



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, December 14th

Bible Study @ 7:00pm

Coffee Socials and Qurban

This Sunday, December 11th

Qurban: The Higareda Family
Coffee Social: The Higareda Family

Next Sunday, December 18th

Qurban: Linda Kaldani
Coffee Social: Isaac Kaldani

Please pray for:

The Orthodox Servants of God

Archimandrite Charles Aboody
Archimandrite Joseph Francavilla
Deacon Theophan Leonarczyk
The Kaldani Family
Christian Rosario
Daniel and Katie Genn
Antonio Handal
Leslie Griffin

The Orthodox Servants Asleep in the Lord in the Hope of the Resurrection

Wilbur Smith
Vanda Kaldani
Siham Hanna

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

Sunday, December 11, 2016

Sunday of the Forefathers

Commemoration of our Holy Father Daniel the Stylite

Troparion of the Resurrection (5th Tone)

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.

نشيد القيامة باللحن الخامس
لننشد نحن المؤمنين ونسجد للكلمة، الأزلي مع الأب والروح، المولود من العذراء لخلصنا. لأنه ارتضى أن يصعد بالجسد
على الصليب، ويحتمل الموت، وينهض الموتى بقيامته المجيدة.

Epistle: Colossians 3:4-11

Brethren, when Christ, our life, appears, then you too shall appear in glory. Put to death
whatever in your members is of the earth: immorality, uncleanness, lust, evil desire,
covetousness, which is a form of idol-worship. Because of these passions, God's wrath comes
upon the sons of disobedience and you yourselves once walked in them when they were your
(way of) life. But now, you too put them all away; anger, wrath, malice, abusive language and
foul-mouthed utterances. Do not lie to one another. Strip off the old man with his deeds and
put on the new one that is being renewed toward perfect knowledge *according to his creator's*
image (Cf. Gn. 1:26). Here there is no Gentile and Jew, no circumcised and uncircumcised, no
Barbarian and Scythian, no slave and freeman, but Christ is all things, and in all.

Gospel: Luke 14:16-24

The Lord told this parable, "A certain man gave a great supper, and he invited many. And he
sent his servant at supper time to tell those invited to come, for everything is now ready. And
they all with one accord began to excuse themselves. The first said to him, 'I have bought a
farm, and I must go out and see it; I pray you hold me excused.' And another said, 'I have
bought five yoke of oxen, and I am on my way to try them; I pray you hold me excused.' And
another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' And the servant returned,
and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said
to his servant. 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor,
and the crippled, and the lame, and the blind.' And the servant said, 'Sir, your order has been
carried out, and still there is room.' Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the
highways and hedges, and make them come in, so that my house may be filled. For I tell you
that none of those who were invited shall taste of my supper.' For many are called but few are
chosen."

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BISHOP'S APPEAL

As we travel with the Virgin to Bethlehem where she will give birth to the greatest gift in
human history—the Gift of God's Only-Begotten Son—let us not forget our Melkite Catholic
Church by which Christ comes to our families and loved ones. **Please give an end-of-year, tax-
deductible gift to the Melkite Church** in America and help our Church in countless ways. Help
produce *SOPHIA* magazine, assist in the faith education of our young people, support the
training of new priests and deacons, and expand our missions and start new ones. Please give
generously so these vital works can continue and grow. God bless you for your generosity.

REMEMBER THE MELKITE CHURCH IN YOUR WILL: Give a lasting gift for future generations of
Melkites and help to ensure that our beautiful Melkite heritage continues to grow and flourish
for your children's children. Simply add the following statement to your last will and
testament: ***I hereby bequeath to the Melkite Eparchy of Newton the following sum:***
\$_____. Contact Bishop Nicholas personally to inform him of your generous bequest: 3 VFW
Parkway, West Roxbury, MA 02132.

Saint of the Day: Our Holy Father Daniel the Stylite

Daniel, born in the year 409 in the upper Euphrates valley, entered the monastic life in his early youth. He visited Simeon the Stylite who encouraged him to be more completely detached. In 451, he retired to an abandoned pagan temple near Constantinople. From 460 until his death on December 11, 493, he lived the life of a recluse in a tower. Patriarch Gennadius (458-471) had ordained him to the priesthood. The fame of his holiness had spread to distant lands: even the Emperor sought his advice and his prayers.

Troparion of Daniel the Stylite

"O Blessed Daniel, you have become a perfect example of patience, for you have emulated two great Patriarchs: Job in his tribulations and Joseph in his trials; and even while in the flesh, you resembled the angels of heaven. O our Father Daniel, intercede with Christ God that He may save our souls!"

FROM THE DIOCESE: SUNDAY OF THE FOREFATHERS: "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 paraclysis 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 is the best preparation for celebrating His coming into the world.

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 offer up a hymn to the fathers who shone forth before the Law and under the Law, and who, by their upright will, were pleasing to the Lord and Master Who shone forth from the Virgin, for they now delight in the unfading light.

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*