

*From the divine office for the Great-Martyr Eustathios, his wife Theopista and their children
Agapios & Theopista (Sept. 20)*

With your whole family, you were presented as first-fruits to our God, as a divine incense exuding its sweet odor in the fire, a total offering, a living and perfect sacrifice. And together with them, you have received a dwelling in Heaven in the company of the saints. (Vespers)

O holy Eustathios, you were an imitator of Christ in His passion: you drank of His cup with courage and became a sharer of His glory. Wherefore, the God of us all granted you a divine power to work wonders. (Kontakion)



**SUNDAY AFTER THE HOLY CROSS
SEPTEMBER 20, 2026**



Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church

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Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM

Antiphon (Feast)

1: O God, why have You cast us off forever? Why does Your anger smolder against the sheep of Your pasture?

O Son of God, who were crucified in the flesh, save us who sing to You: Alleluia!

2: Remember Your flock which You built up of old, Your tribe You redeemed as Your inheritance. Mount Sion where You took up Your abode.

O Son of God, who were crucified in the flesh, save us who sing to You: Alleluia!

Yet God is our King from all eternity: He has wrought salvation in the midst of the earth.

O Son of God, who were crucified in the flesh, save us who sing to You: Alleluia!

Entrance Hymn

P: Extol the Lord our God and worsahip at His footstool for He is holy,

All: O Son of God, who were crucified in the flesh, save us who sing to You: Alleluia!

Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 8. Pg. 42)

You descended from high, O compassionate One, and consented to burial for three days that You might free us from suffering. O Lord, our life and our resurrection, glory to You!

Troparion of the Holy Cross (Tone 1)

O Lord, save your people and bless your inheritance, grant victory to our country over its enemies, and preserve your community by the power of your Cross.

Troparion of the Martyrs (Tone 4)

Your martyrs, O Lord, received the crown of immortality from You, O our God, on account of their struggle. Armed with Your strength, they have vanquished their persecutors, and crushed the powerless arrogance of demons. Through their supplications, O Christ God, save our souls.

Kontakion of the Holy Cross (Tone 4)

O Christ God, who chose by Your free volition to be elevated upon the holy cross, grant Your mercies to Your new people who are called by Your name. In Your power gladden the hearts of our public authorities. Strengthen them in every good deed so that Your true alliance may be for them a weapon of peace and a standard of victory.

Sacrificing One's Self

As Christ's death was the consequence of His assuming our whole nature, the sacrifice of blood-martyrdom is inseparably tied to the martyr's witness to Christ. The very word *martyr* means witness, a witness made at the cost of one's life. The Gospel indicates another kind of witnessing unto death in this passage, when Christ says, "*let him deny himself and take up his cross...*" (Mark 8:34). In addition to our physical life which may be sacrificed in blood-martyrdom, we also have an inner life: the life of our ego. We want do this, own that, eat or drink this. We can satisfy every urge that our material resources allow, or we can deny ourselves to witness to Christ. This is the heart of *asceticism*, whether in its institutional expression (monasticism) or in the call of every Christian to place God and others first in our lives.

The first such self-denial is that to which St Paul urges us: "*Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Romans 6:11). We are called to destroy that part of us which is bound up with sin – the passions of our broken human nature – and to be crucified interiorly.

In another place, St Paul becomes more explicit: "*Therefore put to death your members which are of the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry*" (Colossians 3:5). As St Augustine noted centuries ago, this does not mean that we are to kill or maim ourselves "...but it does mean that one should kill whatever in oneself is unduly attached to the earthly, which makes one take inordinate pleasure in this present life to the neglect of the life to come" (Letter to Laetus). We are to deal violently with our sinful actions and inclinations in imitation of Christ's death on the cross.

In no previous age has the average person been more able to avail himself of entertainments every day. In our society the stuff of popular entertainment is sin: greed, lust, violence and the rest. It permeates TV, sleazy movies, the Internet and even commercials. It appeals to the voyeur and the gossip in us. The follower of Christ is called to put aside these entertainments, dying to internet porn, celebrity gossip, and whatever else is "*of the earth.*"

Our economy is built on consumerism: buying the newest, biggest whatever – simply because we can. Commercials would have us believe that doing so will make us happy and fulfilled. The message of dying to self, on the other hand, calls us to live simply that others may simply live.

Our immediate concerns, our convenience, and the welfare of those closest to us often blind us to the needs of the wider Church and the world around us. Can dying to self also involve putting to death the parochialism of our everyday lives?

It often happens, as St Augustine noted, that our cross drags us along, rather than we carry it. We find the precepts of the Gospels burdensome rather than life-giving, and we observe them only out of a sense of obligation. When we do take up the cross, the Fathers remind us, we need to keep our eyes upon Christ whom we are but following. In the words of Caesarius of Arles, "To what place are we to follow Christ, if not where He has already gone? We know that He has risen and ascended into heaven; there, then, we must follow Him. There is no cause for despair – by ourselves we can do nothing, but we have Christ's promise... Human sin made the road rough; Christ's resurrection has leveled it. By passing over it Himself, He transformed the narrowest of tracks into a royal highway" (Sermon 159, 6).

Come, O people and behold a most glorious wonder – let us worship the power of the Cross. A tree brought about death in paradise, but this tree has caused life to blossom forth, for the sinless Lord was nailed to it. Receiving incorruption from it, all you nations, let us cry: You who abolished Death by the cross and freed us, glory to You!

Exapostilarion of the Feast

DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

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

Next Sunday

This morning's Coffee Hr. is hosted by the Rahall family

Next Sunday's Coffee Hr. will be hosted by

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	\$ 1,958
Candles	\$ 8
Coffee Hr.	\$ 0
Donation	\$ 650
TOTAL	\$ 2,616

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.

THANK YOU

Thank you to all who helped make our annual Middle Eastern Picnic a success!

The rain dampened our feet but not our spirit!

There are so many people who made the Picnic happen: those who cooked, those who set up and broke down, those who served, and those who donated. We cannot do without all of you!

Our preliminary report shows a net profit of \$21,934.53!

God bless you for all your hard work!



THE SACRIFICE OF THE CROSS

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF PASSAGES that we find in one of the Gospels but not in the others. The raising of Lazarus, for example, is recorded only in John. The birth of John the Baptist, certain of the Lord’s parables, such as the Good Samaritan and Jesus’ washing of the disciples’ feet are found in only one Gospel, not the others. It may be that the people who first witnessed one of these events or heard a certain teaching were important to the local community and emphasized it in their preaching. Thus this episode found a place in the Gospel written in that community.

This is not the case for the Lord’s call for anyone who would seek to be His follower to “*take up his cross and follow me*” (Mark 8:34). This teaching is found in each of the four Gospels, suggesting that it was important to the first Christians throughout the early Church. One could not be a Christian without carrying one’s cross, they all affirmed, but what does this key passage mean? What is one’s cross? Is it one’s spouse, or one’s rheumatism, as is often held, or is it something more?

In the ancient world, the cross was a symbol of shame reserved for executing the least important members of society. From about the sixth century bc until the practice was abolished by the Emperor St Constantine the Great in the fourth century ad, crucifixion was the “preferred” method of executing slaves, captives and the worst criminals who had no rights in the ruling culture. The painful nature of this punishment is the source of our English word *excruciating*.

For Christians, the cross quickly became the symbol of sacrifice, of self-giving in imitation of Christ. As Christ’s sacrifice on the cross was the moment of His glorification, so the Christian’s sacrifice would be seen as the time of his or her exaltation with Christ as well.

Sacrificing One’s Life

The first Christians were acutely aware that they might be called to follow Christ to a literal cross, sacrificing their lives as He did. Thus the apostolic brothers Peter and Andrew and some others were actually crucified by pagan authorities. Countless others since then have met their deaths in a host of ways. Practically every day we commemorate martyrs among the saints. This week alone we honor several martyrs of the Roman persecutions: the Great Martyrs Euphemia (9/16), Eustathius and his family (9/20) and a dozen others. Local Churches may also commemorate other martyrs from the Persian, Arab, Turkish or Communist persecutions.

For the followers of Christ, martyrdom is never very far away. Christians today in many parts of Asia and Africa are giving up their lives rather than deny their faith in Christ their Savior. The demise of militant atheistic Communism was followed quickly by the rise of militant Islamism and even militant Hinduism and ultra-Orthodox Judaism as these peoples strive vainly to purify their cultures from foreign influences. Recently a watchdog group in Europe concluded that more than 100,000 Christians are killed each year “because of some relation to their faith.”

Prokimenon

Reader: How great are your works, O Lord! In wisdom You have wrought them all.

People: How great are your works, O Lord! In wisdom You have wrought them all.

Reader: Bless the Lord, O my soul! You are very great, O Lord my God!

People: How great are your works, O Lord! In wisdom You have wrought them all.

Reader: How great are your works, O Lord!

People: In wisdom You have wrought them all.

Epistle: Gal 2:16-21

Alleluia

String your bow, go forth, reign for sake of truth, meekness and righteousness, and your right hand shall lead you wonderfully.

Verse: You loved righteousness and hated iniquity: therefore God, our God, anointed you with the oil of joy above your companions.

Gospel: Mk 8:34-9:1 Sunday after the Holy Cross

Hirmos

O Mother of God, you became a mystical paradise when without tilling you brought forth Christ our God by whom the life-giving tree of the Cross was planted on earth. Therefore seeing Him on the Cross, we adore Him and we magnify you.

Kinonikon

Let the light of Your countenance shine upon us, O Lord. Alleluia!

After Communion

O Lord, save your people and bless your inheritance, grant victory to our country over its enemies, and preserve your community by the power of your Cross.

