



St. Elias Melkite Church

Serving San Jose & South Bay Area, CA

14263 Mulberry Dr., Los Gatos, CA 95032

steliasmelkite.org • (408) 785-1212 • steliasmelkite@gmail.com

Divine Liturgy

Sundays: 11am

Feastdays: See web Calendar

Confession Times

Wednesdays: 5-6 pm

Sundays: 10-11 am

Bible Study

Wednesdays: 6-7pm

Sunday School: After liturgy

Contact the Pastor

Rev. Sebastian Carnazzo

Phone: (831) 229-8350

SebastianCarnazzo@gmail.com

Qurban and Socials

This Sunday, 2/19

Qurban: Gamouney

Social: Farah

Next Sunday, 2/26

Qurban: Higareda

Social: Higareda

Pray for the Servants of God

Nadia Farah

Gamouney Family

Misha McKinney

Andrew Gomes

Gladys Farah

Asleep in the Lord

Iyad Naffa

Sunday, February 19, 2017: Meat Fare – The Last Judgment

HYMNS

Troparion of the Resurrection (7th tone): 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, have risen O Christ God, * granting to the world great mercy.

Kondakion of Meat Fare (1st Tone): O God, when You shall come down upon earth in your glory, every creature shall tremble before You. A river of fire shall flow before your judgment-seat, the books shall be opened and all secrets revealed. On that day, O Just Judge, deliver me from eternal fire and make me worthy to stand at your right!

READINGS

1Cor 8:8-13 & 9:1-2 Brethren, food does not commend us to God. For neither shall we gain any advantage if we eat, nor suffer any loss if we do not. And yet, beware lest perhaps this right of yours become a stumbling-block to the weak. For if a man sees you who “have knowledge” sitting at table in a place dedicated to idols, will not his conscience, weak as it is, be emboldened to eat idol offerings? And through your “knowledge” the weak one will perish, the brother for whom Christ died. Now, when you sin in this way against the brethren and wound their weak conscience, you are sinning against Christ. Therefore if food scandalizes my brother, I will never again eat any more meat so as not to scandalize my brother....

Matthew 25, 31-46 The Lord said, “At that time when the Son of Man shall come in his majesty, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory; and before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and he will set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the king will say to those on his right hand, Come, blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; naked and you covered me; sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me.’ ‘Amen I say to you, every time you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for me.’ Then he will say to those on his left hand, ‘Go away from me, accursed ones, into the everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his ministers. For I was hungry, and you did not give me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take me in; naked and you did not clothe me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit me.’ ... ‘Amen I say to you as long as you did not do it for one of these least ones, you did not do it for me.’ And these will go into everlasting punishment, but the just into everlasting life.”

Commemorations: The Holy Apostle Archippus was a disciple of the Apostle Paul and son of Philemon to whom Paul wrote concerning the slave Onesimus. He was martyred at Colossae.

Announcements

Bishop’s Visit: 3/11-12 Mark your calendar. Plan to attend the Liturgy and Social

FOR THE THIRD WEEK IN A ROW the Church, through its selection of the Scriptures read at the Divine Liturgy, warns us against a false subjectivism or individualism in the coming Fast. First, in the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee, we were warned to avoid self-righteous judging of others. In the story of the Prodigal Son we were confronted by the elder brother, whose faithfulness to his father was marred by his refusal to imitate the father's forgiving heart. Today we are faced with an attitude which, although the opposite in spirit to the view of the elder brother, has the same effect: casting a pall over others' attempts at repentance.

Avoiding Meat in St Paul's Day: The specific issue which St Paul confronted in his Epistles to the Corinthians concerned the meals connected to pagan sacrifices. In most ancient religions foods, particularly meats, were offered in sacrifice to the gods and goddesses being honored. Consuming the sacrifice was an important part of the ritual and people would invite their relatives and friends to these meals, particularly when a large animal had been sacrificed. St Paul's converts might have been frequent guests at such meals before their baptism. Strictly speaking, sharing in such a meal might be a sign that the participants believed in these pagan gods, which would have been unthinkable for a Christian. In Acts 15 we read how the apostles explicitly determined that Gentile converts to Christ were to "*abstain from things polluted by idols*" (v. 20). For the first Christians, eating sacrificed meat at an idol feast was equivalent to practicing idolatry and therefore could never be condoned. St Paul went further and declared, "*... the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons*" (1 Cor 8:20). There were new Christians who would have believed that idols were real okay for Christians to worship if they saw their more mature fellows eating foods from pagan sacrifices. Care for the brethren was more important than displaying one's knowledge that sacrificial meat was nothing. And so St Paul affirmed, "*If food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble*" (1 Cor 8:13).

Avoiding Meat in Our Day: We may never be offered food that has been sacrificed to idols. Nonetheless the Church reads this passage to us as we prepare to avoid meat and other foods for a different reason. During the Great Fast Byzantine Christians are presented with an entire range of foods to be avoided: meat (including fish) and animal products, such as eggs and dairy, as well as wine and, in some traditions, oil as well. We do not abstain from these foods because there is anything wrong with eating them, as some contemporary vegans believe. Our Church fasts from these foods, particularly at this time, because we are limiting our diet to the "food of the Garden," the foods of the earth provided at the creation, according to Gen 1. In that Biblical book the consumption of animal products and wine are described as arising later in human history. When we fast, we eat only the food of Paradise as a sign that we wish to recover our original union with God symbolized by the Garden of Eden.

In our Tradition there is room for customizing the practice of fasting for each believer, under the guidance of his spiritual father. According to her physical strength and spiritual growth, a person may be able to fast from all foods until noon; another may be able and led to fast until evening. The individual believer who does not have a spiritual father should follow the guidelines of their own eparchy without adapting them to personal taste. People who envision a one-size-fits-all rule of fasting may be put off by seeing someone fast differently from them. This brings us back to the principle which St Paul taught the Corinthians: "*If food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble*" (1 Cor 8:13). Our fasting should be informed by love. This may mean fasting the way my neighbor is fasting when in his company, whether this is more or less than my own rule prescribes. Needless to say, we should not seek out such circumstances which would lessen our practice of fasting with that end in mind.

Sad to say, our fasting and other religious practices often mask our inner feelings of self-righteousness and superiority. St Paul would probably endorse these words of Metropolitan Athanasios of Limassol in Cyprus (the "Father Maximos" of *The Mountain of Silence* and its sequels): "How is it possible to pray and still be full of bile against another person? How is it possible for you to read the Gospel and not accept your brother? ... What's the point if I eat oil today and don't eat oil tomorrow? Though I may not eat oil, I still eat my brother day and night! They would say on Mount Athos not to ask whether someone eats fish. Eat the fish, but don't eat the fisherman. Have a tablespoon of oil, but don't eat the man who draws oil. To eat one another with your tongue is much worse than eating a tablespoon of oil" (from *Therapy from the Sickness of Pharisaism*). Fasting, like feasting, should be a communal celebration of the love of God.

O brethren, let us cleanse ourselves with the Queen of virtues. She has arrived, bringing us a wealth of blessings, quenching the rebellious fire of the passions and reconciling sinners to the Master. Let us welcome her joyfully, therefore, and cry aloud to Christ our God: "You are risen from the dead! Keep us uncondemned as we glorify You who alone are without sin!" Meatfare Sunday evening vespers