



St. Elias Melkite Catholic Church

Proclaiming the Ancient and Orthodox Christian Faith in the Silicon Valley

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August 6th, 2016: 9th Sunday After Pentecost – Transfiguration of our Lord

Vespers (evening prayer)
Saturdays 5pm
Feastdays: See website Calendar

Orthros (morning prayer)
Sundays 10am
Feastdays: See website Calendar

Divine Liturgy
Sundays: 11am
Feastdays: See website Calendar

Confession
During Vespers and Orthros, or by appointment

Bible Study
Wednesdays: 6pm Online
See website for link
(now on Summer break)

Sunday School
During Sunday Coffee Social

Contact the Pastor
Rev. Sebastian Carnazzo
Phone: (831) 229-8350
SebastianCarnazzo@gmail.com

Qurban and Socials

- This Sunday, 8/6
Qurban: El Hage
Social: St. Elias Potluck
- Next Sunday, 8/13
Qurban: Srour
Social: Shihadeh

Pray for the Servants of God

Elhage Family (Qurban)
James Biscoe
Shukri Anton
Higareda family
Gary Potter
Rosalie Mendez
William Connelly
Timothy Stoner
Fabian Gomez
Madeleine Heinze
Kamal & Eugenie Neimat
Isaac & Julia Kaldani
Maher & Therese Salama

Asleep in the Lord in the Hope of the Resurrection

Robert & Theresa Stoner
Souad Elhage
Afaf and Hanna Moussy

PRAYER

O Christ God, when You were transfigured in glory on Mount Tabor, You manifested the splendor of your Divinity to your disciples and sanctified the whole universe by your Light. Illumine us too by the Light of your knowledge. Guide us on the way of your commandments. Make us worthy to inherit your eternal Kingdom. For You are Good and Lover of mankind and to You we render glory and to your Eternal Father and your All-holy, Good and Life-giving Spirit, now and always and forever and ever. Amen.

HYMNS

Troparion of the Feast, 7th tone (3 times): You were transfigured on the mountain, O Christ God and you showed your disciples as much of your glory as they could hold. Let your eternal light shine also upon us sinners, through the prayer of the Mother of God, O Giver of light, glory to You.

نشيد التجلي بالحن السابع (3 مرات)
تجلت أيها المسيح الإله على الجبل. فأظهرت مجدك لتلاميذك على حسب ما استطاعوا. فأضئ لنا أيضاً نحن
الخطاة بنورك الأزلي، بشفاعة والدة الإله، يا مُعطي النور المجد لك.

Kondakion of the Feast, 7th tone: O Christ God, you were transfigured on the Mountain, and your disciples saw as much of your glory as they could hold, so that seeing You crucified they would know You had willed to suffer your passion and would proclaim to the world that You as verily the Reflection of the Father.

READINGS

2 Peter 1:10-19 BRETHREN, strive more ardently by good works to make your calling and election certain. For if you do this, you will not fall into sin at any time. Indeed in this way the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be amply provided for you. Therefore I shall begin to remind you always of these things — although indeed you know them and are well established in the present truth. As long as I am in this tabernacle, I think it right to arouse you by a reminder, knowing as I do that the taking away of my tabernacle is at hand, just as the Lord Jesus Christ signified to me. Moreover I will endeavor that even after my death you may often have occasion to recall these things to mind. For we were not following fictitious tales when we made known to you the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but had been eyewitnesses of his grandeur. For he received from God the Father honor and glory when, coming down from the magnificent glory, a voice spoke to him in these words: “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased (Mt.17:5).” And this voice we ourselves heard borne from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain. And we have the word of prophecy surer still, to which you do well to attend, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Matthew 17:1-9 At that time Jesus took Peter, James and his brother John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves, and was transfigured before them. And his face shone as the sun, and his clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah talking together with him. Then Peter addressed Jesus, saying, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you will, let us set up three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah” As he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased hear him.” And on hearing it the disciples fell on their faces and were terrified. And Jesus came near and touched them, and said to them, “Arise, and do not be afraid.” But lifting up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. And as they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus cautioned them, saying, “Tell the vision to no one, till the Son of Man has risen from the dead.”

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Support our Persecuted Parishes: Fr. Sebastian is trying to create a program by which we could help our Melkite brethren in the Middle-East and the best place to start would be with the parishes from which our immigrant members have come. So, if you were baptized in the Middle-East, please email Fr. Sebastian with the name of the church and it's address and any contact information you might have, especially a website. We will then find out their needs and take up a collection for them.

From the Dioceses

"I am the Light of the world" (Jn 8:12). These familiar words of the Lord Jesus reflect one of the most popular images in the Scriptures, but what do they mean? How is Jesus the light of the world? The rest of this verse (pardon the expression) 'sheds light' on what is meant here. "*I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.*" Here, and in a number of other places, Jesus is portrayed as a beacon: one who guides along the right path, who illumines the way for us. He is the "Giver of light," the One bringing light to our hearts. To say He is light in this way is to talk about what He does. But there is another way to see Christ as light. He is light, not only because of what He *does* for us but because of what He *is*. "*God is light and in Him is no darkness at all*" (1 Jn 1:5). God is not described here as light illumining our minds and hearts, but as He is in Himself: Light in His innermost being.

Based on the Gospel message, the Church proclaims the Lord Jesus as "Light from Light" (Nicene Creed), the "Joyful Light of the holy glory of the Father Immortal: the Heavenly, the Holy, the Blessed, Jesus Christ" (3rd century vespers hymn). As God is Light in Himself, so too the incarnate Christ is the Light of the Father. "*I and the Father are one*" (Jn 10:30).

As far back as the third century the Fathers used our experience of the sun to illustrate this mystery. Like others before him, St. Cyril, the enlightener of the Slavs, reflected, "Do you see in the heavens the brilliant sphere of the sun and how from it light is begotten and warmth proceeds? God the Father is like the sphere of the sun, without beginning or end. From Him is eternally begotten God the Son, like light from the sun; just as there comes warmth together with light from the sun, the Holy Spirit proceeds. Each one is distinguished separately: the sphere of the sun and the light and the warmth — these are not three suns, but one sun in the heavens. So also, in the Holy Trinity: there are three Persons but God is one and indivisible."

The Light of Mt. Tabor

Christ was concretely manifested as light at His transfiguration: "*His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light*" (Mt 17:2) – "*white and glistening*" (Lk 9:29), "*such as no launderer on earth can whiten them*" (Mk 9:3). For a moment the disciples glimpsed what had been hidden since the Incarnation: the Word of God, radiant with divine glory, in the person of Jesus. In icons of the Transfiguration, this radiance is depicted by a geometric figure behind the representation of the Lord called a *mandorla*. While depictions of Christ during His earthly ministry show His head surrounded by a cross and a halo, icons representing Him in moments beyond time and space (the Transfiguration, the Resurrection, the Dormition) envelop His whole body in this light of glory. This same figure is found in icons of the conversion of St. Paul. Christ, the "Radiant Light" was manifested to Saul of Tarsus (St. Paul) on the road to Damascus as "*a light from the sky brighter than the sun*" (Acts 26:13) While this Light briefly blinded Saul by its brilliance, it enabled him to see ever more clearly "*the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed*" (Col 1:26). In the Church the light experienced by Saul has been identified with the light that shone on Tabor, the Radiant Light of the Father, Jesus Christ. As we sing on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, "Christ, who had been radiant in light on the mountain, blinded your bodily eyes; but He allowed your soul to see the Trinity" (from the Canon, Ode 1).

The "Uncreated Light" of God

In the Gospels we find two seemingly contradictory understandings of our ability to know God. On the one hand we are told, "*No one has seen God at any time*" (Jn 1:18). On the other hand we hear, "*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*" (Mt 5:8). In the fourth century, St. Gregory of Nyssa showed how both statements are true. He taught that the essence of God was unknowable. Like the sun in the imagery cited above, God in His deepest being is unapproachable. The energies of God – His "Light" and "Warmth" – have been made known to us and we can truly know God in His energies. In the fourteenth century, St Gregory Palamas applied this teaching to the Transfiguration. He explained that when the Apostles witnessed the Transfiguration of the Lord on Mount Tabor, that they were seeing the actual uncreated light of God.

Reflecting the Divine Light

We too, Palamas insisted, can experience God's divine energies even though we can never know His essence: "for those who love each other all nature is filled with the light which seems to radiate from the other." Many saints who have loved deeply have reflected this light. Perhaps the first was the Protomartyr St. Stephen who witnessed to Christ before the council of Jewish elders in Jerusalem. "*And looking steadfastly on Stephen, they saw his face as it had been the face of an angel*" (Acts 6:15).

St Simeon the New Theologian, writing in the eleventh century, described his own experience in similar words: "He gives Himself totally to me, unworthy as I am, and I am filled with His love and beauty. I am sated with pleasure and divine tenderness. I share in the Light. I participate also in the glory. My face shines like that of my beloved and all my members become bearers of Light." The most compelling recorded witness to such an experience comes from Nicholas Motovilov. In 1831 he wrote of seeing St Seraphim of Sarov transfigured with the divine light. They had been discussing how a person can acquire the grace of the Holy Spirit but Motovilov was puzzled: "I do not understand how I can be certain that I am in the Spirit of God." Finally, as he described it, "Father Seraphim took me very firmly by the shoulders and said: 'We are both in the Spirit of God now, my son. Why don't you look at me?' "I replied: 'I cannot look, Father, because your eyes are flashing like lightning. Your face has become brighter than the sun, and my eyes ache with pain.' "Father Seraphim said: 'Don't be alarmed, your Godliness! Now you yourself have become as bright as I am. You are now in the fullness of the Spirit of God yourself; otherwise you would not be able to see me as I am.' "Then, bending his head towards me, he whispered softly in my ear: 'Thank the Lord God for His unutterable mercy to us! You saw that I did not even cross myself; and only in my heart I prayed mentally to the Lord God and said within myself: 'Lord, grant him to see clearly with his bodily eyes that descent of Your Spirit which You grant to Your servants when You are pleased to appear in the light of Your magnificent glory.' And you see, my son, the Lord instantly fulfilled the humble prayer of poor Seraphim. How then shall we not thank Him for this unspeakable gift to us both?" For a moment the Apostles on Tabor saw the light of God which is Christ's by nature. Likewise for a moment Nicholas Motovilov saw the light of God indwelling by grace in the person who is in Christ.