



OUR LADY OF THE CEDARS CHURCH

A MELKITE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

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REV. THOMAS P. STEINMETZ, Pastor

RT. REV. ANDRE ST. GERMAIN (retired)

REV. ROGER BOUCHER - Weekend Ministry

REV. THEOPHAN LEONARCZYK, Eparchial Chancellor

"Enter the Church and repent ... for here is the physician, not the judge. Here one is not investigated, one receives remission of sins." (St. John Chrysostom)

December 11, 2016

THE SUNDAY OF THE HOLY FOREFATHERS

Parish Advisory & Finance Council:

KEN MONTY (*PRESIDENT*), RICHARD ASHOOH, ROBERT ANDERSON, ROBIN ANDERSON, JOHN CULLEN, MARTHA DAGHER, TIM ERMATINGER, KEN KOMISAREK, MARYLOU LAZOS, PAUL MANSUR, NAJWA MOUSSOBA, JOE NEHME, MOE PARE, PAUL ST. GERMAIN, AND CHRISTELLE SLAYBE

Parish Secretary: ROBIN ANDERSON

Cedars Society President: MARYLOU LAZOS

Sunday School Coordinator: MARTHA DAGHER

N.A.M.Y. Advisor: ROBIN ANDERSON

HOLY MYSTERY OF CONFESSION: Before or after any service, or by appointment;

HOLY MYSTERY OF CHRISTIAN ILLUMINATION: Please contact the clergy in advance to arrange for the required baptismal instructions;

HOLY MYSTERY OF CROWNING: At least six months prior to the proposed wedding, please contact the clergy to arrange for the required interview and instructions;

HOLY MYSTERY OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK: Please contact the pastor at any time when this sacrament is needed;

HOLY COMMUNION FOR THE SICK: Anyone too infirm to attend our services may receive Communion in the home. Please advise the clergy whenever this sacrament is needed.

THE ORDER OF TODAY'S LITURGY

The Troparion of the Resurrection (5th Tone) Page 53

Troparion of the Forefathers (2nd Tone)

Through faith, You have justified Your Ancestors, O Christ our God, and through them You have espoused in advance the Church set apart from the Gentiles. The saints rejoice in glory because, from the seed of these Ancestors, has come forth the glorious fruit, who gave You birth without seed. Through their intercession, O Christ God, save our souls.

The Troparion of the Dormition of the Theotokos (1st Tone): Page 16

The Kondakion of the Pre-festive Period of the Nativity (3rd Tone)

Today the Virgin is on her way to the cave where she will give birth to the Eternal Word of God in an ineffable manner. Rejoice therefore, O universe, when you hear this news, and glorify, with the angels and the shepherds, Him who shall appear as a new child, being God from all eternity.

THE PROKIMENON:

**BLESSED ARE YOU, O LORD, GOD OF OUR FATHERS,
AND YOUR NAME IS WORTHY OF PRAISE AND GLORIOUS FOREVER!**

*For You are just in all You have done to us,
and all Your works are true and Your ways right!*

Today's Readings: Colossians 3:4-11 and Luke 14: 16-24

LITURGY INTENTIONS

Saturday, 4:30 PM:

For the repose of Latify Attalla (31st) and Joseph Corey (48th)

Sunday, 11:00 AM:

For the repose of Ernest Ashooh (1 Year Memorial),
by his family

Next Saturday (Dec. 17), 4:30 PM:

For the repose of Nabie Sahady (24th), Jane Ganem (5th),
Sophie Ameen (61st), Florence Barody (45th), Fred Attalla (33rd),
Louise Wihby (29th), and George Kessop (22nd)

Next Sunday (Dec. 18) 11:00 AM:

For the repose of Nassim Sleiman (1 Year Memorial),
by his family

For the repose of Nabil Migali, who reposed in the Lord on Dec. 6



Can you give a Christmas gift to help support your parish?

I am asking that each family prayerfully consider making a gift of \$100 to the church between now and Jan. 6. If you cannot afford a gift of \$100, then I ask you to give according to your means. If you can afford more than \$100, then I ask you to please be more generous.

When you make out your check to Our Lady of the Cedars Church please write: "Parish Christmas Gift" in the memo of the check. You may mail the check to the church or include it in the Sunday collection. Our goal is to raise \$17,000. So far -only one week into the drive - we have raised \$5,800! Thank you for your generosity.

- Fr. Tom

Fr. Tom will be in the church and available for Confession next Saturday, Dec. 17, from 3-4 PM.

CHRISTMAS SERVICES

The Nativity of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ will be commemorated with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on:

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24, at 7:30 PM

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25, at 11:00 AM



Sunday School will not be held on Sunday, December 25 or January 1. Classes will be held next Sunday, December 18.

Time to Clean Up!



Jeanine Notter is organizing the annual effort to give the church a good cleaning before Christmas. The cleaning will take place on Thursday, Dec. 15 (sanctuary floors and vicinity) and Friday, Dec. 16 (pews, main church, narthex), beginning 9 AM both days. Bring a bucket, sponges, and cleaning rags. Rubber gloves are optional. Please see Jeanine, or call her at (603) 423-0408, or email at jeaninenotter@comcast.net if you can help.

Next weekend: A second collection for flowers for Christmas

Attendance - Last Saturday 4:30 PM: 16 Last Sunday 11:00 AM: 131

Last Weekend's Collection: \$ 1,499.¹⁶

The average Sunday envelope donation: \$34.⁸⁶

The balance remaining on our mortgage is: \$ 79,589.⁶⁴

SERVICES FOR THE WEEK

Tues., Dec. 13	8:30 AM	Orthros-basement chapel
Wed., Dec. 14	7:00 PM	Divine Liturgy: For the deceased of the parish
Thurs., Dec. 15	8:30 AM	Orthros-basement chapel
Sat. Dec. 17	4:30 PM	Divine Liturgy: The Sunday of the Ancestors of Christ
Sun., Dec. 18	10:15 AM	Sunday Orthros
Sun., Dec. 18	11:00 AM	Divine Liturgy: The Sunday of the Ancestors of Christ

The One Foretold

THE SUNDAY OF THE FOREFATHERS intensifies the countdown to the feast of Christ's Nativity. During the Nativity Fast we celebrate the memorials of several Old Testament prophets – Obadiah (Nov. 19), Nahum (Dec. 1), Habbakuk (Dec. 2), Zephaniah (Dec. 3), Haggai (Dec. 16), and Daniel (Dec. 17). Today we reflect on how the entire Old Testament period has been a preparation for Christ and how we are called to be ready for His ultimate triumph.

Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament, begins with the stories of the creation and the fall of Adam and Eve. Genesis concludes their tragic story with these words addressed to the serpent: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers; he will strike at your head while you strike at his heel” (Gen 3:15). Many Fathers saw this as the first heralding of the Messiah's victory over sin and death. Satan's apparent defeat of Christ on the cross is but a striking of His heel while Christ's striking at his head is His ultimate defeat of Satan. It would take countless generations – from the beginning of humanity, through the years of both Old and New Testaments and the subsequent history of this age – for this event to be fulfilled.

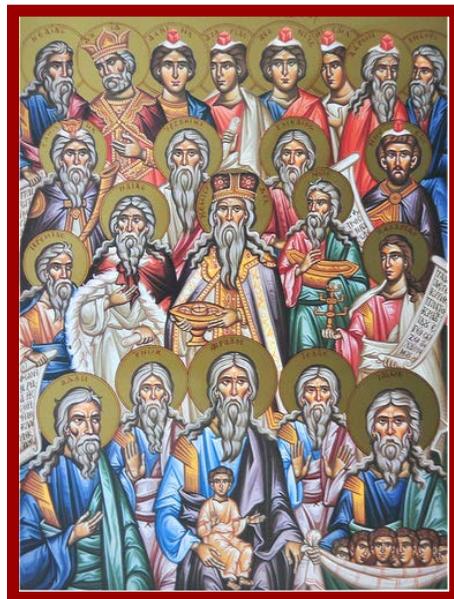
At the time of the Hebrew kingdoms (the 700 years before Christ) prophets were calling the people to trust in God despite the troubles of their nation. Despite conflicts with the Philistines or the Assyrians, and even in the midst of defeat and exile by the Babylonians and occupation by the Romans, the prophets encouraged the people to trust in God who would provide a deliverer.

After the death and resurrection of Christ, the apostles came to see these prophecies fulfilled in a decisive way by Jesus Christ, who delivers all mankind – not just the Jewish people – from its ultimate enemies, sin and death, not just foreign oppressors. Around the Old Testament prophecies the apostles built their preaching of the true Messiah of God, Christ Jesus the Savior.

The Scriptures do not depict Christ's birth as the ultimate point in the story of God's dealings with us. Instead we are told to look ahead to that final stage in history. In the imagery of Luke's Gospel, there shall be a great banquet – the triumph of the Messiah – and many shall be invited to share in that feast. St Paul is a bit more direct: “Christ shall appear, and when He does, you also will be revealed in glory with him” (Col 3: 4).

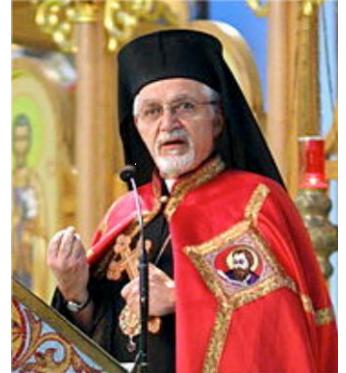
The great banquet is the final triumph of Christ which we proclaim in the Creed: “He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead...” and the revelation of those who are in Christ as well. “I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come.” And so our celebration of Christ – whether spread out throughout the liturgical year or experienced in each Divine Liturgy – always directs us to look ahead to “His glorious second coming.”

The Nativity Fast is a time to reflect on our lives as people who have renounced lust, greed, wrath and to reaffirm our commitment to humility, forgiveness, and love, and to refocus on the mystery of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, Who invites us to His Great Banquet.



The Bishop's Appeal: Help us reach our goal!

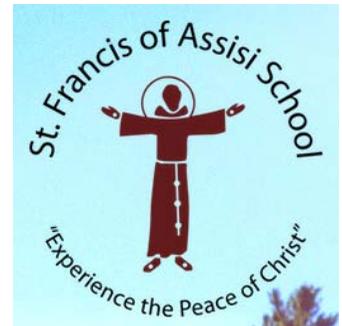
As we travel with the Virgin to Bethlehem where she will give birth to the greatest gift in human history—the Gift of God's Only-Begotten Son—let us not forget our Melkite Catholic Church by which Christ comes to our families and loved ones. **Please give an end-of-year, tax-deductible gift to the Melkite Church in America** and help our Church in countless ways. Help produce *SOPHIA* magazine, assist in the faith education of our young people, support the training of new priests and deacons, and expand our missions and start new ones. Please give generously so these vital works can continue and grow. God bless you for your generosity.



REMEMBER THE MELKITE CHURCH IN YOUR WILL: Give a lasting gift for future generations of Melkites and help to ensure that our beautiful Melkite heritage continues to grow and flourish for your children's children. Simply add the following statement to your last will and testament: *I hereby bequeath to the Melkite Eparchy of Newton the following sum: \$_____.* Contact Bishop Nicholas personally to inform him of your generous bequest: 3 VFW Parkway, West Roxbury, MA 02132.

St. Francis School Advent Open House Wednesday, December 14th

Drop-in during the day to shadow classes, tour our school and meet with our Principal! St. Francis School provides an education in virtue for 3 year-olds to Sixth Grade. It is situated on a beautiful 14-acre campus in Litchfield. Be part of something magnanimous! For more information and to register, visit StFrancisSchoolNH.org or call (603) 424-3312.



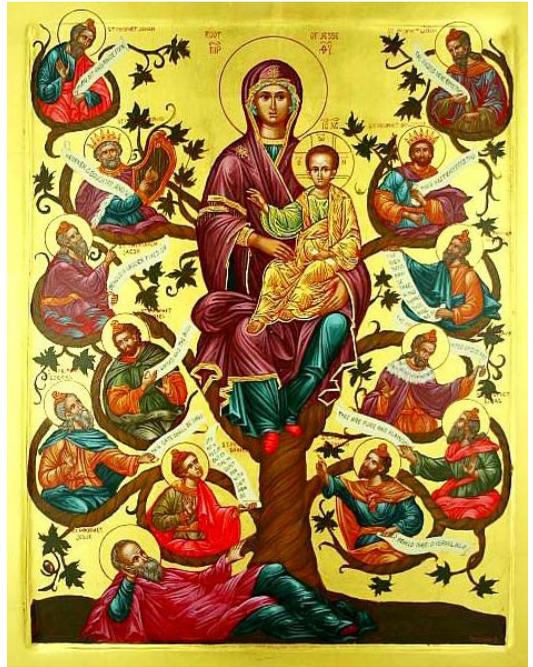
Penance Service St. Joseph's Parish, 777 West Hollis St., Nashua, NH Next Sunday, Dec. 18 at 2 PM.

More than 15 priests will be available for confession. Come to the Lord and experience the extraordinary grace of His forgiveness!

The Virgin Has Conceived

WITH THE FIRST SCENT of cooler weather in the air, merchants begin marketing potential Christmas gifts. As the holiday nears, the shopping frenzy intensifies with music, parties and decorations all telling us “Hurry up and buy something.” Our Church, on the other hand, tells us that it’s time for renewed fasting and almsgiving.

Gift-giving as we know it became popular in the 1860s and grew as mechanical and, later, electrical goods came on the market and Santa began appearing in ads and in stores. For most Americans, handmade goods such as pastries, canned preserves or hand-carved toys were the most common gifts until World War II. With the return to prosperity after the war, people set their sights on more expensive gifts. Today the average American is expected to spend between \$700 and \$800 on Christmas gifts this year.



Anti-Consumerist Protests

Even as the marketing and the spending grew voices were heard denouncing the Christmas shopping experience as an exercise in wasteful consumerism. Environmentalists deplored the focus on acquiring more and more useless “toys.” Christians lamented the practice as fostering materialism rather than celebrating Christ’s birth.

While many people complain about the financial and emotional stresses of Christmas shopping, some people do something about it. Some parents have decided to give only one store-bought toy per child and to focus on shared activities instead. Well-planned Christmas outings with the family provide memories that will last a lifetime, long after plastic toys are forgotten. Others have revived the tradition of homemade gifts. They report that making a gift for and with your child provides an unforgettable and rewarding experience for both parent and offspring. Internet sites are filled with more suggestions for frugal and creative gift ideas than ever.

Our Secret Weapon: the Nativity Fast

Eastern Christians seeking to escape the commerce-driven “spirit of Christmas” have a formidable ally in the Nativity Fast. While the length of the fast varies in the different Churches, the spirit behind it is the same. We best prepare for a Christian festival by intensifying our practice of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. We seek to deepen within ourselves the spirit of repentance which these practices foster. We are, as it were, heeding the message of St John the Baptist – “*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*” – as we anticipate the coming feast as a manifestation of that kingdom.

Putting on the Mind of Christ

At first our prayer life during the Nativity Fast does not revolve around the Nativity itself. The focus of prayer in Byzantine Churches during much of this Fast is simply to deepen our relationship with the living Lord, the basic prayer life of Christians at any time. Our fasting seasons are fundamentally “excuses” giving us a reason to observe a fuller Christian life than we might live otherwise. In the same way our fasting and almsgiving are not focused on Christmas as much as they are the basic practices of believers at any time. We intensify them at this time because a heart focused on the ways of Christ in the best preparation for celebrating His coming into the world.

The Fast Intensifies

As the feast draws nearer our liturgical prayer revolves around the time before the coming of Christ. Several Old Testament prophets are remembered individually, enabling us to focus on their role in preparing for the coming of the Messiah. On the two Sundays before the Nativity a general commemoration of the Israelites who came before Christ and a memorial of the actual ancestors of Christ are observed. During the fore-feast of the Nativity, the five days before the actual celebration, our liturgical hymns direct our attention to the mystery of the incarnation.

Unfortunately the Nativity Fast competes for our attention with the secular season of shopping, Christmas parties and gift exchanges. People seeking to observe the season as Eastern Christians might do well to view the question in light of the adage, “Enjoy the roses, but beware the thorns.” Employ the positive aspects of this season in our culture while avoiding the ones which endanger our Eastern Christian spiritual life.

“*Enjoy the Roses*” might include singing Christmas carols or watching faith-based films instead of our usual entertainment. Religious Christmas cards and decorations are still acceptable in our society and provide us with a chance to enter into the season in the spirit of the Nativity Fast. Perhaps most importantly, our secular society provides us with many opportunities for sharing with the needy during this season. Participating in such programs enables us to practice almsgiving in solidarity with our neighbors of other faiths.

“*Beware the Thorns*” takes us to the matter of Christmas parties. In some places these gatherings more resemble New Year’s Eve or a tailgate party than a Christmas celebration. These Pre-Christmas parties have become a prevailing custom in the society around us and they can make it difficult to participate in the spirit of the fast. In attending these parties, we can usually enjoy the conviviality while avoiding excesses and abstaining from those foods from which we are fasting. In any case Eastern Christian church groups should be expected to delay their own Christmas parties to the week after Christmas, when the fast is over and the Church is still celebrating Christ’s Nativity.

Most parishes have a children’s Christmas celebration which includes gift-giving. As a rule it is St Nicholas rather than Santa who presides at these events in Eastern churches. Still, there are few if any Eastern Christian parishes in the West whose children need to receive gifts from the church. The best gift a parish could give its children might be teaching them to give instead of receive. Children might be asked to give a gift to St Nicholas instead of expecting to receive one. The toys and games our children no longer enjoy can be re-gifted to the disadvantaged in hospitals, shelters or parishes in poorer neighborhoods. In this way we teach our children to be “Santa’s Helpers” rather than the victims of materialism disguised as the Christmas spirit.

Please remember to pray for the health and protection of Genevieve Allen, Olivia Aragon, Elizabeth Ashooh, Elsie Ashooh, Al Auclair, Alice Auclair, Erin Baroody, Michael Baroody, Anthony Blando, Helena Burkush, Fr. Michael Carl, Danielle Caron, Michael Cavanaugh, Meghan Connors, Sarah Cullen, Theresa Cullen, Sher Farrow, Declan Finn, Janet Drake, Julie Fregeau, Mary Fregeau, Peter Fregeau, Christine Freitas, John Gallagher, Loretto Gauvin, Bonnie Gomez, Gail Fisher, Nick Haddad, Lucille Harper, Laura Jorba, Virginia Kearney, Shirley Lanoue, Susan Latvis, Diana Lebel, Peggy Leclear, Sadie Grace McCallum, Miriam McCallum, Susan Merrill, Alfred Nasr, Afef Nasr, Blaise Notter, Steve Notter, Steven O'Leary, Denis O'Keefe, Ellen Osgood, Josephine Paquette, Sheila Quinn, Deborah Roberts, Adam Rubin, Fr. Andre St. Germain, Kara Salvas, Denise Sherburne, Tarrant Smith, Mary Stephen, Catherine Waldron, and Iris Angelina Velasquez.

If you are visiting our church, our parish family is delighted to welcome you here! Please give us the chance to get to know you by joining us for some coffee, pastry, and conversation in the church hall following the Divine Liturgy. If you would like to know more about the Melkite Catholic Church, check out the brochure entitled *"Welcome to this Holy House,"* located on the table in the back of the church.



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