



St. Elias Melkite Church

Serving San Jose & South Bay Area, CA

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Sunday, March 5, 2017: First Sunday of Lent – Sunday of Orthodoxy

Divine Liturgy

Sundays: 11am

Feastdays: See website Calendar

Confession Times

Wednesdays: 5-6 pm

Sundays: 10-11 am

Vespers, Bible Study, and Social

Wednesdays of Fast: 6pm

Presanctified Liturgy

Fridays of Fast: 7:30pm

Sunday School: After liturgy

Contact the Pastor

Rev. Sebastian Carnazzo

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SebastianCarnazzo@gmail.com

Qurban and Socials

- This Sunday, 3/5
Qurban: Kaldani
Social: Kaldani
- Next Sunday, 3/12
Qurban: Carnazzo
Social: Bishop's Lunch

Pray for Servants of God

The priest Paul Leonarczyk

Higareda Family

Katrina Holly

Isabella Holly

Judy Sramcik

William Connelly

Anthony Thomas

Areej Zakher

Joseph Le

Holly Handal

Kayla Handal

Nick McAlpine

Paul Luetchford

Frank Leskauskas

Christians in the Middle-East

Asleep in the Lord

Gladys Farah

Michael Novak

Camille Veronica Pagnini

PRAYER

O Christ God, You condescended to be incarnate, taking the form of a slave. You became like one of us by the body to make us participants in your glorious Likeness. Wherefore we paint your image on icons and we honor it by mouth and heart asking for the grace to be healed by its power. For it belongs to You to have mercy on us and to heal us, O Christ God, and to You we render glory, thanksgiving and worship, and to your Eternal Father, and your All-Holy, Good and Life-Giving Spirit, now and always and forever and ever.

HYMNS

Troparion of the resurrection (1st tone): After the stone was sealed by the Jews * and the while the soldiers were watching Your spotless body, * You rose, O Savior, on the third day,* bestowing life to the world.* Therefore the heavenly powers cried out to You, O Giver of life:*“Glory to Your resurrection, O Christ! * Glory to Your kingdom! * Glory to Your economy, * O You Who alone are the lover of mankind!

Kondakion of the Annunciation (8th Tone): Triumphant leader to you belongs our prize of victory! And since you saved us from adversity we offer you our thanks. We are your people O mother of God! So as you have that invincible power, continue to deliver us from danger that we may cry out to you Hail, O Virgin and bride pure.

READINGS

Hebrews 11:24-26; 32-40; 12:1-2 Brethren, by faith Moses, when he was grown up, denied he was a son of Pharaoh's daughter (CF. Ex, 2: 11) — choosing to be afflicted with God's people rather than to have the enjoyment of sin for a time, estimating the indignities suffered by Christ to be of greater value than the Egyptians' treasures (Cf. Ex. 2:32): for he was considering the reward. By faith he left Egypt not fearing the king's wrath: for he persevered as if he were seeing the One who cannot be seen. By faith, he celebrated the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the one who destroyed the first-born might not touch these. By faith, they passed through the Red Sea, as through dry land — whereas the Egyptians attempting it were swallowed up. By faith, the walls of Jericho fell after people had gone around them for seven days. By faith, Rahab the prostitute who had received the spies in peace did not perish with the unbelievers. And what more shall I say? For time will be too short to speak of Gideon, of Barac, of Samson, of Jephthe, of David and of Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained the fulfillment of promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, recovered strength from weakness, became valiant in battle routed foreign armies. Women had their dead restored to them through resurrection. Others were tortured, refusing to yield for their release, in order to obtain a better resurrection. Others again suffered mockery and blows, even chains and jailing. They were stoned, cut to pieces, put to the question, killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, distressed, afflicted (of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts, mountains, caves and holes in the ground. And none of these, despite the positive witnessing of faith, received what was promised, for God had something better in store for us, so that they were not to reach their final perfection without us.

John 1:43-51 At that time Jesus was about to leave for Galilee, and he found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the town of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found the one of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets wrote, Jesus the son of Joseph of Nazareth." And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him and said of him, "Look, a true Israelite in whom there is no guile!" Nathanael said to him, "Where do you know me from?" Jesus answered him and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered him and said, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are King of Israel." Answering, Jesus said to him, "Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, you believe. Greater things than these shall you see." And he said to him, "Amen, amen, I say to you, you shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

COMMEMORATION

The Holy Martyr Conon of Isauria was martyred under Emperor Decius (r. 249-251).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Men's Meeting: Friday, March 10th, at 6pm, Church Hall

Women's Meeting: Saturday, March 11th, at 11am, at Sweet Tomatoes in Fremont.

Berkeley Outreach: Saturday, March 11th, at 5pm. Please come support this great endeavor!

Bishop's Visit: March 10th-12th. Mark your calendars! All parishioners should be at the Divine Liturgy on Sunday and remain afterward to eat with the bishop and listen to his presentation. The bishop's itinerary and other details of his visit are being sent through email.

AT EVERY DIVINE LITURGY during the Great Fast we read from the Holy Gospel according to Mark – except for today. Why is this passage from St John’s Gospel read on this Sunday, the Sunday of Orthodoxy?

The brief answer is that both the Gospel reading and the triumph of Orthodoxy we commemorate today are about seeing God. In the Gospel story we hear how Philip invites Nathaniel to see Jesus (physically); when they meet, Nathaniel sees (spiritually) that Jesus is the Messiah. In the Church we (physically) see icons and see (spiritually) that they reflect the reality of Christ’s incarnation.

Nathaniel Sees God

The story of Jesus’ encounter with Nathaniel is a brief and almost cryptic tale which many have tried to explain. Nathaniel and his friend Philip were both disciples of St John the Forerunner. They had responded to John’s announcement that One was coming *“whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose”* (Jn 1:27). The Lord Jesus had gone to the Jordan where John was baptizing and it is there that John identified Jesus as the Awaited One. *“Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples.*

And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, ‘Behold the Lamb of God!’” (vv. 35, 36) Philip may have been one of those who heard John’s testimony, so that when Jesus invited Philip to follow Him, he responded positively.

In turn, Philip goes to his friend Nathaniel with the news, *“We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph”* (v. 45). Nathaniel replies laconically, *“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”* (v.46)

Modern commentators generally see this remark of Nathaniel as a somewhat snide dismissal of Jesus because He was a Nazarene. The Fathers approach this passage differently, saying that Nathaniel was saying the exact opposite: that if Jesus was the Awaited One, then He could not have come from Nazareth. St John Chrysostom suggested that Nathaniel “thought within himself that Philip was probably mistaken about the place” and that Jesus “was not from Nazareth” (Hom. 20 on John).

In any case, Philip responds with the same words that Jesus earlier said to Andrew, *“Come and see.”* When Nathaniel finally meets Jesus, the Lord utters another cryptic remark: *“‘Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!’ Nathanael said to Him, ‘How do You know me?’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you’”* (vv. 47, 48).

What was Nathaniel doing under the fig tree? Again many suggestions have been offered; none of them are attested in the Scripture, so we cannot know for sure. One possibility upheld by many in our Tradition is that Nathaniel was praying at that time: *O God of our fathers, send us the One whom You have promised. Send us the Messiah, the Savior.* Faith in the promise of a Savior is what marks out a true Israelite. The Lord, they say, saw him at prayer and He saw Nathaniel’s heart. Nathaniel’s response marks him as one of the first disciples of Christ, whom He called before His ministry in Galilee.

“You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” (v. 49), Nathaniel sees that Jesus is the Messiah and acclaims Him with the traditional titles of a royal Messiah: “Son of God” and “King of Israel.”

At the end of His public ministry Jesus’ followers would affirm their faith in His heavenly origin: *“See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech! Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God”* (Jn 16:29, 30). But it would only be after His resurrection, when the risen Christ was manifested to the disciples that the full force of Jesus’ words to Nathaniel would be realized: *“Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man”* (Jn 1:51). Nathaniel, like the rest of the apostles, would grow to see Jesus not as the earthly conqueror devout Jews were awaiting but as a King not of this world and, ultimately, the eternal Word of God incarnate.

Icons Reveal Christ as God’s Image

In the eighth and ninth centuries some Byzantine emperors and churchmen waged a struggle against the use of icons. This conflict was ultimately ended in 843 with the restoration of icons, called in the Church the “Triumph of Orthodoxy.” Today’s observance celebrates this act.

Iconoclasm formally began in the 720s when certain bishops began questioning the excessive way some people were revering icons. In 730 Emperor Leo III took up their cause and issued a decree forbidding the veneration of religious images, “the evil art of painters,” as a later iconoclastic council called it. While iconoclasts saw images as a departure from the practice of the early Church, those who supported the veneration of icons did so precisely on the basis of tradition: the Church had done so for years and was not in error.

It was St John of Damascus (676-749) who gave the Church the insight that the use of icons was the logical consequence of the incarnation of Christ. As he wrote in his Treatise on the Divine Images, “In former times, God, who is without form or body, could never be depicted. But now when God is seen in the flesh conversing with men, I make an image of the God whom I see. I do not worship matter; I worship the Creator of matter who became matter for my sake.” St John’s teaching became normative in the Byzantine Church which, since the Triumph of Orthodoxy, has in the minds of many become identified as the “Church of Icons.”

“But I Can’t Fast”

“If there are some gathered here who are hindered by sickness and cannot remain without food, I advise them to reverse their ailment and not to deprive themselves from the fast, but to care for it even more.

“For there exist, there really exist, ways which are even more important than abstinence from food which can open the gates which lead to God with boldness. He, therefore, who eats and cannot fast, let him display richer almsgiving, let him pray more, let him have a more intense desire to hear divine words. Then our physical illness is not a hindrance to our spirit. Let him become reconciled with his enemies, let him distance from his soul every resentment. If he wants to accomplish these things, then he has done the true fast, which is what the Lord asks of us more than anything else.

“It is for this reason that He asks us to abstain from food, in order to place the flesh in subjection to the fulfillment of His commandments, by curbing its impetuous-ness ... If we eat with moderation we should never be ashamed, because the Creator gave us such a body which cannot be supported in any other way except by receiving food. Let us only stop excessive food; that in itself contributes a great deal to the health and well-being of the body.”

Abridged from St. John Chrysostom homilies "On Fasting"