



# St. Elias Melkite Catholic Church

Proclaiming the Ancient and Orthodox Christian Faith in the Silicon Valley

14263 Mulberry Dr., Los Gatos, CA 95032

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**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: 7pm Online  
See website for link

**Sunday School**  
During Sunday Coffee Social

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

## Qurban and Socials

- Next Sunday, 9/24  
Qurban: Shihadeh  
Social: Kaldani
- This Sunday, 10/1  
Qurban:  
Social: Ghada Awad

**Pray for the Servants of God**  
Priests Christopher and Anthony  
Readers Cyril and Romanos  
Shihadeh Family (Qurban)  
Kaldani Family (Social)  
Laure Kelly  
Nabil Matta  
Sr. Iliana  
Madalena Taurke  
William and Araceli Carnazzo  
Beatrice Lardizabal  
William Connelly  
Genevieve Gomez  
Kamal & Eugenie Neimat  
Isaac & Julia Kaldani  
Maher & Therese Salama

**Asleep in the Lord in the Hope  
of the Resurrection**  
Lorrice Asher

**Sunday, September 24, 2017**

**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday After the Exaltation of the Holy Cross – The Miraculous Catch**

الاحد 24 ايلول 2017

الاحد الاول بعد رفع الصليب المقدس

## HYMN

**Resurrectional Troparion Tone 7:** You destroyed Death by Your cross. You opened paradise to the thief. You changed the weeping of the myrrh bearers, and commanded Your apostles to proclaim that You, O Christ God, have risen, granting to the world great mercy.

نشيد القيامة باللحن السابع  
لاشييت بصليبك الموت، وفتحت للصلب الفردوس، وحولت نوح حاملات الطيب الى فرح، وأمرت رسلك أن يكرزوا مبشرين بأنك  
قد قمت، أيها المسيح الإله، مانحاً العالم عظيم الرحمة.

## READINGS

**2 Corinthians 6: 1-10 (16<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost)** READING from the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the BRETHREN, yes, working together with him, we beg you not to receive God's grace in vain. For he says, *In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation, I have helped you.* (Is.49:8) Look, now is the acceptable time; look, now is the day of salvation! We give no offense to anyone, that our ministry may not be blamed. On the contrary, let us behave in all circumstances as God's ministers, in much patience, in tribulations, in hardships, in distress; in stripes, in imprisonments, in riots; in labors, in sleepless nights, in fastings; in innocence, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in unaffected love; in the word of truth, in God's power; with the armor of justification on the right hand and on the left; in honor and dishonor, in evil report and good report; as deceivers and yet truthful, as unknown and yet well known, as dying, and look, we live; as punished, but not killed, as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, as poor, yet enriching many, as having nothing, yet possessing all things.

**Luke 5:1-11 (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Holy Cross):** At that time Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. And he saw two boats moored by the lake, but the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. And getting into one of the boats, the one that was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And sitting down, he began to teach the crowds from the boat. But when he had stopped speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep, and lower your nets for a catch." And Simon answered and said to him, "Master, the whole night through we have toiled and have taken nothing; but at your word I will lower the net." And when they had done so, they caught a great number of fishes, but their net was breaking. And they called to their comrades in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw this, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord," For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish they had made; and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you shall catch men." And when they had brought their boats to land, they left all and followed him.

## COMMEMORATION

**The Holy Protomartyr and Equal of the Apostles Thekla**, received the faith from St. Paul at Iconium of Lycaonia and at Antioch of Pisidia. She was the first woman martyred for Christ.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Rummage Sale:** Maurice Elhage will be heading up the organization of our first church rummage sale. Please start discerning what things you would like to give away and begin setting the aside somewhere in your home (Don't bring them to church until the day of the sale). Ladies, let's also make this a bake sale so that those who come might also have food to purchase to take home or eat while they shop. The purpose of all of this is not to see how much money we can make but rather to have an opportunity to work together and attract people to the church. So let's take this seriously.

Online Bible Study: Having concluded our summer break, this Wednesday we will begin are Online Bible Study again. The bible study is available online (see classroom link on website) every Wednesday at 7-8pm.

**Singing Practice:** We are now having singing practice every Saturday from 4-5pm. All are welcome to come learn and help.

**Qurban:** If you would like to bake the qurban, please make sure it is at the church by Saturday evening or at the latest by Sunday morning before Orthros (10am). This makes the Sunday morning preparations of the qurban much easier. Thank you!

## From the Dioceses

### **“I have been crucified with Christ”**

From September, 2013 to April, 2014 government and rebel forces struggled for control of the ancient Christian town of Ma'loula, Syria, a UNESCO World Heritage site and home to a number of shrines and monasteries. One of them is the ancient Orthodox women's monastery of St Thekla from which 12 nuns were abducted and held by rebel forces for three months. Almost unknown in the West today, St Thekla was held in great esteem in the early Church and is still revered in the Christian East. Her festival, on September 24, has attracted pilgrims since at least the fourth century. Today both Christians and Muslims pray at her shrine in this venerable town.

### **Who was St Thekla?**

The story of St Thekla is told in the *Acts of Paul and Thekla*, written in the lifetime of the Apostle John the Theologian but not by him. In this work Thekla, is said to be a daughter of an aristocratic family in Iconium (modern Konya in Asia Minor) who heard St Paul preaching during his stay there (see Acts of the Apostles 14:1-7). She was so captivated by Paul's preaching that her mother and fiancé denounced him to the authorities and he was jailed. Thekla bribed the guards to gain entry to the prison and spent the night listening to Paul. When she was discovered, she too was arrested and condemned to death so that “all the women who have been taught by this man may be afraid.” Thekla was convinced of the truth of the Gospel and was ready to renounce everything she had for its sake. She was taken to the outdoor theater and placed on a pyre. Then, as the *Acts of Paul and Thekla* tells it, “They lighted the fire. And though a great fire was blazing, it did not touch her. For God, having compassion upon her, made an underground rumbling and a cloud full of water and hail overshadowed the theater from above” (22). In the storm which followed the earthquake the pyre was overturned and Thekla was saved. In the Scriptural Acts of the Apostles we are told that, when St Paul left Iconium he went to Lystra. In the apocryphal Acts we are told that he went to Antioch, taking Thekla with him. In any case, Thekla spent the rest of a long life near Seleucia (modern Silifke, in southern Turkey) where she “enlightened many and died in peace.” Because of the many people Thekla brought to Christ in that pagan region the Church accords her the title “Equal to the Apostles.” Many early writers in both East and West revered St Thekla as a model for devout women, particularly ascetics. Thus other notable women such as St Macrina and St Melany the Roman were described as “second Theklas” by eminent Church Fathers St Gregory of Nyssa and St Jerome.

### **The Tomb of St Thekla**

The cave near Silifke, in which Thekla reputedly lived as an ascetic and was buried, was revered locally during the time of the Roman persecutions. As St Gregory the Theologian wrote (Oration 31), the fame of this shrine spread and by the fourth century a church had been built around the cave. This church, as well as the ruins of the more prominent church, built over it in the fifth century, may still be seen at the site. This church, as its ruins attest, was the largest in the region. Monasteries for both men and women grew up surrounding it which attracted pilgrims from all over the empire. The fourth-century Spanish pilgrim nun Egeria wrote about visiting this shrine twice, on her way to and from Jerusalem. On her second visit, she writes, “When I had arrived in the name of God, prayer was made at the [saint's] memorial and the whole of the Acts of Saint Thekla had been read, I gave endless thanks to Christ our God, who deigned to fulfill my desires in all things, unworthy and undeserving as I am. Then, after a stay of two days, when I had seen the holy monks and ascetics who were there, both men and women, and when I had prayed and made my Communion, I returned to Tarsus and to my journey.”

### **St Thekla and the Defile**

Stories of St Thekla often tell how she was protected from being defiled by “a defile”. “To defile” means to debase or render impure, but “a defile” is a narrow crevice affording passage through mountains. In a number of stories about St Thekla it is said that she was pursued by people intending to defile her. In some versions her pursuer is a would-be lover frustrated by her commitment to chastity. In other versions pagans, resenting her success at proclaiming the Gospel, pursue her in order to silence her. In all versions Thekla flees into the mountains where a defile opens up allowing her to pass through it unharmed. Churches or shrines to St Thekla were often placed near mountain crevices, such as the monastery in Ma'loula, whose name in Aramaic means *entry*.

### **The First Woman Martyr?**

In the Christian East, St Thekla is considered the first woman martyred for Christ, much as St Stephen was among men. Yet, as we have seen, Thekla lived a long life and died in peace. How, then is she a martyr? Thekla was first described as protomartyr among women by St Isidore of Pelusium, a fifth century Egyptian ascetic and friend of Ss Cyril of Alexandria and John Chrysostom. Known for his letters (over 2000 have survived), Isidore wrote to some women ascetics in Alexandria who were facing expulsion from the city for supporting the exiled Athanasius. He extolled “the all-praiseworthy Thekla” as “an eternal monument of purity” and the “head of all women victors and trophy-bearers” (Letter 87). Her “martyrdom” was considered to be all the sufferings she endured for giving herself to Christ. St Thekla thereby became the principal model for Egyptian women ascetics. Early writers saw the life-long struggle of ascetics such as more intense than the more transient pains of actual martyrs. Their daily struggle with temptation and physical affliction became the “spears and swords” of their martyrdom. Hence St Thekla, as the model for women ascetics was the proto-martyr of their kind.

### **From the Vespers for St Thekla**

*O Lord, Thekla followed in the footsteps of the Apostle in chains, casting off the chains of earthly passions; captivated by the power of Your love, she was firmly bound to You, O Savior of our souls. O Lord, Your spotless Protomartyr Thekla was delivered over to the fire, but was not burned since she possessed You as a refreshing dew. She remained safe in the midst of wild beasts, protected as she was by Your hand, O Savior of our souls.*

*As an athlete in your struggles, you overcame the enemy, O blessed Thekla; in martyrdom, you destroyed his schemes. You fled far from Thamyris in order to be espoused to Christ, your true Love. You were the companion of Paul and imitated Stephen in his trial. As the first woman to bear witness to Christ, you have boldness before Him: save our souls from all danger as, in faith, we festively celebrate your sacred memory.*