



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. DEACON PAUL LEONARCZYK

*"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 20, 2015 - The First Day of the Forefeast of the Nativity

THE SUNDAY OF THE GENEALOGY OF CHRIST

Parish Advisory & Finance Council:

KEN MONTY (*PRESIDENT*), RICHARD ASHOOH, LUKE ANDERSON, ROBERT ANDERSON,
ROBIN ANDERSON, MARY CULLEN, MARTHA DAGHER, MARYLOU LAZOS, TERRI LEONARCZYK,
MATTHEW LOMANNO, PAUL MANSUR, NAJWA MOUSSOBA, 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

The Troparion of the Preparation of the Nativity of the Lord (4th Tone)

Bethlehem make ready, for Eden has been opened for all. Ephrata be alert for the Tree of Life has blossomed forth from the Virgin in the cave. Her womb has become a spiritual Paradise wherein the divine Fruit was planted, and if we eat of it we shall live, and not die like Adam. Christ is coming forth to bring back to life the likeness that had been lost in the beginning,

The Troparion the Holy Ancestors of Christ (2nd Tone)

Faith can accomplish great things. Through it the three holy young men rejoice in the flames as if they had been in refreshing water, and Daniel in the midst of lions is like a shepherd among his sheep. Through their intercession, O Christ God, save our souls.

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

The Kontakon of the Preparation of the Nativity of the Lord (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: Hebrews 11: 9-10, 32-40 and Matthew 1: 1-25

LITURGY INTENTIONS

Saturday, 4:30 PM:

For the repose of Nabie Sahady (23rd), Jane Ganem (4th), Sophie Ameen (60th), Florence Baroody (44th), Fred Attalla (32nd), Louise Wihby (28th), & George Kessop (21st)

Sunday, 11:00 AM:

For the repose of Ernest Ashooh,
who fell asleep in the Lord on December 10

Next Saturday, 4:30 PM:

For the repose of Adma Solomon (12th), Louise Samara (27th),
Frederick Solomon (13th), and Margaret Marpes (38th)

Next Sunday, 11:00 AM:

For the repose of Ethel Steinmetz (21st), by her son Fr. Tom and Family



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 \$15,000. So far –just one week into the drive –the parish has received \$8,000! Thank you for your generosity.

- Fr. Tom

Christmas Carols: 7:00 PM on Christmas Eve!

Get in the spirit of the season! Come to church early on Christmas Eve and join in the singing of traditional Christmas carols. The caroling will begin at 7:00 PM and conclude at 7:30 PM, when the Divine Liturgy begins.



**This weekend there will be a 2nd collection for flowers for Christmas.
Next weekend there will be a 2nd collection for the mortgage.**

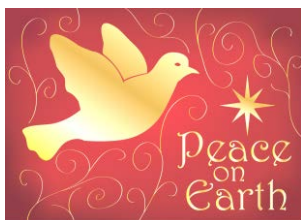
The 2016 offering envelopes are available in the back of the church. If you are not currently receiving envelopes and would like envelopes for 2016, please tell Father Tom.

CHRISTMAS SERVICES

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

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24, at 7:30 PM

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25, at 11:00 AM



**Sunday School will not be held next Sunday, December 27,
or on Sunday, January 3.**

Attendance Last Week: Sat. 4:30 PM: 21 Sun. 11:00 AM: 84

Last Weekend's Collection: \$ 982.⁰⁰

The average Sunday envelope donation: \$44.⁶³

The balance remaining on our mortgage is: \$ 85,436.⁷⁶

SERVICES FOR THE WEEK

Thurs. Dec. 24	7:00 PM	Divine Liturgy: The Feast of the Nativity of the Lord
Fri., Dec. 25	11:00 AM	Divine Liturgy: The Feast of the Nativity of the Lord
Sat., Dec. 26	4:30 PM	Divine Liturgy: The Sunday after the Nativity
Sun., Dec. 27	10:15 AM	Sunday Orthros
Sun., Dec. 27	11:00 AM	Divine Liturgy: The Sunday after the Nativity

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

As we prepare our hearts and our homes to receive the greatest gift in human history—the Nativity of Christ our God—let us not forget our Melkite Church by which Christ comes to our families and loved ones. **Please give a special end-of-year, tax-deductible gift to the Melkite Church** to support all the vital works of our Church in America, and for our suffering and persecuted brothers and sisters.



REMEMBER THE MELKITE CHURCH IN YOUR WILL: Give the lasting gift of the Melkite Faith to your children's children, and help to ensure that our beautiful Melkite heritage continues to flourish for generations to come. 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.

ARE YOU CURIOUS?

What is Religious Life? Is God still calling people to religious life? How do I know if I have a religious vocation? How do you join a religious community? What are the vows?

The Come and See Weekend, January 29-31, 2016, allows single Catholic women to look at these and other questions about religious life. You will meet and talk with Sisters of the Presentation of Mary, have time for quiet prayer, liturgy, group sharing, and relaxation. We begin Friday evening at 4:00 pm and end Sunday at 1:00 pm after lunch. The weekend will take place at Our Lady of Hope House of Prayer, 400 Temple Road, New Ipswich, NH 03071

To register or for more information contact: Sr. Holly Gauthier, p.m.

shollypm@gmail.com, tel #978-701-3013



FISH FRY at Northeast Catholic College

Fish Fry at Northeast Catholic College on Friday, January 15, 2016 from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m., 511 Kearsarge Mountain Road, Warner, NH. \$10 per adult; \$5 per child 6-12; 5 and under Free. Call 603.456.2656 for more information. Also, please visit our website www.NortheastCatholic.edu.

The Melkite Convention is coming to Boston in 2016!

The celebration of the Melkite Convention this year is a special one. It is the 50th Melkite Convention, the 50th Anniversary of the first Melkite Bishop in America, and the 50th Anniversary of the Annunciation Cathedral. It will be held close by, in Boston at the Boston Quincy Marriott, on June 30-July 3. You may make hotel reservations at a group discount rate by calling 617-472-1000, and reserving under “50th National Melkite Convention.” Fr. Philip Raczka, the host of this year's convention, wants our parish to know that those who are interested in day trips to attend only the Divine Services and the Spiritual Workshops may do so and need only pay the minimal convention registration fee!

The Sunday of the Genealogy

On this day the Church commemorates all those who were well-pleasing to God from all ages, from Adam to St Joseph the Betrothed of the Most Holy Theotokos, those who are mentioned in the genealogy of Matthew 1:1-25. The holy prophets and prophetesses are also remembered today, especially the Prophet Daniel and the three holy youths.

Today, as we celebrate the memorial of the Forefathers, let us the faithful raise a hymn to Christ the Redeemer, the Lord who magnifies them among all the nations, and faithfully performs extraordinary wonders, as he is mighty and powerful; and he showed forth from them a rod of power for us, pure Mary the Child of God who alone knew no man, from whom the flower, Christ, came forth, blossoming life for all and pleasure without cost and eternal life.



O people, let us celebrate the forefeast of the Nativity of Christ. Raising our minds on high, let us go to Bethlehem in spirit. With the eyes of the soul, let us gaze upon the Virgin as she hastens to the cave to give birth to our God, the Lord of all. When he beheld this wonder, Joseph thought he saw a mortal wrapped in swaddling clothes; but from all that came to pass, he understood it was the true God, who grants the world great mercy.

Make ready, O Bethlehem! Throw open your gates, O Eden! For He who exists forever comes to be that which He was not; and He who formed all creation now takes a form, granting the world great mercy.

Make ready, O cave, to receive the Mother who bears Christ within her womb. O manger, receive the Word who destroyed the sins of mankind. O shepherds, keep watch and then bear witness to the awesome wonder. O Magi, come from Persia and bring your gifts to the King. For the Lord has appeared from a Virgin Mother, yet she bowed to Him as a servant and spoke to Him within her heart saying, “How were You conceived in my? How did You grow in me, O Jesus, my Savior and my God?”

— *From Vespers for the Paramony of the Nativity of the Lord*

The Sprout from Israel's Root

FROM DECEMBER 20 TO 24 we observe a five-day “holy week” during which Christ’s birth seems ever closer. This fore-feast of the Nativity culminates on December 24, the *Paramony* of the feast. During these days we focus on how the birth of the long-expected Messiah is at hand. As we sing during those days, “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.”

The hope that One would come to deliver God’s people from their enemies is found throughout the Old Testament. In Numbers 24 we read a prophecy of Balaam, “*I see a star that rises out of Jacob, a stem that springs from Israel’s root; one who shall lay low the chiefs of Moab, shall bring devastation on all the posterity of Seth*” (v.17). The “star rising out of Jacob” is a way of saying “a descendant of Jacob.” As we read in Matthew’s genealogy, Jesus was a descendant of Jacob.

This expected one was clearly a national leader who would deliver the Israelites from their enemies. Jewish people expected this kind of savior throughout their history. Some Jews, however, looked for more. They read God’s promise to David to mean that the kingdom of Solomon would endure forever: “*When your days are ended, and you are laid to rest beside your fathers, I will grant you for successor a son of your own body, established firmly on his throne. He it is who shall build a house to do my name honor. I will prolong forever his royal dynasty*” (2 Sam 7:12-13). As we read in Matthew’s genealogy, Jesus was a descendant of David.

The prophets deepened the Jews’ understanding of just who the Messiah would be. We read in Isaiah 40, “*Tell the cities of Juda, See, your God comes! See, the Lord God is coming, revealed in power, with his own strong arm for warrant; and see, they come with him, they walk before him, the reward of his labor, the achievement of his task, his own flock! Like a shepherd he tends them, gathers up the lambs and carries them in his bosom*” (vv. 10, 11). The promised One is the Lord Himself, our Good Shepherd.

The Tree of Life

Every day during the fore-feast of the Nativity we sing the following troparion: *Bethlehem, make ready for Eden has been opened for all. Ephrata, be alert for the Tree of Life has blossomed forth from the Virgin in the cave. Her womb had become a spiritual Paradise, wherein the divine Fruit was planted – and if we eat of it we shall live and not die like Adam. Christ is coming forth to bring back to life the likeness that had been lost in the beginning.*

Like much of our liturgical hymnody, this troparion incorporates a theme drawn from the writings of the Church Fathers: “*The Fruit of righteousness and the Tree of Life is Christ. He alone, as man, fulfilled all righteousness. And with His own underived life He has brought forth the*



fruits of knowledge and virtue like a tree, whereof they that eat shall receive eternal life, and shall enjoy the tree of life in paradise, with Adam and all the righteous”(St Hippolytus of Rome, Commentary on Proverbs).

In the Genesis story of creation the Tree of Life was the giver of immortality from which fallen man could not be allowed to eat (see *Gen 3:22*). Were he to do so, Genesis suggests, sin would live forever. For us, however, Christ is the source of our immortality. He is the Tree of Life and, sinners though we are, we are called to eat of this Tree and live forever.

We also find the Tree of Life in the last chapter of Revelation. There the Tree is in the center of the New Jerusalem, the ultimate Paradise. For St Augustine and other Fathers, “Paradise is the Church, as it is called in the Canticles...the Tree of life is the holy of holies, Christ...” (St Augustine, *The City of God*). Christ, at the heart of the Church, gives us life through the Holy Spirit who works in the Church.

In our troparion Christ is called the Fruit planted in the spiritual paradise of the Virgin’s womb. As Mary’s cousin Elizabeth proclaimed – with countless generations after her – “*Blessed is the Fruit of your womb!*” (*Lk 1:42*)

The Paramony of the Nativity

Usually translated as vigil or eve, *paramony* actually refers to the *uninterrupted* nature of the Church’s prayer on this day. During the day the lengthier Great Hours or Royal Hours are chanted.

The *Royal Hours* replace the ordinary First, Third, Sixth and Ninth Hours, served every day in Byzantine practice. They contain some different psalms as well as readings from both the Old and New Testaments. While for most of the year the Hours are “cell services” – without choral responses or accompanying ritual, meant to be served by monastics in their cells (or by anyone at work or at home), the Royal Hours are served solemnly in church with hymns, Scripture readings and ceremony, concluding with the Typika. The name “Royal Hours” comes from the practice of the Great Church in Constantinople. The emperor and his court would attend the Hours on these days, emphasizing their importance in the life of the Church.

The Royal Hours are served on the Paramony of Christmas, the Paramony of the Theophany and on Great and Holy Friday, which we might call the “Paramony of Pascha.” In addition, some Greek Churches serve the Royal Hours on the Eve of Pentecost as well, but without fasting.

A Day of Fasting

The Paramony is a strict fast day. Many people don’t eat anything until the evening. This is why the Divine Liturgy is not served until the end of the fasting day, when it is joined to a more elaborate than usual Great Vespers. As on other fast days, the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil is prescribed for Christmas Eve.

In the fullest observance a special service of Great Compline with a Litia for the feast ends the day. Sometimes this leads directly into the Orthros and Divine Liturgy of December 25. The same order is also prescribed for the Eve of the Theophany.

In some countries of Eastern Europe the Paramony culminates with a Holy Supper of twelve vegan courses representing the apostles. In the Balkans wheat pies and kutia (boiled wheat) are popular on this day.

Please remember to pray for the health and protection of Genevieve Allen, Elizabeth Ashooh, Elsie Ashooh, Louise Ashooh, Al Auclair, Alice Auclair, Erin Baroody, Michael Baroody, Sarah Beadle, Anthony Blando, Helena Burkush, Fr. Michael Carl, Danielle Caron, Michael Cavanaugh, Meghan Connors, Theresa Cullen, Jamileh Dagher, Sher Farrow, Declan Finn, Janet Drake, Julie Fregeau, Mary Fregeau, Peter Fregeau, Christine Freitas, John Gallagher, Loretto Gauvin, Nick Haddad, Jean Hannoush, Lucille Harper, Howard Jabaley, Laura Jorba, Virginia Kearney, Shirley Lanoue, Susan Latvis, Roger Lawrence, Peggy Leclare, Sadie Grace McCallum, Miriam McCallum, Susan Merrill, Margaret Mitchell, Alfred Nasr, Afef Nasr, Blaise Notter, Steven O'Leary, Denis O'Keefe, Ellen Osgood, Josephine Paquette, Russell Pond, Sheila Quinn, Deborah Roberts, Adam Rubin, Fr. Andre St. Germain, Nassim Sleiman, Salwa Sleiman, Tarrant Smith, Mary Stephen, Catherine Waldron, Laura Weingast, 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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