

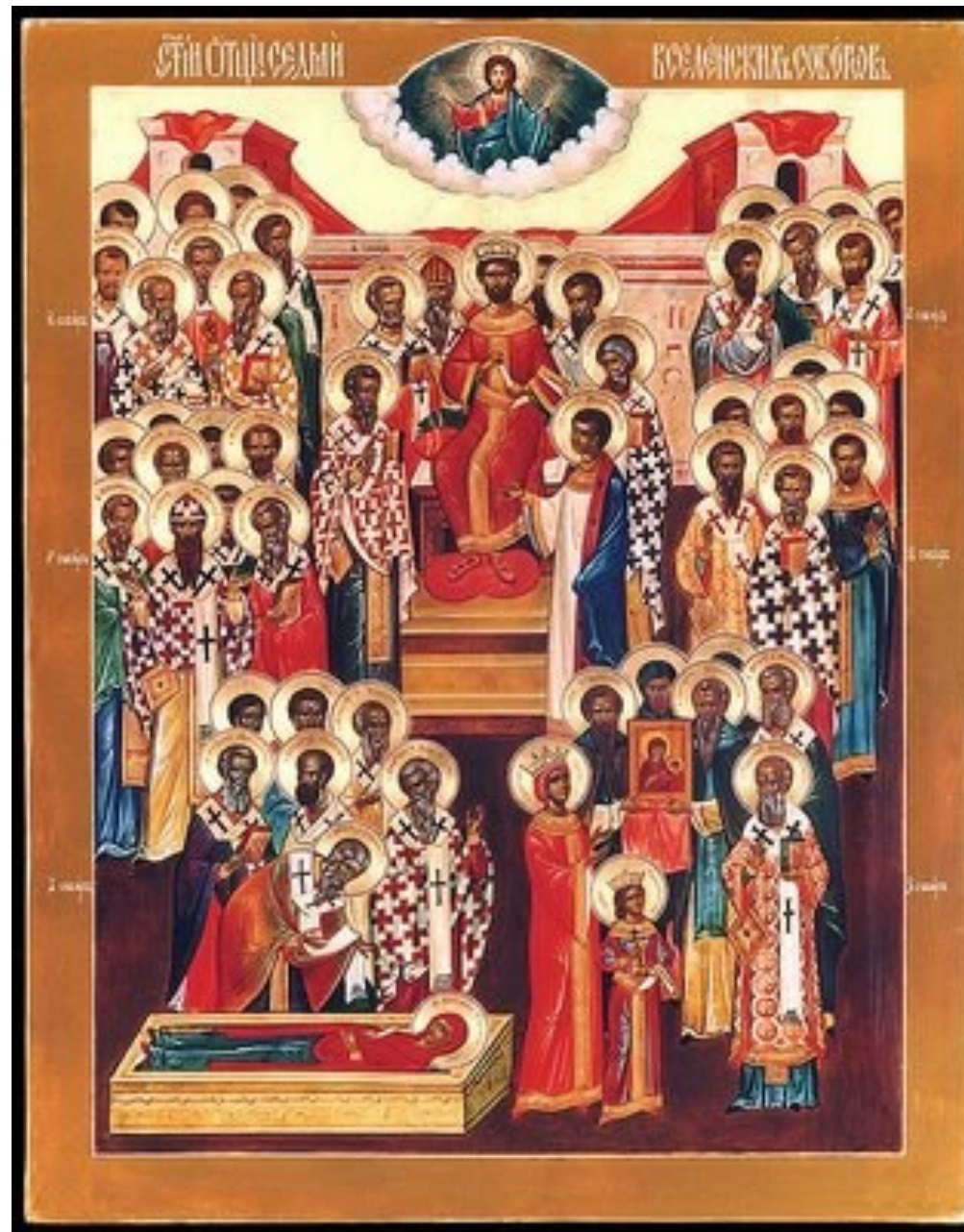
*From the Divine Office for the Feast of the Ascension*

*After fulfilling the mystery of the plan of redemption, O Lord, You took Your Apostles and went up with them to the Mount of Olives, and there You passed beyond the firmament of heaven. O You who humbled Yourself to become a man like us, and went up to the place from which, as God, You never had been separated: send down Your all-holy Spirit to enlighten our souls! (Vespers)*

*O Christ, when You came to the Mount of Olives to accomplish the good will of the Father, the Angels were astonished in heaven while the demons trembled in the underworld. The Apostles were filled with reverence and joy, as You spoke in their midst. A cloud stood before You prepared as a throne; heaven opened its gates, radiant in beauty; the earth uncovered its depths to show both Adam's fall and his raising up toward You. As an invisible power lifted You up towards the sun, You blessed them aloud with Your hands extended; the cloud carried You up into heaven which opened to receive You. This is the great and glorious deed, O Lord, which You carried out for the salvation of our souls. (Lete)*



**SUNDAY OF THE FATHERS OF THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA  
MAY 17, 2026**



**Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church**

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**Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM**

**Antiphon (Feast)**

1-Great is the Lord and wholly to be praised in the city of our God, on His holy mountain  
*O Son of God Who gloriously ascended into heaven, save us who sing to You: Alleluia.*

2-Mount Zion, the recesses of the North, is the City of the Great King.  
*O Son of God Who gloriously ascended into heaven, save us who sing to You: Alleluia.*

3-God is with her castles: renowned is He as a stronghold.  
*O Son of God Who gloriously ascended into heaven, save us who sing to You: Alleluia.*

**Entrance Hymn**

**Priest:** God ascended amid shouts of joy, the Lord amid trumpet blasts.

**People:** *O Son of God, Who gloriously ascended into heaven, save us who sing to You. Alleluia!*

**Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 6) Pg. 41**

The angelic powers were around Your tomb, and the guards became as dead; and Mary stood at the tomb, seeking Your spotless body. Then You despoiled Hades without being tried by it and You met the Virgin, O Bestower of Life. O Lord, Who rose from the dead, glory to You!

**Troparion of the Ascension (Tone 4)**

You ascended in glory, O Christ our God, and gladdened Your disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit. Through Your blessing they were confirmed in their belief that You are the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world.

**Troparion Of The Fathers (Tone 8)**

O Christ our God, You are infinitely glorified, for You established our Fathers as radiant stars on earth. You led us to the true Faith through them. O most merciful One, glory to You!

**Patronal Troparion (Tome 1) Pg. 15**

In giving birth you preserved your virginity and in falling asleep you did not forsake the world, O Mother of God. You have passed to life being the Mother of Life. Through your intercessions save our souls from death.

**Kontakion of the Ascension: (Tone 6)**

After fulfilling for us Your plan of redemption and joining the things of earth with those of heaven, O Christ our God, You gloriously ascended without abandoning us, but remained with us forever and reassured all who love You by telling them: "Behold, I am with you: no one has power against you."

**Arianism and the Creed**

The Spanish bishops who had proposed the council were struggling against Arianism, a view that Christ was like the Father, but was not of the same essence. Arians believed Him to be the first of God's creatures. This doctrine had been articulated by an Alexandrian teacher named Arius and opposed by another teacher, St Athanasios of Alexandria, who pointed out the fallacy of Arius' teaching: "If the Father begat the Son, then he who was begotten had a beginning in existence, and from this it follows there was a time when the Son was not."

The council examined several creeds used in local Churches then prepared its own, reflecting an anti-Arian Christology. Although this creed was widely accepted, Arianism persisted, particularly in the West, for some time.

During the Protestant Reformation some sects rejected the trinitarian doctrine of Nicaea and adopted one or another form of Unitarianism. Later American sects, such as the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of God adopted teachings which have been described as neo-Arian.

The Nicene Creed which we recite at baptisms, the Divine Liturgy and some other services is actually the version which was completed at the second ecumenical council, (Constantinople I). The version composed at Nicaea ended with the words "and in the Holy Spirit."

**Church Structure**

By the third century many local Churches had come to be organized as regional provinces with the bishop of the major city designated as the "Metropolitan" or regional primate. The Nicene Council confirmed this practice. It also decreed, "Let the ancient customs in Egypt, Libya and Pentapolis prevail, that the Bishop of Alexandria have jurisdiction in all these, since the like is customary for the Bishop of Rome also. Likewise in Antioch and the other provinces, let the Churches retain their privileges..." (Canon 6).

Soon after the Council, the new imperial capital of Constantinople ("New Rome") was established. Its bishop was given the second place in honor after Rome, and Jerusalem was given the fifth place because it was the "Mother of all the Churches." These five sees would eventually be called the "pentarchy", and their bishops designated as patriarchs.

**The Date of Pascha**

As the Churches sought to manifest their unity in the new Christian empire of Constantine, they sought to unify the celebration of Pascha, a controversial issue for over a century. Most Churches celebrated this feast on a Sunday, "the first day of the week" (Matthew 28:1), the day on which Christ's tomb was found to be empty. Some Churches celebrated it on the 14th of the Jewish month of Nisan, the day the lambs were sacrificed for Passover. According to the Gospel of John, that was the day on which Jesus was crucified.

Contemporary sources agree that the Council Fathers decided that all the Churches celebrate Pascha on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox. The Church of Alexandria was to determine the proper date of Pascha and communicate it to the other Churches.

This rule is universally observed today. However, most Eastern Churches calculate the vernal equinox based on the Julian calendar, whereas the Western Churches calculate the vernal equinox according to the Gregorian calendar. In addition, most Eastern Christians also specify that Pascha must be celebrated after the Jewish Passover.

### DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

**Today** Deceased members of Arraje & Hajjar families. Requested by Susan Arraje  
+Fouad Mourad. Requested by Antoinette Arraj and Family

**Next Sunday** Our Families and Friends, Living and Deceased

**This morning's Coffee Hr. is hosted by Susan Arraje**

**Next Sunday's Coffee Hr. will be hosted by Elias Hattar**

Please remember in your prayers: Zenon Tencza, Robert Ghiz, Sadie Mirante, Richard Abraham, Sr., Frank Boyda, Carol Boyda, Bob Lynch, Michael Mooradian, Dennis Desplaines, Thomas Houde, Ken Jordan, Mary Rizk, Michael McNeil, Jeff McNeil, Jeannine McNeil, Neil Gartner, Linda Gartner, Arthur Hill, Houda Daou, Lauren Abraham, Nicholas Haddad, Elaine Foley, David Ahlin, Elio Kanaan, Susan Bailey, Jacqueline Ventriglia, those affected by the natural disasters throughout the world, the people of Gaza, and for peace in Ukraine & the Middle East. Let us also pray for the repose of the souls of Zakeya Assaf, Genvieve Hatem, Hanna Francis, Saddalh Alkateb. If there are people for whom you would like me to pray, please reach out and give me their names. Part of our vocation as Christians is to pray for each other, especially when someone is sick or suffering in any way.

### Last Week's Collection

Weekly	\$ 912
Candles	\$ 42
Coffee Hr.	\$ 0
Donations	\$ 650
Hall Rental	\$ 200
Memorials	\$ 25
Dividends	\$ 90
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 2,019</b>

**God bless you for your generosity!**



**Welcome to any visitors we have with us this morning! We are happy to have you worship with us.**

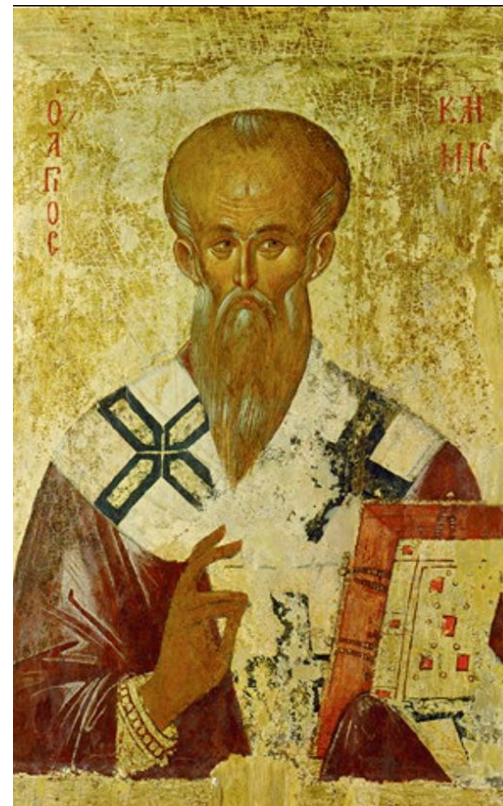
**Please join us downstairs in the church hall for the coffee hour so that we can get to know each other better and answer any questions you may have about the parish or the Melkite Church.**

### FAMILY FUNDAY

**The Ladies Sodality invites you to their annual Family Funday on Sunday June 7 after the Divine Liturgy. There will be music, bouncy house, face painting and more! The menu is hamburgers, hot dogs, chicken, potato salad, macaroni salad, watermelon, dessert and drinks.**

**Tickets are \$15 for adults, \$10 for children over 12. Children under 12 are free.**

**Mark you calendars now!**



The rule of life for a perfect person is to be in the image and likeness of God

**St. Clement of Alexandria**

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## THE FIRST ECUMENICAL COUNCIL

ON THE SUNDAY AFTER THE ASCENSION, our Church remembers the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council which met at Nicaea in ad 325. It was convoked by the first Christian Roman emperor, St Constantine the Great, in response to an appeal by a synod of Spanish bishops. Its principal task was to promote the unity of the Churches in the Empire by insuring that all the Churches believed the same faith and observed the same practices.

### **Before the Council of Nicaea**

We might ask, “Why did it take three centuries for the Church to address these issues?” In fact, it was only in the fourth century that Christians received toleration and then recognition as an “institution” in the Roman Empire. Prior to the time of St Constantine, matters of concern to the Churches were addressed locally. When issues arose which affected more than one local Church, they were dealt with by Church leaders coming together in council.

The first such gatherings are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. The first issue addressed by the disciples after Christ’s ascension was the defection of Judas (Acts 1:15-26). The Church at that time was simply the community of believers in Jerusalem around the Apostles and it was this community which nominated two men to replace Judas. “*Then they prayed, ‘Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.’*”

“*Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles*” (Acts 1:24-26).

As the Church grew and spread beyond Palestine to places like Cyprus and Asia Minor, it was forced to address a potentially divisive issue – through a council of the Apostles and elders (Acts 15:1-31). Some Jewish Christians were opposed to the practice at Antioch where converts were not obliged to be circumcised or to follow Jewish dietary rules. The council decided to affirm this practice and informed “*the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia*” (Acts 15:23) of their support by letter.

From the middle of the second century regional councils became common, particularly in Christian centers such as Italy and Asia Minor. These councils addressed suspect teachings (such as Montanism) and conflicting practices (such as observing Pascha on a fixed date) which were felt to affect the unity of the Churches. Regional councils often established common policies on questions such as penances for returning apostates or rules for clerical marriages. While these policies directly affected the participating local Churches, they were communicated to Churches in other regions which often adopted them as well.

### **The Ecumene**

St. Constantine’s council brought together bishops from throughout the Roman Empire (the “Ecumene”) and hence was called an Ecumenical Council. Its decisions were given the force of law throughout the empire.

Representatives from the Kingdom of Greater Armenia (a Roman vassal state) and from the Persian Church attended also. Since the Roman and Persian Empires had been rivals for centuries, it was only in ad 410 that the Persian Church (the Church of the East) formally adopted the creed and canons of the First Council of Nicaea.

Our liturgy speaks of the Council Fathers as 318 in all. This number actually refers to the 318 trained men of Abram’s household who fought the kings of Sodom and Gemmorah (Gen 14:14). The Council Fathers were seen as the “trained men” of the Church.

### **Prokimenon**

**Reader:** Blessed are You, O Lord God of our fathers, and Your name is worthy of praise and glorious forever.

**People:** Blessed are You, O Lord God of our fathers, and Your name is worthy of praise and glorious forever.

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

**People:** Blessed are You, O Lord God of our fathers, and Your name is worthy of praise and glorious forever.

**Reader:** Blessed are You, O Lord God of our fathers, and Your name is worthy of praise and glorious forever.

**People:** Blessed are You, O Lord God of our fathers, and Your name is worthy of praise and glorious forever.

### **Epistle: Acts 20:16-18, 28-36**

### **Alleluia**

—The God of gods, the Lord has spoken and summoned the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.

**Verse:** Gather His faithful ones around Him, those who have made a covenant with Him through sacrifices.

### **Gospel: Jn 17:1-13**

### **After Communion: Troparion of the Ascension**