



St. Elias Melkite Catholic Church

Serving San Jose Valley & Bay Area, CA

Church Information

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Pastor

Rev. Sebastian Carnazzo
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Sunday Service Time

Divine Liturgy: 11:00 am

Confession Times

Wednesdays: 5:30-6:30 pm
Sundays: Before Divine Liturgy

THIS WEEK

Wednesday, August 31st

Bible Study @ 7:00pm
(Online and in Church Hall)

Coffee Socials and Qurban

This Sunday, August 28th

Qurban: Holly Handal
Coffee Social: Nabil Matta

Next Sunday, September 4th

Qurban: Marie Elhage
Coffee Social: Marie Elhage

Please pray for:

The Orthodox Servants of God

Fr. Daniel Lenz and Family
Charlie, Alice & Natalia Carnazzo
Rosemary Hashimoto
Ann, Gabriel, & Louis Carnazzo
Abraham, Robert &
William Connelly
Sandra Carnazzo
Anastasia Kalil

The Orthodox Servants Asleep in the Lord

Ernest & Marion Young
Robert & Alice Robertson

If you have names you would like added to the list of commemorations, please send to steliasmelkite@gmail.com

Sunday, August 28th 2016

15th Sunday After Pentecost – The Great Commandment

Troparion of the Resurrection (6th Tone)

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!

نشيد القيامة بالحن السادس

إن القوات الملائكية ظهرت على قبرك، والحراس صاروا كالأموات، ومريم وقفت عند القبر، طالبة جسدك الطاهر. فسلبت الجحيم ولم تنلك بأذى، ولاقيت البتول وأهبا الحياة. فيا من قام من بين الأموات، يا رب المجد لك.

Epistle 2 Corinthians 4:6-15

BRETHREN, God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts, to give enlightenment concerning the knowledge of God's glory, shining in Christ Jesus' face. But we carry this treasure in vessels of clay, to show that its superabundant power is God's, and not ours. In all things we suffer tribulation but we are not distressed, we are sorely pressed but we are not destitute, we endure persecution but we are not forsaken, we are cast down but we do not perish: always carrying around in our body the dying of Jesus, so that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodily frame. For we, the living, are constantly being handed over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh. Thus death is at work in us, but life in you. But since we have the same spirit of faith, as shown in that which is written, *I believed, and so I spoke*, (Ps. 115:1) we also believed, wherefore we also speak. For we know that the One Who raised up the Lord Jesus will raise us up also together with Jesus, and will place us with you. For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace that abounds through the many may cause thanksgiving to abound for God's glory.

Gospel Matthew 22: 35-46 (The Greatest Commandment)

AT that time one of the doctors of the Law, putting Jesus to the test, asked him, "Master, which is the great commandment in the Law?" Jesus said to him, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus questioned them, saying, "What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "David's." He said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call him Lord, saying, 'The Lord said to my Lord: Sit thou at my right hand till I make thy enemies thy footstool?' If David, therefore, calls him Lord, how is he his son?" And no one could answer him a word; neither did anyone dare from that day forth to ask him any more questions.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wednesday Bible Study- August 31st @ 7:00 pm

Join us this Wednesday for our weekly Bible Study. **The Bible Study will be held in the Church Hall, with an option to log in online.** See the Bible Study Tab at steliasmelkite.org for information on how to login. Please note: Fr. Sebastian will be hearing confessions in the Church from 5:30-6:30pm.

Saints of the Day: St. Moses the Abyssinian & St. Augustine of Hippo {Credit: OCA.org & Book of the Menaion}

● Saint Moses lived in Egypt during the fourth century. Moses the brigand spent several years leading a sinful life, but through the great mercy of God he repented, left his band of robbers and went to one of the desert monasteries. After many years of monastic exploits, St Moses was ordained deacon, then later to the priesthood. St Moses labored for fifteen years in this rank, and gathered 75 disciples around himself. When the saint reached the age of 75, he warned his monks that brigands would descend upon the skete and murder all who remained there. The robbers killed St Moses and the six monks who remained with him. Their death occurred about the year 400.

● Augustine, born on November 13th, 354 in Tagaste of North Africa, acquired great knowledge and taught in the schools of Carthage, Rome, and Milan. He encountered there Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, who enlightened his mind by his teachings and the holiness of his life. After many years of sin and spiritual failures, Augustine returned to sanctity of life in 386. With humility and compunction, he described the errors of his youth in his "Confessions." Ordained a priest in 391, he became Bishop of Hippo in 396. For twenty-four years, he was a perfect example of the good shepherd, zealous teacher and holy apostle. He died on August 28, 430 while the Vandals were besieging the city of Rome. St. Augustine, a Father of the Church, is one of the most influential teachers of theology and philosophy in the Latin Church.

FROM THE DIOCESE OF NEWTON: THE 15TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST "THE FORERUNNER IN HADES"

THE GOSPELS DEPICT St John the Baptist as the "forerunner" or herald announcing the immanent coming of God's saving work in Jesus Christ. In the Gospel of Mark, for example, we read, "*There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit*" (Mk 1:7, 8).

The coming of the Messiah was the focus of John's message about the kingdom of God. "*In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'*" (Mt 3:1). This "kingdom" is none other than Jesus in whom the will of His Father governed His every action. Thus He is the kingdom personified.

The Story of John's Struggle

We read the story of John's final fight "for the sake of truth" in Mark's Gospel. "*For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her. Because John had said to Herod, 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife'*" (Mk 6:17, 18).

John languished in prison because Herod had a superstitious fear of the prophet. He revered John as a holy man but could not bring himself to follow the Baptist's teachings.

"Then an opportune day came when Herod on his birthday gave a feast for his nobles, the high officers, and the chief men of Galilee. And when Herodias' daughter herself came in and danced, and pleased Herod and those who sat with him, the king said to the girl, 'Ask me whatever you want, and I will give it to you.' He also swore to her, 'Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half my kingdom'" (Mk 6:21-23).

What followed has been frequently retold in literature, music, painting and sculpture. Prompted by her mother, Salome asks for the head of John: "*I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter*" (v. 25). Because of the oath he had sworn in the presence of his guests, Herod agreed and had John beheaded, making possible the prophet's ministry in Hades.

John's work as herald of our salvation was not limited to announcing the beginning of Christ's ministry in Galilee. Our troparion for today's commemoration mentions that John baptized the Lord Jesus. Then, it continues, "You have fought for the sake of truth and proclaimed to those in Hades that God who appeared in the flesh has taken away the sins of the world and bestowed His great mercy upon us." John's ministry continued after death as he announced to the dead in Hades that Christ's coming was close at hand.

Did John Witness in Hades?

As the Gospel s affirm, Jesus was still alive when John was executed. But the New Testament does not teach that John witnessed to Christ in Hades. How and when did this concept enter our tradition?

Origen of Alexandria, foremost commentator on the Scriptures in the third century, explained that John the Baptist had died before Christ, "so that he might descend to the lower regions and announce His coming. For everywhere the witness and forerunner of Jesus is John, being born before and dying shortly before the Son of God, so that not only to those of his generation but likewise to those who lived before Christ should liberation from the death be preached, and that he might everywhere prepare a people trained to receive the Lord" (Origen, *Homily on Luke 4*).

Those in Hades would "receive the Lord" upon His death as we read in the New Testament: "*Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit; in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly did not obey..."* (1 Pt 3:18, 19). A number of the Apostolic Fathers such as Saints Polycarp of Smyrna, Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus of Lyons, and Clement of Alexandria all taught that Christ had descended into Hades. We find the same teaching in the Syriac Fathers Jacob of Sarouj, Aphrahat the Persian and Ephrem the Syrian as well as the Greek Fathers Athanasius the Great, Basil the Great, Gregory Nazianzen, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Maximus the Confessor and John of Damascus.

Our most common icon of the Resurrection depicts Christ emerging from Hades leading out by the hand Adam and Eve (and, by implication, the human race). In many icons John the Forerunner is beside Him, at the head of those who had died before Christ and were now brought to eternal life by Him.

Our Observance of John's Death

Because John, whom the Lord Himself had called the greatest man born of woman, was killed as a result of Herod's birthday revels, the Byzantine Churches observe today as a strict fast: no parties, no luxury foods, no drink. We see where these things can lead.

A number of popular local customs have arisen to mark this day among various Eastern Christians. In various places people may:

- Avoid eating anything on round plates, since Salome asked for John's head "on a platter" (Mk 6:25). Use bowls instead.
- Avoid eating any round fruits or vegetables (they resemble a head).
- Avoid eating anything that requires use of knives or anything that cuts.
- Avoid eating or drinking anything red (they remind us of blood).

A contemporary way to observe this commemoration might be to fast and pray for those who have died senselessly at the hands of others through terrorism, armed conflicts or senseless violence. Think of them as John's "companions in suffering."

John's Witness in Our Liturgy

Come, you people, let us praise the prophet and martyr, the baptizer of the Savior; for, as an angel in the flesh, he denounced Herod, condemning him for committing most iniquitous fornication. And thanks to iniquitous dancing, his precious head is cut off, that he might announce in Hades the glad tidings of the resurrection from the dead. He prays earnestly to the Lord, that our souls be saved.

Let us celebrate the memory of the severed head of the forerunner, which poured forth blood upon the platter then, but now pours forth healings upon the ends of the earth.

Liti Stichera

The beheading of the Forerunner was an act of divine providence: the occasion for him to announce the coming of the Savior to the souls in Hades. Let then Herodias lament and weep, for she has asked for murder, preferring the present life and its pleasures to eternal life and God's law.

Kondakion