishes in the West whose children need to receive gifts from the church. The best gift a parish could give its children might be teaching them to give instead of receive. Children might be asked to give a gift to St Nicholas instead of expecting to receive one. The toys and games our children no longer enjoy can be re-gifted to the disadvantaged in hospitals, shelters or parishes in poorer neighborhoods. In this way we teach our children to be “Santa’s Helpers” rather than the victims of materialism disguised as the Christmas spirit.

Let us honor the first Adam who was honored by the hand of the Creator, and who is the forefather of us all and who rests with all the elect in the mansions of heaven.

The Lord and God of all accepted the gifts of Abel, who offered them with a most noble soul; and when he was slain by his brother’s murderous hand, He received his soul into light as that of a divine martyr. Let us hearken to the divine sayings which declare the appearance of Christ; for, lo! He is born in a cave, of a Maiden who knew not man; for the star which appeared to the astrologers proclaims His awesome nativity.

Canon of the Forefathers, Ode 1

DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today +Antonio Solitro (40 Day). Requested by Karen Solitro & Family

This morning's Coffee Hr. is hosted by Karen Solitro & Family

Next Sunday's Coffee Hr. will be hosted by

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, Thomas Houde, Michael McNeil, Jeff McNeil, Jeannine McNeil, Linda Gartner, Billy Rahall, Dan Rahall, Lauren Abraham, Nicholas Haddad, Nicholas Halal, Elaine Foley, David Ahlin, Elio Kanaan, Susan Bailey, Jacqueline Ventriglia, Thomas Houde, those affected by the natural disasters throughout the world, the people of Gaza, and for peace in Ukraine & 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	\$
Candles	\$
Coffee Hr.	\$
Xmas Flowers	\$
Memorials	\$
Xmas Donations	\$
Stole	\$
TOTAL	\$

FINANCIALS

<u>10.2024</u>		<u>YTD (10.2024-10.2024)</u>	
Income	\$7,856	Income	\$7,856
Expenses	-\$9,373	Expenses	-\$9,373
Net	-\$1,517	Net	-\$1,517

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.

BISHOP'S APPEAL UPDATE

We need light to see. Jesus is the Giver of true Light and Life. In His light we properly see and know man, God, the world, ourselves and relationships. His word gives the correct light and perspective to see reality as it is. In today's Gospel, who was truly blind? The "blind" man calling out to Jesus to see correctly, or those who tried to hush him up. In what "light" do we see life? The Bishop's Appeal tries to give a proper perspective, "sight", to our parishes, our Eparchy and to us as parishioners.

Our parish has raised \$3,600.14 and our goal is \$8,000. Appeal envelopes and reply cards are available in our parish. Thank you for your continued generosity to our parish and to the Diocese of Newton. You may also donate online at: melkite.org/appeal or scan the QR code below:



ST. NICHOLAS POTLUCK

We will have our St. Nicholas potluck next Sunday December 8 after the Divine Liturgy. Please bring a dish to share with the community!

THE VIRGIN HAS CONCEIVED

WITH THE FIRST SCENT of cooler weather in the air, merchants begin marketing potential Christmas gifts. As the holiday nears, the shopping frenzy intensifies with music, parties and decorations all telling us “Hurry up and buy something.” Our Church, on the other hand, tells us that it’s time for renewed fasting and almsgiving.

Gift-giving as we know it became popular in the 1860s and grew as mechanical and, later, electrical goods came on the market and Santa began appearing in ads and in stores. For most Americans, handmade goods such as pastries, canned preserves or hand-carved toys were the most common gifts until World War II. With the return to prosperity after the war, people set their sights on more expensive gifts. Today the average American is expected to spend between \$700 and \$800 on Christmas gifts this year.

Anti-Consumerist Protests

Even as the marketing and the spending grew voices were heard denouncing the Christmas shopping experience as an exercise in wasteful consumerism. Environmentalists deplored the focus on acquiring more and more useless “toys.” Christians lamented the practice as fostering materialism rather than celebrating Christ’s birth.

While many people complain about the financial and emotional stresses of Christmas shopping, some people do something about it. Some parents have decided to give only one store-bought toy per child and to focus on shared activities instead. Well-planned Christmas outings with the family provide memories that will last a lifetime, long after plastic toys are forgotten. Others have revived the tradition of homemade gifts. They report that making a gift for and with your child provides an unforgettable and rewarding experience for both parent and offspring. Internet sites are filled with more suggestions for frugal and creative gift ideas than ever.

Our Secret Weapon: the Nativity Fast

Eastern Christians seeking to escape the commerce-driven “spirit of Christmas” have a formidable ally in the Nativity Fast. While the length of the fast varies in the different Churches, the spirit behind it is the same. We best prepare for a Christian festival by intensifying our practice of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. We seek to deepen within ourselves the spirit of repentance which these practices foster. We are, as it were, heeding the message of St John the Baptist – “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” – as we anticipate the coming feast as a manifestation of that kingdom.

At first our prayer life during the Nativity Fast does not revolve around the Nativity itself. While some churches serve akathists or a pre-Nativity paraklisis service, the focus of prayer in Byzantine Churches during much of this Fast is simply to deepen our relationship with the living Lord, the basic prayer life of Christians at any time. Our fasting seasons are fundamentally “excuses” giving us a reason to observe a fuller Christian life than we might live otherwise.

In the same way our fasting and almsgiving are not focused on Christmas as much as they are the basic practices of believers at any time. We intensify them at this time because a heart focused on the ways of Christ in the best preparation for celebrating His coming into the world.

Prokimenon

Reader: Sing praise to our God, sing praise! Sing praise to our King, sing praise!

People: Sing praise to our God, sing praise! Sing praise to our King, sing praise!

Reader: All you peoples, clap your hands! Shout to God with cries of gladness!

People: Sing praise to our God, sing praise! Sing praise to our King, sing praise!

Reader: Sing praise to our God, sing praise!

People: Sing praise to our King, sing praise!

Epistle: Col 1:12-18

Alleluia

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High abides in the shadow of the God of heaven.

Verse: He will say to the Lord, “My wall, my refuge my God in whom I will trust!”

Gospel: Lk 18: 35-43

PARISH COUNCIL

We will have a Parish Council meeting on Tuesday December 3 at 6:30pm.

