

St. Michael Antiochian Orthodox Church of the San Fernando Valley
a Parish of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America
16643 Vanowen Street; Van Nuys, California; 91406 stmichaelvannuys.org

His Eminence, Metropolitan SABA, of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian
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The Sunday before the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

After-feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos

Martyrs Menodora, Metrodora and Nymphodora of Bithynia;
Empress Pulcheria; Peter, Bishop of Nicaea

Sunday, September 10, 2023

Tone 5; Eothinon 3

Apolytikion for the Resurrection (Tone 5)

Let us believers praise and worship the Word; coeternal with the Father and the Spirit, born of the Virgin for our salvation. For, He took pleasure in ascending the Cross in the flesh to suffer death; and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.

Apolytikion of the Nativity of the Theotokos (Tone 4)

Thy nativity, O Theotokos, hath proclaimed joy to the whole universe; for from thee did shine forth the Sun of justice, Christ our God, annulling the curse, and bestowing the blessing, abolishing death and granting us life everlasting.

Apolytikion for our Patron, Michael the Archangel (Tone 2)

O ye foremost of the heavenly hosts, we beseech thee, though we are unworthy, pray that we may be encompassed with a shadow of thine unearthly glory; preserving us who kneel and cry endlessly: Deliver us from oppression since ye are the prince of the highest powers.

Kontakion of the Nativity of the Theotokos (Tone 4)

By thy holy nativity, O pure one, Joachim and Anna were delivered from the reproach of barrenness; and Adam and Eve were delivered from the corruption of death; thy people do celebrate it, having been saved from the stain of iniquity, crying unto thee: The barren doth give birth to the Theotokos, who nourisheth our life.

Daily Readings

THE EPISTLE (for the Sunday before the Elevation of the Cross)

O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance.
To Thee, O Lord, I have cried, O my God.

**The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians
(6:11-18)**

Brethren, see with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who receive circumcision do not themselves keep the Law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. Peace and mercy be upon all, who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God. Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

THE GOSPEL (for the Sunday before the Elevation of the Cross)

**The Reading of the Holy Gospel is according to St. John
(3:13-17)**

The Lord said, "No one has ascended into heaven but He who descended from heaven, the Son of man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."

The Synaxarion

On September 10 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we continue to celebrate the Nativity of the Theotokos; and we commemorate the Martyrs Menodora, Metrodora and Nymphodora of Bithynia.

Verses

Menodora, Metrodora, and Nymphodora,

The Lord's adorers, are now adorned in the Heavens.

On the tenth, the three namesakes of gifts were struck to death.

These sisters grew up in the Faith in Asian Bithynia. They withdrew to the wilderness and dedicated themselves to great labor, fasting and prayer. God adorned them with the gift of miracle-working. A certain governor, Fronton, called for them. Although they were great fasters and

their bodies were withered, their faces were radiant, illumined by inward peace and the grace of God. He ordered that Menodora be tortured first. Fronton called out to Menodora, who was wounded and bloody: “Offer sacrifice to the gods!” To this the holy martyr replied: “Do you not see that I am offering my entire self as a sacrifice to my God?” When Menodora gave up her spirit, the governor brought out her two sisters, and stood them by the body of Menodora, where he counseled them to deny Christ. Since they remained steadfast, he slew them by harsh tortures. Just then, a thunderbolt struck from heaven, and killed the soulless Fronton and his servants. The sisters suffered in the fourth century and found rest in the Kingdom of Christ.

On this day, we also commemorate the Empress Pulcheria; and Peter, bishop of Nicaea. By the intercessions of Thy saints, O Christ God, have mercy upon us. Amen.

LITURGICAL CALENDAR

NOTE: Wednesdays and Fridays are observed as days of fasting

Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross – Thursday, Sept. 14th

[observed as a day of strict fasting (dry eating of uncooked foods)]

Wednesday, September 13 - Great Vespers, 6 p.m.

Thursday, September 14 - Divine Liturgy, 10 a.m.

The Sunday after the Elevation of the Holy Cross

Great Vespers – Saturday, September 16th, 5 p.m.

Orthros – Sunday, September 17th, 8:45 a.m., Divine Liturgy, 10 a.m.

with the Procession of the Holy Cross

[Next Sunday, the Procession of the Holy Cross will precede the reading of the Holy Gospel. It is important that we gather for Liturgy on time at the start of the Divine Liturgy]

OFFERINGS

Holy Bread is being offered with prayers for the passing of Lou Aboud, Jr. (+3 September, 2023), with love, by the Deeb, Kouri and Najjar families. We will never forget the wonderful memories with our cousin Lou! Memory eternal.

Memorial Wheat is being offered by the Ababseh family with prayers for the repose of the newly-departed servant of God Daher Ababseh (+7 September, 2023) beloved husband, father, grandfather, brother, brother-in-law, uncle. Memory eternal.

Funeral Schedule: Friday, September 15 — viewing, 8:30 a.m. prior to The Funeral Service at 10 a.m., followed by the Graveside Trisagion at Ascension Cemetery (1380 Fitzgerald Road; Simi Valley 93065)

Special offerings and requests for prayers are being made . . .

for the recovery and continued health of Scotty Shaheen
by Diana & Riad Nasser.

for the family of the V. Rev. Antony Bahou; especially his khouriye Dina and daughter, Eliana. May they be blessed with strength, good health and a speedy recovery.

for the continued health of Jake Thomas.

in loving memory of Adeeb Sadd (+31 August, 2011).
Memory eternal.

for the continued recovery and good health of Marsha Terry
by Charlotte Murr and family.

by Rachel Grundler for the healing good health of Mike Zwaaf.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Weekly Bible Study Tuesday (September 12)

Our next Bible Study will be held on Tuesday evening, September 12th, at 7 p.m. We are nearing the completion our study of the Book of Exodus (Chapters 34-40). A link to the Zoom meeting will be sent out in an e-mail. Sessions are recorded for those unable to attend who may also request the link to the study. Plan to join us.

Parish Council Meeting

The next Parish Council Meeting is scheduled for Monday, September 18, 2023.

A Prayer for September 11th

O Thou who didst pray for them that crucified Thee and who didst commend Thy servants to pray for their enemies, forgive, O Lord, those who hate and maltreat us, and turn our lives, and the lives of all those who suffered at the hands of our enemies, from all harm and evil to brotherly love and good works. For this we humbly bring our prayer, that with one accord and one heart we may glorify Thee who alone art the Lover of mankind. And as Thy first martyr Stephen prayed to Thee for those who slew him, so we fall down before Thee and pray: Forgive, O Lord, all those who hate us and maltreat us, and let not one of them perish because of us, but be saved by Thy grace. Set our hearts on fire with love for Thee, O Christ our God, that in its flame we may love Thee with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul and with all our strength, and our neighbors as ourselves, so that, keeping Thy commandments, we may glorify Thee together with Thine unoriginate Father and Thine all-holy and good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Parish Council Nominations

On Sunday, November 19, 2022 we will be holding a brief virtual and in-person Special Meeting of the Voting Membership solely for the purpose of receiving and accepting nominations for Parish Council members to be elected for there (3), three-year terms (January, 2024 to December, 2026). At this meeting the Nominations Committee will present their report and additional nominations will be open from the floor.

It is important that persons being considered be able to fulfill the commitment to serve. Therefore it is necessary that all nominees first be personally asked if they would accept nomination, and second be approved by the Pastor as someone who is qualified. The Parish Constitution prescribes that all nominees must be at least twenty-five years of age or older, have been a pledging members of the parish for at least one year and have fulfilled the canonical requirements of the Faith [Article VI, Sec. 2]. The nominees must also be committed in attending monthly Parish Council meetings held on the third (3rd) Sunday of each month.

We sincerely thank Connie Abdun-Nur Barilla [having service eight (8) consecutive years, and this year as Council Chair; unable to be nominated or appointed]; Joe Ayoub [ending his second (2nd) term; unable to be nominated; able to be appointed]; Deacon Andrew Monsue [ending his second (2nd) term; unable to be nominated; able to be appointed]; and Judy Bitar [completing her first (1st) term; able to be nominated or appointed]. Our one-year appointed members whose terms are expiring are: Michael Mitchell [completing his first (1st) year appointed and able to be nominated], and Maria Safady [completing her second (2nd) year appointed; able to be nominated or appointed].

If necessary, the Parish Council election will be held on two (2) consecutive Sundays: November 26 and December 3. Council members whose terms are unexpired are: Subdeacon Richard Ajalat, John Khouri, Britton McLinn, Constantine Nasr, Michael Paraskevas and Kris Thabit. Charmaine Darmour is also completing her twelfth (12th) consecutive year as President of the Antiochian Women. All interested in serving on the Parish Council should contact: Kris Thabit, Nominations Chair at: kthabit66@hotmail.com or speak with Father Timothy.

Use of Assembly Hall and In-House Caterers

St. Michael Church will provide its ballroom and kitchen for special events, i.e., parties and receptions, with an established donation fee for parishioner requests made on an individual basis. Also, we welcome licensed caterers who may be interested in use of our kitchen. Please contact either: Connie Barilla: <cmatthews46@yahoo.com>, Michael Mitchell <mgmitchell3@gmail.com>, or Father Timothy for more information.

Upcoming Events

[Note: You may now access our Google Parish Calendar to your personal calendar.

Simply go to: <https://calendar.google.com/calendar/u/1?cid=YWRtaW5Ac3RtaWNoYWVsdmFubnV5cy5vcmcj>

Ladies Fellowship Brunch - Saturday, September 23, 2023 from 10 a.m. to 12 noon; RSVP to Charmaine Darmour at: 714-287-1266

First Sunday of Church School - September 24th

Young Adult Wine and Cheese - Friday, September 29 at 7 p.m.
(5849 Ranchito Ave., Sherman Oaks, 91401); RSVP to William Nehme
(See flier with this bulletin)

Lake Balboa Neighborhood Town Hall - Saturday, October 14, 2023
at 1 p.m. Discussion on State Housing Mandate

St. Nicholas Cathedral Festival - Saturday, Sunday, October 7-8, 2023
Saturday, 3-11 p.m., Sunday, 12 noon to 10 p.m.

Diocesan Fall Gathering - Friday-Sunday, October 13-15, 2023
Hosted by St. James Church (Modesto, California); Register at:
saintjamesmodesto.org

St. Michael Feast Day Celebration - Saturday-Sunday, November 4-5

Special Meeting of the Voting Membership
for Accepting Parish Council Nominations - Sunday, November 19

Church School Christmas Program - Sunday, December 10

Our 2023 Pledge Form Provided with this Bulletin

Our parish depends upon the financial pledge commitments of its members in order to meet its monthly expenses. Our 2023 budget has included the increase of costs and was expanded to include additional maintenance expenses for our new church sanctuary. A hardcopy of the Pledge Form is provided with this bulletin, is also available in the church narthex, or will be mailed to you by request.

As a committed member of St. Michael Church, please complete a new 2023 form. An annual "Fair Share Contribution" is paid by St. Michael Church to the Archdiocese (\$50/adult; \$35/17 years of age or under). If you have completed a Pledge Form and would like to receive an six-month update of your contributions, please send your request to our Treasurer, Britton McLinn at: britton@stmichaelvannuys.org Our Six-month Financial Summary will be soon mailed to our members. Thank you.

St. Michael Antiochian Orthodox Church
16643 Vanowen Street, Van Nuys, CA 91406 Phone: 818-994-2313
Website: www.stmichaelvannuys.org

2023 CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT FORM

1. All enrolled members must first fulfill a fair share contribution that is paid 100% by St. Michael Church to the Archdiocese annually (this does not include your family pledge obligation BELOW).

Total number of baptized Orthodox persons (age 18 & above) in your household _____ \$50 each _____

Total number of baptized Orthodox persons (age 17 & under) in your household _____ \$35 each _____

(Please print all names with information in the section below)

2. In gratitude of God's blessings, I / we pledge to contribute St. Michael Church expenses.

A total annual amount of: ____ (see Treasure self-assessment chart)

\$ _____ weekly \$ _____ monthly \$ _____ quarterly \$ _____ semi-annually \$ _____ annually

Name _____ Spouse Name _____

Phone number _____ E-mail Address _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

3. How do you wish to pay? We accept personal checks or credit card payments. (See below)

- a. You may write a check to "St. Michael Church" and mail it to the Church Office. (see address above)
- b. You may process an "automatic bill pay" with your bank that will mail a recurring monthly hard-copy earmarked check to St. Michael Church.
- c. You may pay by credit card using our website donation page (a 3% processing fee will apply) at: <https://www.stmichaelvannuys.org/donate/> and we will be immediately notified.
- d. You may arrange for a recurring monthly automatic withdrawal from your bank account using our church bank routing number and bank account.

Note: Each donation to St. Michael Church should be earmarked, i.e., "Building Fund," "Pledge," etc.

Print names of baptized Orthodox persons in your household.

Name Age

Name Age

Name Age

Name Age

Name Age



ST. MICHAEL CHURCH SCHOOL 2023 - 2024

REGISTER NOW!

START DATE

SEP 24TH

CURRICULUM

ROMANS

CLASSES

Pre-K - Kindergarten

1st - 3rd Grade

4th - 6th Grade

7th - 12th Grade



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT COOPER ROWE
SUPERINTENDENT@STMICHAELVANNUYS.ORG



ST MICHAEL LADIES FELLOWSHIP BRUNCH



**Let's come together as Sisters in Christ
for a Fellowship Brunch. An opportunity
to get to know one another better.**

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23RD
10AM - 12:30PM
OUR CHURCH HALL**



**RSVP to Charmaine at 714-287-1266
Please advise if you can
bring a dish to share**

**We will also be collecting baby
supplies for the OPEN ARMS
Pregnancy Center in Northridge.
Baby clothes, diapers, blankets,
wipes, pacifiers, teething rings, etc.
Things to help moms
who have chosen LIFE.**



ST. MICHAEL ANTIOCHIAN CHURCH
Young Adults

CHEESE & WINE

NIGHT

| Sept 29

07.00 PM



Join us for a night of wine
and cheese and fellowship,
Hosted by Will & Bre

5849 Ranchito Ave Sherman Oaks, California 91401

Note to Coffee Hour hosts: coffee and paper goods will be provided each week.

Holy Bread Offering List

Coffee Hour Hosts Calendar

Sep 14 (Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross) - open

Sep 17 - open

Sep 24 - open

Oct 01 - open

Please contact Fr. Timothy (818/219-3761; frtimothy@stmichaelvannuys.org) to sign-up to offer Holy Bread or host the coffee hour.

Sale of Storage Items

Furniture in a that needs to be sold in a Mission Hills Self Storage unit is available for anyone interested by contacting Father Timothy for more information at: 818-219-3761 or at: frtimothy@stmichaelvannuys.org

Stock Donation Option

A charitable donation of long-term appreciated securities, i.e., stocks, bonds and/or mutual funds that have realized significant appreciation over time is one of the best and most tax-efficient of all ways to support St. Michael Church. There are two main advantages: 1) Any long-term appreciated securities with unrealized gains (meaning they were purchased over a year ago, and have a current value greater than their original cost) may be donated to the church with the benefit of receiving a tax deduction for the full fair value of the securities—up to 60% of the donor's adjusted gross income; 2) since the securities/stock is being donated rather than sold, capital gains taxes from selling the securities no longer apply. And the more appreciation the securities have, the greater the tax savings will be. Please speak with or contact Ron Zraick, Chair of the Capital Funds Campaign Committee for more information at: <ronaldzraick@yahoo.com>.

Camp St. Nicholas Resident Manager Sought

The Resident Manager at Camp St Nicholas in Frazier Park CA has submitted her resignation after twelve years of service. We are now actively seeking candidates to interview for this position. The position is an exempt, full time, salaried position. It is required that the candidate reside

at the house provided on the camp site for this purpose (the cathedral covers all utilities and repairs required at the house). The position includes the same healthcare benefits offered to all full time employees of St Nicholas Cathedral, and currently also includes a small life insurance policy. For more information, please contact Father Andrew Andrews at: frandrewa@stnicholasla.com

EOTHINON 2

الايوثينا 2

STONE 4

اللحن 4

THE SUNDAY BEFORE THE ELEVATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

THE AFTER-FAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS

Martyrs Menodora, Metrodora and Nymphodora of Bithynia;

Empress Pulcheria; Peter, bishop of Nicaea

أبوليتيكيون القيامة باللحن الخامس

لِنُسَبِّحْ نَحْنُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَنَسْجُدْ لِلْكَمِةِ، الْمُسَاوِي لِأَبِ وَالرُّوحِ فِي الْأَزَلِيَّةِ وَعَدَمِ الْإِبْتِدَاءِ،
الْمَوْلُودِ مِنَ الْعَذْرَاءِ لِخَلَاصِنَا، لِأَنَّهُ سُرَّ بِالْجَسَدِ أَنْ يَعْلوَ عَلَى الصَّلِيبِ، وَيَحْتَمِلَ الْمَوْتَ،
وَيُنْهَضَ الْمَوْتَى بِقِيَامَتِهِ الْمَجِيدَةِ.

أبوليتيكيون لميلاد والدة الإله باللحن الرابع

مِيلَادُكَ يَا وَالِدَةَ الْإِلَهِ، بَشَّرَ بِالْفَرَحِ كُلَّ الْمَسْكُونَةِ، لِأَنَّهُ مِنْكَ أَشْرَقَ شَمْسُ الْعَدْلِ الْمَسِيحِ
إِلَهْنَا، فَحَلَّ اللَّعْنَةَ، وَوَهَبَ الْبَرَكَةَ، وَأَبْطَلَ الْمَوْتَ، وَأَعْطَانَا حَيَاةً أَبَدِيَّةً.

طروبارية رؤساء الملائكة باللحن الرابع

أَيُّهَا الْمَتَقَدِّمُونَ عَلَى الْأَجْنَادِ السَّمَاوِيِّينَ، نَتَوَسَّلُ إِلَيْكُمْ نَحْنُ غَيْرِ الْمَسْتَحَقِّينَ، حَتَّى أَنْكُمْ
بَطْلِبَاتِكُمْ تَكْتَنُوفُونَا بِظُلْمِ أَجْنَحَةِ مَجْدِكُمْ غَيْرِ الْهَيُولِيِّ، حَافِظِينَ إِيَّانَا نَحْنُ الْجَائِثِينَ
وَالصَّارِحِينَ بِغَيْرِ فِتْرِ، أَنْقَذُونَا مِنَ الشَّدَائِدِ، بِمَا أَنْكُمْ رُؤَسَاءُ مَرَاتِبِ الْقَوَاتِ الْعُلُويَّةِ.

القنطاق لميلاد والدة الإله باللحن الرابع

إِنَّ يُوَاكِيمَ وَحَنَّةَ مِنْ عَارِ الْعُقْرِ أُطْلِقَا، وَآدَمَ وَحَوَاءَ مِنْ فَسَادِ الْمَوْتِ، بِمَوْلِدِكَ الْمُقَدَّسِ يَا طَاهِرَةً أُعْتِقَا. فَلَهُ يُعِيدُ شَعْبِكَ، وَقَدْ تَخَلَّصَ مِنْ وَصْمَةِ الرِّلَّاتِ، صَارِحًا نَحْوِكَ: الْعَاقِرُ تَلِدُ وَالِدَةَ الْإِلَهِ الْمُغَذِّيَةَ حَيَاتِنَا.

الرسالة

خَلِّصْ يَا رَبُّ شَعْبَكَ وَبَارِكْ مِيرَاثَكَ

إِلَيْكَ يَا رَبُّ أَصْرَحُ إِلَهِي

***فَصَلِّ مِنْ رِسَالَةِ الْقَدِيسِ بُولَسِ الرَّسُولِ إِلَى أَهْلِ غَلَاطِيَةَ**

يَا إِخْوَةَ، انظُرُوا مَا أَعْظَمَ الْكِتَابَاتِ الَّتِي كَتَبْتُهَا إِلَيْكُمْ بِيَدِي. إِنَّ كُلَّ الَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُرْضُوا بِحَسَبِ الْجَسَدِ يُلْزِمُونَكُمْ أَنْ تَخْتَبِتُوا، وَإِنَّمَا ذَلِكَ لِنَلَّا يَضْطَهَدُوا مِنْ أَجْلِ صَلِيبِ الْمَسِيحِ. لِأَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَخْتَبِتُونَ هُمْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ لَا يَحْفَظُونَ النَامُوسَ بَلْ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَخْتَبِتُوا لِيَفْتَحُوا بِأَجْسَادِكُمْ. أَمَّا أَنَا، فَحَاشَى لِي أَنْ أَفْتَحِرَ إِلَّا بِصَلِيبِ رَبَّنَا يَسُوعَ الْمَسِيحِ، الَّذِي بِهِ صُلِبَ الْعَالَمُ لِي وَأَنَا صُلِبْتُ لِلْعَالَمِ. لِأَنَّهُ فِي الْمَسِيحِ يَسُوعَ لَيْسَ الْخِتَانُ بِشَيْءٍ وَلَا الْقَلْفُ بَلِ الْخَلِيقَةُ الْجَدِيدَةُ. وَكُلُّ الَّذِينَ يَسْلُكُونَ بِحَسَبِ هَذَا الْقَانُونِ، فَعَلَيْهِمْ سَلَامٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَعَلَى إِسْرَائِيلَ اللَّهُ. فَلَا يَجْلِبُ عَلَيَّ أَحَدٌ أَتْعَابًا فِيمَا بَعْدُ، فَإِنِّي حَامِلٌ فِي جَسَدِي سِمَاتِ الرَّبِّ يَسُوعَ. نِعْمَةُ رَبَّنَا يَسُوعَ الْمَسِيحِ مَعَ رُوحِكُمْ أَيُّهَا الْإِخْوَةُ. آمِينَ.

الإنجيل المقدس

فَصَلِّ شَرِيفٌ مِنْ بَشَارَةِ الْقَدِيسِ يُوْحَنَّا الْإِنْجِيلِيِّ الْبَشِيرِ وَالتَّلْمِيزِ الطَاهِرِ

قَالَ الرَّبُّ: لَمْ يَصْعَدْ أَحَدٌ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ إِلَّا الَّذِي نَزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ، ابْنُ الْبَشَرِ الَّذِي هُوَ فِي السَّمَاءِ * وَكَمَا رَفَعَ مُوسَى الْحَيَّةَ فِي الْبَرِّيَّةِ، هَكَذَا يَنْبَغِي أَنْ يُرْفَعَ ابْنُ الْبَشَرِ * لِكَيْ لَا يَهْلِكَ كُلُّ مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ، بَلْ تَكُونَ لَهُ الْحَيَاةُ الْأَبَدِيَّةُ * لِأَنَّهُ هَكَذَا أَحَبَّ اللَّهُ الْعَالَمَ، حَتَّى بَدَّلَ ابْنَهُ الْوَحِيدَ لِكَيْ لَا يَهْلِكَ كُلُّ مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ، بَلْ تَكُونَ لَهُ الْحَيَاةُ الْأَبَدِيَّةُ * فَإِنَّهُ لَمْ يُرْسِلِ اللَّهُ ابْنَهُ الْوَحِيدَ إِلَى الْعَالَمِ لِيَدِينِ الْعَالَمَ، بَلْ لِيُخَلِّصَ بِهِ الْعَالَمَ.

إن مفهومنا لتناول القربان يعنى عمومية المشاركة فيه لذوى العقيدة الواحدة، إلا إن المشاركة في سر القربان المقدس هنا مقتصر فقط على أعضاء الكنائس الارثوذكسية والذين يحضرون أنفسهم بالصلاة والصوم والاعتراف منذ فترة قريبة (وعلى كل حال، فإننا ندعو الجميع للمشاركة في الخبز المقدس الذى يوزع عند إنتهاء مراسيم القداس). رجاء مراجعة الكاهن. إذا رغبت أن تصبح عضواً في الكنيسة الارثوذكسية.

Pastor's Sermon
The Sunday before the Elevation of the Cross
By V. Rev. Timothy Baclig
September 10, 2023

The Feast and message of the Holy Cross speak to us as parents, grandparents, godparents and teachers. The Church places great emphasis on the meaning of the Cross this week that it includes three (3) gospel lessons, beginning with The Sunday before the Feast (Sunday, September 10), The day of The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14), and The Sunday after the Feast (next Sunday, September 17).

The lesson points to the many choices we face as children, young people, young adults, husbands, wives, parents, godparents; choices that always begin with parenting and the challenge to love with the sacrificial love of God. It is the same lesson heard in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism when Godparents are reminded of their commitment to Christ and their responsibility to teach their Godchildren by example (word and deed). It is the same lesson heard in the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony when a couple is challenged to love as Christ loved the church, “submitting to one another out of reverence of Christ.” It is the same lesson heard at the time of an ordination when one responds to God’s call to service. It is also the lesson learned in the Sacrament of Healing, and includes the Sacrament of Confession and reconciliation.

With each Sacrament, the lesson remains the same: Love is never mastered. It is always tested. It is grounded in commitment and devotion.

It always begins in humility. It is selfless and (as we hear St. Paul say) is not proud, not rude or boastful, does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It is full of mercy. It protects, trusts, hopes, perseveres. It grows with patience and is never practiced in a vacuum. It is greater than faith and hope [see I Corinthians 13]. Love is eternal.

In today's gospel we clearly hear that love took the initiative: *God so loved the world that He gave...* It is sacrificial but not presumptuous; not without consideration or thoughtfulness. God's love is also not conditional. He did not say: "Get your act together and I'll love you." His love is not, "I'll love you if..." or "I'll love you when..." It's not even something He needed to explain: "I love you because..." His love is grounded in His relationship with His creation. And as the Author of Life, however, His love is also not permissive. It cares. It speaks the truth, but lovingly. It extends itself. It reaches out. Consequently, as Christians: Love works with others for a greater good and considers a team effort more important than one's personal agenda or interest.

The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross is always on the 14th of September. While it is a day with historical significance tied to the Holy City of Jerusalem and specifically the Church of the Holy Resurrection—that we today, celebrate its dedication; the Feast of the Cross is observed as a day of strict fasting because (like the fast on Wednesday of each weekday), we are reminded of our Lord's passion; and like the fast of the Friday of each weekday, we are reminded of our Lord's Death.

Thursday's Divine Liturgy will take place at 10 a.m. The Gospel reading for the Feast is of our Lord's judgment and crucifixion, reminding us of his passion; his saving work. It is the most important Feast of the fall season, celebrating the redeeming love of God and renewing our lives and equipping us with virtue of spiritual power.

We are reminded that the Holy Cross is called the "life-giving" Cross: **A sign of hope**, as Christ is seen not as a victim but victor: He who

trampled down death by Death. It is a symbol of God's unconditional love as we hear in today's Gospel. The Feast of the Holy Cross is among several days in the Church calendar devoted to the theme of God's boundless love, His supreme sacrifice and what it means to committed to Christ. Finally, the Holy Cross is for us an ironic emblem. It called a "weapon of peace" and and "trophy invincible." It is the symbol of deliverance and healing. For St. Paul the Cross is our boast. It is the cause of joy because its end is God's victory over sin and death: His triumph in the Holy Resurrection!

These very facts are heard in the content of today's short and very concise Gospel lesson: *"No one has ascended into heaven but He who descended from heaven, the Son of man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."*

As Christians we must now be vigilant in knowing how to respond and not react to all that we see and hear around us. In every circumstance our response is in love. That love, however, is grounded in the truth. And our actions cannot be anything other than what is rooted in all that Christ has fulfilled and accomplished for us.

Prayer

O Lord, save your people and bless your inheritance, granting victory over the adversary and by the power of your life-giving Cross, guard and protect all who follow Thee!