



St. Elias Melkite Catholic Church

Proclaiming the Ancient and Orthodox Christian Faith in the Silicon Valley

14263 Mulberry Dr., Los Gatos, CA 95032

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

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

Bible Study
Tuesdays: 7pm Online

Sunday School
During Sunday Coffee Social

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

COMMEMORATION
St. Leo, bishop of Rome (c. 440).

Pray for the Servants of God
P. Christopher, Anthony
D. Fernando
Elhage Family
Anna Higareda
Tuan Nguyen
Tim Macdonald
Carnazzo Family
Kamal & Eugenie Neimat
Isaac & Julia Kaldani
Maher & Therese Salama
The Expectants Mothers Leila
Carnazzo & Emma Fynan
Catechumens Abigail Higareda,
Jonathan & Jaikob Wright, Jess &
Valerie Guy

**Asleep in the Lord in the Hope
of the Resurrection**
Priest Charles Aboody
Reader Romanos
Susan Macdonald

February 18, 2018

**First Sunday of Lent – Sunday of Orthodoxy
Commemoration of Saint Leo, Bishop of Rome**

الاحد، 18 شباط 2018
لاحد الاول من الصوم العظيم المقدس – احد الارثوذكسية
تذكار ابينا في القديسين لاون بابا رومة

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 (4th tone) *The women disciples of the Lord, having learned from the angel the joyful announcement of the resurrection, and having rejected the ancestral sentence, proudly told the apostles: Death is despoiled. Christ God is risen, bestowing to the world great mercy.*

Troparion of the Holy Icons: *Before Your most pure image, we bow in worship, O Good One, begging forgiveness of our stumbling, Christ God: because You chose of your own free will to ascend upon the cross in the flesh in order to deliver from the enemy's bondage those You had created. For this reason we cry out to You in thanksgiving: "You our Savior have Filled all things with joy when You came to save the world."*

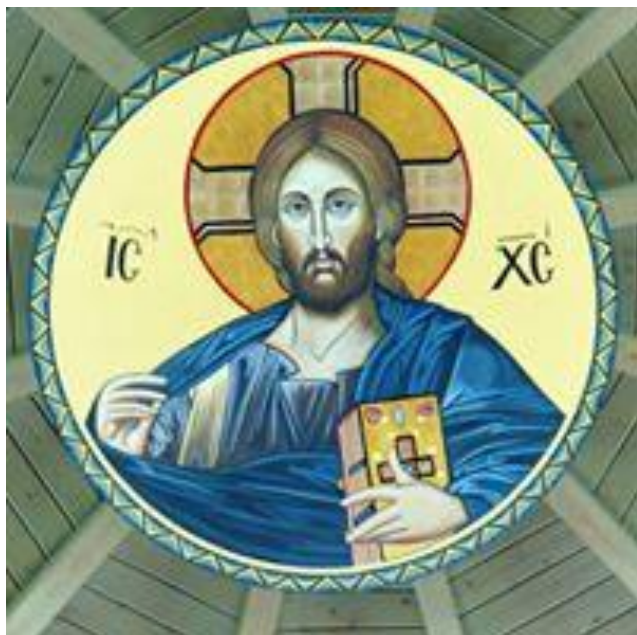
Kondakion of the Annunciation: *Triumphant leader to you belongs our prize of victory! And since you saved us from adversity we offer you our thanks. We are your people O Theotokos! So as you have that invincible power, continue to deliver us from danger that we may cry out to you Hail, O Virgin and bride ever 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."

FROM THE DIOCESE



We have completed the first week of the Great Fast. Hopefully, we have met the goals which we have set for ourselves: the degree of fasting and almsgiving appropriate to our station in life, or the participation in the services which our schedule of responsibilities allows. Whether we did or did not do so, we should realize that taking part in such practices is not the ultimate purpose of the fasting season. The final goal of the Great Fast – and of our entire life as Christians – is our ultimate transfiguration in Christ.

St Paul – who had seen the transfigured glory of the risen Christ appear to him on the road to Damascus – insisted that we will share in this transformation and that this change is already taking place: *“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord”* (2 Cor 3:18). He daringly asserts that we are being transformed to be the mirror image of the risen Christ. Our human nature, he proclaims, is being renewed after the model who is Christ. This is what our later tradition calls *theosis*, being *“partakers of the divine nature”* (2 Pt 1:4): given a share through Christ in the very life of God.

How Can This Be?

We may try to imitate Christ, to pattern our actions on the way of life which Christ has proposed to us; but the change described in the Scripture demands more than our striving to make it so. It demands an *ontological change*, something that affects us at the heart of our being and turns the water of our human nature in the wine of God. This transformation is what St Paul calls *“the mystery decreed before the ages for our glory”* (1 Cor 2:7). The first transformation in this mystery is the incarnation of the Word of God Himself. He assumes our human nature without putting aside His divinity. His glory was concealed – except for the moment of His transfiguration on Mt. Tabor – but He did not cease being the eternal Son of God. His incarnation was complete: *“in all things He had to be made like His brethren”* (Heb 2:17) so that He would transform our entire human nature. St Gregory the Theologian expressed it concisely, *“That which He has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is thereby saved.”* In other words, if there is an aspect of our being which the Son did not assume in the Incarnation, then that aspect of our humanity would be beyond the reach of Christ’s redeeming work. The second transformation is ours: we are incorporated into Christ. When we are baptized into Christ we experience an ontological change, we have *“put on Christ”* (Gal 3:27) We have been taken into His family and His divine Father by nature is now ours, as we are *“adopted as sons by Jesus Christ in himself, according to the good pleasure of his will”* (Eph 1:5). Body, soul, and spirit, we have become the dwelling place of *“Christ in you, the hope of glory”* (Col 1:27) and *“the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you”* (1 Cor 6:19). This ontological change working in our baptism is not abolished when we take off our baptismal garment. Our theosis is reaffirmed whenever we partake of the Eucharist. Christ’s body mystically becomes one with ours, confirming our incorporation into Him. Our entire life becomes a matter of *“becoming what you are.”* We are called to become consciously and actively what we are mystically through our baptism: to strive for a loving awareness – and even perhaps vision – of the indwelling glory of Christ in the Spirit. In words attributed to St Gregory of Sinai, *“Become what you already are, find Him who is already yours, listen to Him who never ceases speaking to you, own Him who already owns you.”*

What Will It Be Like?

For most of us, our theosis, begun in the Holy Mysteries (sacraments), blossoms in our spirits when we live with a conscious awareness of God’s life in us. Rarely is it manifested in our bodies before the life of the age to come. At the end of this age, however, our bodies will share in our transformation, according to the Scriptures. With all the drama of apocalyptic literature, 1 Corinthians describes the destiny of our bodies: *“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory’”* (1 Cor 15:51-54). St Paul describes this change as the corruptible putting on incorruption. The physical decay of death, is destined to be reversed, as it were, and the body given a share in the eternal life of grace. The biblical authors themselves could not describe concretely how this will happen. St Paul resorted to imagery: *“But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?’ Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body”* (1 Cor 15:35-38). In one of the last books of the New Testament to be written, even imagery is abandoned. In 1 Jn the apostolic author professes his faith despite his ignorance of details: *“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure”* (1 Jn 3:2, 3). Somehow, the vision of God will penetrate our bodily nature.

The Icon and Our Transfiguration

The Church’s faith in the transformation of our mortal bodies by the vision of God is at the heart of our concept of the icon. The bodies of Christ and of the saints are shown as physical, but transfigured. They are of this world, but other-worldly. They may be shown in an earthly setting – a city or a countryside – but even nature is depicted as not of this world. Individual saints are shown on a golden background, representing heavenly glory. With the rediscovery of classical pagan art in the Renaissance, Western painters moved away from the tradition of iconography, depicting Christ and the saints as naturalistically as possible. In the Eastern churches, the rules of iconography remain, giving us an image of the transfigured body of the age to come. By a happy coincidence, it was on the First Sunday of the Great Fast, in the year 843 that iconoclasm was decisively defeated and icons formally restored in Constantinople. As we celebrate this Triumph of Orthodoxy, we cannot fail to see the transfigured bodies in our icons as a reminder that the glory of Christ and the Spirit sacramentally within the believer will one day become physically visible, in the very limbs of the transformed body.

