



St. Elias Melkite Church

Serving San Jose & South Bay Area, CA

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Divine Liturgy

Sundays: 11am

Feastdays: See website Calendar

Confession Times

Wednesdays: 5-6 pm

Sundays: 10-11 am

Vespers, Bible Study, and Social

Wednesdays: 6pm

Presanctified Liturgy

Fridays: 7:30pm w/St. Basil Com.

Sunday School: After liturgy

Contact the Pastor

Rev. Sebastian Carnazzo

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Qurban and Socials

- This Sunday, 2/26
Qurban: Higareda
Social: Higareda
- Next Sunday, 3/5
Qurban: Kaldani
Social: Kaldani

Pray for Servants of God

The priest Paul Leonarczyk

Higareda Family

Judy Sramcik

William Connelly

Ibtissam Ishaq

Anthony Thomas

Areej Zakher

Joseph Le

Holly Handal

Kayla Handal

Nick McAlpine

Paul Luetchford

Christians in the Middle-East

Asleep in the Lord

Gladys Farah

Michael Novak

Sunday, February 26, 2017: Cheese Fare – Forgiveness Sunday

PRAYER

O Creator of the Universe, You fashioned Adam from the dust of the earth. You infused him with a breath of life. You gave him dominion over the earth. By the enticement of the Serpent he rebelled against Your Commandments and fell. You therefore exiled him from Paradise. But your Only-begotten Son was incarnate, endured Passion and restored us to the Garden of Eden which we had lost. We therefore implore You, at the threshold of Holy and Great Lent, to make us worthy of a sincere repentance, so that we may avoid even the shadow of evil and abstain from carnal pleasure in order to gain You, Divine River of Paradise that quenches the thirst of our souls. Thus, having lived according to your commandments, we may share the glory of the Resurrection of Christ, our God and Savior. For You are long-suffering, most compassionate and You call all people to salvation; and to You we render glory, honor and worship, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and always and forever and ever.

HYMNS

Troparion of the Resurrection (8th tone): You descended from on high O compassionate One; and consented to burial for three days that You might free us from suffering. O Lord, our life and our resurrection, * glory to You.!

Kondakion of Cheese-fare, (6th Tone): O You who guide men toward wisdom, and give them intelligence and understanding, instructor of the ignorant and helper of the poor, strengthen and enlighten my heart, O Lord, give me word, O Word of the Father, for behold I will not refrain my lips from crying out to You: O merciful One, have mercy on me who have fallen.

READINGS

Romans 13:11-14:4 Brethren, now our salvation is nearer than when we came to believe. The night is far advanced: the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light. Let us walk becomingly as in daytime, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in debauchery and wantonness, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and as for the flesh, pay no attention to its lusts. But whoever is weak in faith, receive him without arguing about opinion. For one believes he may eat all things but another who is weak, let him eat vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who does not; and let not the one who does not eat judge the one who does, for God has received him. Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls but he will stand, for God is able to make him stand.

Matthew 6:14-21 The Lord said, "If you forgive men their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their offenses, neither will your Father forgive you your offenses. And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, who disfigure their faces in order to appear to men as fasting. Amen I say to you they have had their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not be seen by men to fast, but by your Father, who is in secret; and your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where worm and rodent consume, and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither worm nor rodent consumes, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there also will be your heart."

COMMEMORATIONS

Porphyrios, bishop of Gaza, born in Thessalonica of a rich and noble family, embraced the monastic life in Egypt, then Palestine. He preached in Jerusalem and was ordained priest by bishop John in the year 392. When John had become Metropolitan of Caesarea of Palestine, he consecrated Porphyrios bishop of Gaza. He became a model of the perfect bishop and pastor, and died on February 26, 420.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Berkeley Outreach: Saturday, March 11th, at 5pm. Please come support this great endeavor!
Bishop's Visit: March 10th-12th. Mark your calendar and plan to attend the Liturgies and Socials. More details to follow.

TOMORROW IS THE FIRST DAY of the Great Fast. As a reminder we hear once more these words of St Paul: *"You know what hour it is, how it is full time now for you to wake from sleep"* (Rom 13:11). Each year the Church calls to four fasting periods – four wake-up calls to focus more intently on the spiritual life in connection with one of its most important feasts. Since the Great Fast prepares us for Pascha, the "Feast of Feasts," it is naturally more intense than the other fasting periods. Accordingly the Church sees St Paul's admonition as especially appropriate today. How do we observe this Fast? Again we take our cue from St Paul: *"Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ"* (Rom 13:12-14). In calling the people of his time to take up the challenges of the Gospel the apostle also gives us an outline of how to keep the Fast that is upon us. We are first of all to cast off the Works of Darkness, specifically the two examples which St Paul mentions.

Not in Reveling and Drunkenness: Abstaining from entertainment is the first of St Paul's examples which has become part of the Church's Lenten fast. There is a hold on Church parties and celebrations (including marriages) for these forty days. Instead many parishes hold Lenten Dinners with proceeds devoted to charity. In second-millennium Europe it was customary that theaters and all places of entertainment would be shuttered during the Fast. Religious plays and music on Biblical themes would be offered instead. Perhaps the most famous composition of this type, Handel's *Messiah*, was premiered at a charity concert in Holy Week, April 1742. In the past entertainment was, for most people, a relatively rare respite from work. Today it often seems that work is a respite from entertainment, which is available to us day and night at the click of a button. Many people cannot imagine doing without their TV or computer for forty days. Are we called to fast from these devices at least for part of the time during the Fast? Abstinence from rich food and drink is the signature exercise of spiritual discipline during this period. The specific way this activity is practiced varies from eparchy to eparchy and even from individual to individual. These general principles are universal: **Fasting**, the abstinence from all food and drink, is observed prior to receiving the Eucharist and on every weekday (Monday through Friday) during the Great Fast.

Abstinence is the avoidance of specific foods. During the Great Fast abstinence from "meat" (i.e. all animal products, including poultry, fish, eggs, dairy) as well as wine and, in some traditions, oil is practiced daily for the forty days in most Eastern Churches. This is also the root of the Western practice of "giving up something for Lent." The Fast is a time for simplifying our physical life, but should it be seen as a time of "giving-up"? The Prodigal did not feel that he was giving something up when he set out for his father because he saw the reality of the life he was living. If we see fasting as "giving-up," we may have forgotten the first lesson we learned in Sunday school: that the real aim of our life is communion with God.

Not in Quarreling and Jealousy: As long as there has been a Great Fast there have been voices warning against misusing the experience. When we simply equate food fasting as the purpose of the season, St John Chrysostom tells us, we belittle the very season we seek to observe: "Let the mouth fast from disgraceful and abusive words, because, what gain is there when, on the one hand we avoid eating chicken and fish and, on the other, we chew-up and consume our brothers? He who condemns and blasphemes is as if he has eaten brotherly meat, as if he has bitten into the flesh of his fellow man. It is because of this that Paul frightened us, saying: 'If you chew up and consume one another be careful that you do not annihilate yourselves ... "You did not thrust your teeth into the flesh (of your neighbor) but you thrust bad talk in his soul; you wounded it by spreading dishonor, causing inestimable damage both to yourself, to him, and to many others.'" The Prayer of St Ephrem the Syrian ("O Lord and Master of my life..."), which we recite so often during this season, leads us to see the purpose of the season as the acquisition of virtue, particularly in relation to others. We pray to avoid sloth, ambition, inquisitiveness, and vain talking as well the habit of judging others. We ask that we attain patience, love, and humility – virtues that define our relations with others as being in Christ. Another Lenten experience which seeks to put relationships at the center of our focus during the Fast is the rite of forgiveness held at the end of vespers or the Liturgy on this day. We are enjoined to ask forgiveness and prayers from every other person in the community. In some Churches it is the custom to sing the Paschalia during this rite, pointing toward the kiss we will exchange with everyone in the joy of Christ's resurrection.

Put On the Lord Jesus Christ: St Paul's admonition – and the spirit of the Great Fast – does not exalt deprivation, or giving something up for its own sake. Both see abstinence as a way of making room for something greater: living a life of Christian love. Again, Paul is echoed by Chrysostom who writes, "Whoever limits the fast to the deprivation of food, he is the one who, in reality, abhors and ridicules the fast. Are you fasting? Show me your fast with your works. Which works? If you see someone who is poor, show him mercy. If you see an enemy, reconcile with him. If you see a friend who is becoming successful, do not be jealous of him! If you see a beautiful woman on the street, pass her by." Thus almsgiving is as integral a part of this season as is fasting from food and drink. St John Chrysostom offers us other helps in understanding the true purpose of this season when he writes: "If you cannot go without eating all day because of an ailment of the body, beloved one, no logical man will be able to criticize you for that. Besides, we have a Lord who is meek and loving (philanthropic) and who does not ask for anything beyond our power. Because he neither requires the abstinence from foods, neither that the Fast take place for the simple sake of fasting, neither is its aim that we remain with empty stomachs, but that we fast to offer our entire selves to the dedication of spiritual things, having distanced ourselves from secular things. "If we regulated our life with a sober mind and directed all of our interest toward spiritual things, and if we ate as much as we needed to satisfy our necessary needs and offered our entire lives to good works, we would not have any need of the help rendered by the fast. But because human nature is indifferent and gives itself over mostly to comforts and gratifications, for this reason the philanthropic Lord, like a loving and caring father, devised the therapy of the fast for us, so that our gratifications would be completely stopped and that our worldly cares be transferred to spiritual works."