



**Our Lady of Perpetual Help
Melkite Catholic Church**
— 256 Hamilton St., Worcester —

Middle Eastern Picnic

Sunday, September 13, 2026

12-6pm

• DELICIOUS FOOD • MUSIC • DANCING • FAMILY FUN •




MENU

- ✦ Chicken Shawarma
- ✦ Baked Kibbeh
- ✦ Chicken Kabobs
- ✦ Beef Kabobs
- ✦ Stuffed Grape Leaves
- ✦ Tabbouli
- ✦ Hummus
- ✦ Pastries
- And more ...

For details
visit
olphworchester.org/picnic



ENTERTAINMENT

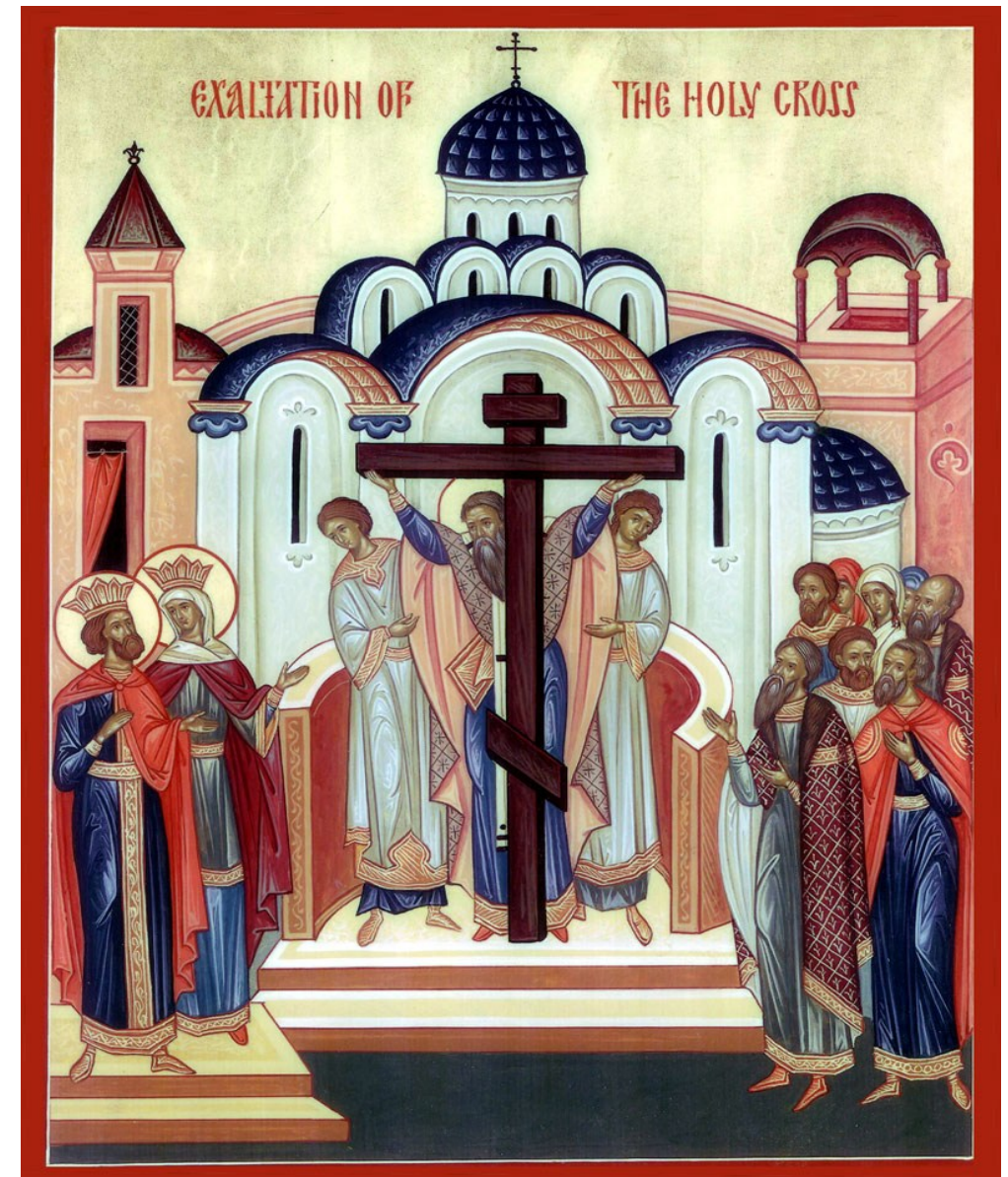
-  Live Music
-  Dancing
-  Kids' Activities
- And more ...

RAFFLES



Faith • Community • Tradition • Together

**SUNDAY BEFORE THE HOLY CROSS
SEPTEMBER 13, 2026**



**EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS
SEPTEMBER 14**

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church

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Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM

Antiphon (1st)

1: Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth, and sing praise to His Name.

Through the prayers of the Mother of God, O Savior, save us.

2: Say to God: How awesome are Your deeds! So great is Your power that Your enemies cringe before You.

Be shafa'ati Walidatil Eelah, ya Mukhallisu, khallisna.

3: Let all the earth worship You and sing praises to You; let it sing praises to Your Name, O Most High!

Through the prayers of the Mother of God, O Savior, save us.

Entrance Hymn

P: Come let us worship and bow down before Christ.

All: O Son of God, Who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You. Alleluia!

Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 7. Pg. 42)

You destroyed Death by Your cross. You opened paradise to the thief. You changed the weeping of the myrrh-bearers, and commanded Your apostles to proclaim that You, have risen O Christ God, granting to the world great mercy.

Troparion of the Preparation: (Tone 2)

We offer You, O Lord, as a means of intercession, the life-giving Cross, a sign of your bounty You have given us in spite of our unworthiness, save our country and your people who offer You their supplications through your Mother, O You who alone are the Lover of Mankind!

Troparion of the Dedication: (Tone 4)

As You had shown from on high the splendor of the firmament, so did You show on earth the splendor of the dwelling-place of your holy glory. Make it stand firm for ever and ever, and accept the supplications which we offer there to You, unceasingly, through your Mother, O You the Life and Resurrection of all!

Patronal Troparion (Tone 1, Pg. 15)

In giving birth you have 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 intercessio0n, save our souls from death.

Kontakion of the Dedication: (Tone 4)

You have made of the Church a resplendent heaven, enlightening all the faithful: wherefore we stand in the midst of this holy dwelling-place and cry out to you: “Make firm this house, O Lord!”

The first sticheron sung at vespers on this feast echoes this festive sentiment: “By its elevation, the Cross is like an appeal to the whole creation to adore the blessed Passion of Christ our God who was suspended on it, for Christ destroyed by this Cross the one who had destroyed us. In His great goodness, He brought us back to life after we had been dead, and He beatified us and made us worthy of Heaven, for He is merciful. Wherefore, we exalt His name with great rejoicing and glorify His infinite condescension.”

Our Reason for Fasting

We also observe the feast of the Cross by fasting – not in anticipation of the feast but on the feast itself. Church directives say that September 14 is a strict fast day, on whatever day of the week it falls. So we may be called upon to fast on Saturday or even on Sunday. The fast is mitigated on weekends (wine and oil are permitted) but not completely abolished. Since Sunday is always a Eucharistic day, today’s fast means that we do not eat until we receive Holy Communion. After that, we do not eat meat, fish or dairy products.

The Church’s reason for fasting on this day is not to lament the death of Christ, which as we have seen is a source of blessings. Rather we fast because of our sins, committed despite the fact that we know what Christ has done for us on the cross and still prefer to follow our own egos rather than following His way. We do well to be distressed when we look on the Cross – not for the Lord’s sake (He is risen!) – but because our salvation, brought about on the Cross, means so little to us.

The mention of fasting usually prompts two reactions. Some overly meticulous people tend to overemphasize fasting rules in a legalistic way. Others, imbued with a pietistic ideas about devotion, see fasting and any discipline involving the body, such as prostrations, kissing icons, etc. as unspiritual.

St Paul would not agree. He definitely saw that the body becomes an important component in worship when we use it in a sacrificial way. “*I beseech you therefore, brethren,*” he wrote, “*by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service*” (Romans 12:1). When we refrain from food and drink, from sleep, from sexual activity or from any normal physical activity we make our longing an offering to God. In this way we push the physical beyond itself into the spiritual realm. Surrendering our physical desires becomes a *logike latreia*, a reasoned or conscious act of worship of the One who has given us all things.

Sharing in the Mystery of the Cross

“The Lord accomplished our salvation by His death on the Cross: on the Cross He tore up the handwriting of our sins; through the Cross He reconciled us with our God and Father; and through the Cross He brought down upon us grace-filled gifts and all heavenly blessings. But this is the Lord’s Cross itself. Each of us becomes a partaker of its salvific power in no other way than through our personal cross.

“When the personal cross of each of us is united with Christ’s Cross, the power and effect of the latter is transferred to us and becomes, as it were, a conduit through which ‘*every good gift and every perfect grace*’ (James 1:17) is poured forth upon us from the Cross of Christ.

“From this it is evident that the personal cross of each of us is as essential to the work of salvation as the Cross of Christ.”

St Theophan the Recluse

DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today **+William J. Rahall (1yr.),** Requested by his family

Next Sunday **+William & Bertha Rahall, James Rahall, William Rahall, Daniel Rahall.** Requested by the Rahall Family

This morning’s Coffee Hr. is replaced by the Picnic

Next Sunday’s Coffee Hr. will be hosted by the Rahall family

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, Joyce Kfoury, Neil Gartner, Linda Gartner, Arthur Hill, Houda Daou, Lauren Abraham, Nicholas Haddad, Elaine Foley, David Ahlin, Elio Kanaan, Susan Bailey, Jacqueline Ventriglia, Joyce Kfoury, 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	\$ 1,205
Candles	\$ 82
Coffee Hr.	\$ 75
Stole	\$ 25
TOTAL	\$ 1,387
God bless you for your generosity!	
As a reminder, we need \$2,000 per week to meet our expenses.	



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.

UPCOMING LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Mon Sep 14, 6PM - Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

MIDDLE EASTERN PICNIC

Our annual Middle Eastern Picnic is today from noon to 6pm. It is an afternoon of food, music and fun. Please join us!

We can always use volunteers for the day of the picnic. Please see me or Dave Johnson if you can help out for a couple of hours!

God bless you!



EXPIATION FOR THE WORLD

THE GREAT FEASTS OF THE CHURCH are each celebrations of an aspect of the mystery of Christ: Of these feasts Pascha is considered “the Feast of Feasts,” the center of our Church life, the mystery of Christ’s resurrection. While Pascha is celebrated with feasting, the Great and Holy Week which leads up to Pascha observes the last events of Christ’s earthly life along with His death and burial by fasting.

Each Sunday celebrates the resurrection with the Eucharistic banquet, while each Wednesday and Friday remembers Christ’s betrayal and death – again, with fasting.

Next in importance to Pascha are “the Twelve Great Feasts” which celebrate events of Christ’s life, of His Mother, of His ascension and the coming of the Spirit. Several of these are preceded by days or seasons of fasting. The feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross is the only one observed by simultaneous feasting and fasting!

Our Reasons for Feasting

The immediate historical events celebrated on this feast are, first of all, the unearthing of the Cross in the fourth century during the expedition led by St Helena to adorn the Holy Land with fitting shrines to Christ. The second event remembered is the recovery of the cross in the seventh century by Byzantine forces fourteen years after it had been captured by Persian invaders.

Two traditions common among Eastern Christians celebrate the discovery of the cross. It is said that St. Helena’s workmen were led to the site of the cross by the fragrant aroma of basil growing there. It is customary to adorn the cross and, in some places, the entire church with sprigs of basil. Some basil would be given to people when they venerate the Cross to take home and adorn their icons. In some parts of Greece basil would be ground and added to the dough used to make prosphora.

A second festive act observed throughout the Middle East in both Byzantine and Oriental Churches is the lighting of bonfires, usually after the vespers or vigil of the feast. When the cross was unearthed by St. Helena’s expedition, the news of this discovery was spread from Jerusalem to Constantinople by a series of bonfires set on the mountains along the coast through Asia Minor. Today’s bonfires are a popular re-enactment of that event.

The recovery of the Cross is remembered by another festive act – the one which gives this feast its name. When the victorious Byzantine army returned the Cross to Jerusalem, Patriarch Zachariah “exalted” the Cross, lifting it high for the veneration of the people who continually cried out *Kyrie eleison* as they gazed on the Cross. In our ceremony of the exaltation, the Cross is raised high in each direction – north, south, east and west – to bless the entire world as the people repeatedly chant *Kyrie eleison*.

Our most basic reason for feasting on this day, however, is what took place on the Cross. As St. John Chrysostom described it, “The Cross has taken away sin. It was an expiation for the world, a reconciliation of the ancient enmity. It opened the gates of heaven, changed those who hated into friends; it took our human nature, led it up to heaven, and seated it at the right hand of God’s throne. And it brought to us ten thousand other blessings” (*Homily 3 against the Judaizers*).

Prokimenon

Reader: Your decrees are worthy of trust indeed; Holiness befits your house, O Lord, for length of days!

People: Your decrees are worthy of trust indeed; Holiness befits your house, O Lord, for length of days!

Reader: The Lord is king, in splendor robed; Robed is the Lord and girt about with strength

People: Your decrees are worthy of trust indeed; Holiness befits your house, O Lord, for length of days!

Reader: Your decrees are worthy of trust indeed;

People: Holiness befits your house, O Lord, for length of days!

Epistle: Heb 3:1-6

Alleluia

On the Holy Mountain is his city cherished by the Lord. The Lord prefers the gates of Zion to all Jacob’s dwellings.

Verse: Of you are told glorious things, O City of God!

Gospel: Jn 3:13-17

