

# ST. JOSEPH THE BETROTHED

MELKITE GREEK- CATHOLIC CHURCH  
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## PRAYER INTENTIONS

P. H. S.: Rev. Dn. Joseph Daratony. Michael Abda. Marie Barron. Nikki Boudreaux. George Bales Sr. Lucille Bales. Jayne Buckley. Chris Carey. John Coury. Maryann Nappi Donahue. Carol Downer. David Fairclough, Sr. Robert Fairclough, Sr. Sara Gomez. Niko Mayashairo. Mary McNeilly. Sue Solsman. Susan Vieselmeyer. Dean & Sherry Yockey. **MEMORY ETERNAL:** ✱Rev. Char. Aboody. ✱Rev. Mich. Jolly. ✱Rev. Jos. Francavilla. ✱Rev. Theo. Leonarczyk ✱Rev. Frank Milienewicz ✱Dn. John Karam. ✱Marie Abda. ✱Charlotte Abda. ✱James Abda. ✱Marie Abda. ✱Nancy Abda. ✱Paul Bauman. ✱A.J. Bolus. ✱Nicholas Cianci. ✱Patricia Cimakosky. ✱Ann Coury. ✱Mary Sue Betress. ✱Cecilia Davidson ✱Marg.t Dillenburg ✱Eric Jolly. ✱Jos. King ✱Blakely Landell. ✱Elaine Manuele. ✱Frank Milewski, Sr. ✱Frank Milewski, Jr. ✱Mary L. Mooty. ✱Karen Murray. ✱Marie Patchoski. ✱Anth. Simon. ✱Bill Simon. ✱Ruth Sirgany. ✱Mary A. Walsh. ✱Gen. Zaydon

## CLERGY:

Rev. Christopher Manuele, Presbyter

## DIVINE SERVICES:

Wednesday :

Compline ..... 7:30 P.M

Saturday:

Great Vespers: ..... 3:15 P.M

Sunday:

Orthros ..... 9:00 A.M.

Divine Liturgy: ..... 10:00 A.M.

Holy Days:

Eve: Great Vespers: .... 5:30 P.M.

Day: Divine Liturgy ... 5:30 P.M

## HOLY MYSTERY OF CONFESSION:

Before Vespers at 3:00 P.M.; following any service; or by appointment.

## HOLY ANOINTING OF THE SICK:

Following services /call the Rectory.

## HOLY MYSTERY OF CROWNING:

Call rectory at earliest convenience.

## PARISH ADVISORY COUNCIL:

Meetings as scheduled.

## SUNDAY OF MEATEARE



*Icon of the Ladder of Divine Ascent*

# DIVINE LITURGY OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

20 FEBRUARY 2022 ♦ TONE 06 EOTHINON 06 † SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGEMENT / MEATFARE SUNDAY

GREAT DOXOLOGY:

ANTIPHONS:

FIRST:

SECOND:

THIRD:

ENTRANCE HYMN:

APOLYTIKIA:

*Resurrection (Tone 6)*

*Holy Bishop Leo of Catania*

*Saint Joseph*

KONDAKION: *Meatfare*

TRISAGION:

PROKIMENON: *(Tone 6)*

EPISTLE:

*Brethren*, food does not commend us to God. For neither shall we gain any advantage if we eat, nor suffer any loss if we do not. And yet, beware lest perhaps this right of yours become a stumbling-block to the weak. For if a man sees you who “have knowledge” sitting at table in a place dedicated to idols, will not his conscience, weak as it is, be emboldened to eat idol offerings? And through your “knowledge” the weak one will perish, the brother for whom Christ died. Now, when you sin in this way against the brethren and wound their weak conscience, you are sinning against Christ. Therefore, if food scandalizes my brother, I will never again eat any more meat so as not to scandalize my brother. Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? And if to others I am not an apostle, yet to you I am. For you are the seal set upon my apostleship in the Lord.

ALLELUIA: *Psalm 19:1, 27:9*

*(Tone 2)*

The lord shall hear you on the day of distress; the name of the God of Jacob shall defend you.

O Lord, save your people and bless your inheritance.

.GOSPEL:

*St. Matthew 25:31-46*

*The Lord said*, “At that time when the Son of Man shall come in his majesty, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory; and before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and he will set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the king will say to those on his right hand, Come, blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; naked and you covered me; sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me.’ Then the just will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry, and feed you; or thirsty, and give you to drink? And when did we see you a stranger, and take you in; or naked, and clothe you? Or when did we see you sick, or in prison, and come to you?’ And answering, the King will say to them, ‘Amen I say to you, every time you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for me.’ Then he will say to those on his left hand, ‘Go away from me, accursed ones, into the everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his ministers. For I was hungry, and you did not give me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take me in; naked and you did not clothe me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit me.’ Then they also will answer and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Amen I say to you as long as you did not do it for one of these least ones, you did not do it for me.’ And these will go into everlasting punishment, but the just into everlasting life.”

*Liturgy Book p. 17*

*Liturgy Book p. 29*

*Liturgy Book p. 32*

*Liturgy Book p. 36/44*

*Liturgy Book p. 38*

*Liturgy Book p. 44*

*Liturgy Book p. 103*

*Liturgy Book p. 47*

*Handout*

*Liturgy Book p. 50*

*Liturgy Book p. 59*

*1 Corinthians 8:8-13, 9:1-2*

St Paul’s response to the elitism of the Gnostic Christians was to urge them to put the welfare of the weaker brethren ahead of their own. Yes, Paul said in effect, it’s ok to eat food at pagan festivals but it’s not ok to scandalize brethren who don’t understand how this could be. And the reason for this is that we are all members of the one body of Christ: “*But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ*” (vs. 9-12).

St Paul would make this principle a cornerstone of his directions to the new churches he would organize. Not only should the intellectuals look out for the ordinary believer, those able to put their faith into practice should care for those who do not. As he told the Galatians, “*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself*” (Gal. 6 1-3). Not only the intellectual elite but the spiritually adept need an antidote to pride: caring for those less proficient than themselves rather than looking down upon them.

## A Matter of Conscience

St Paul characterizes those who may be scandalized at pagan banquets as having a “*weak conscience*” (v.9). In every man there is an understanding of right and wrong. Conscience has been described as “man’s most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths” (Vatican Council II). Deep within himself man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. When a person does this he is said to be “following his conscience.”

Christians should feel obliged to form their conscience in accordance with the word of God rather than the dictates of the culture in which they live or their personal sentiments. Developing such a Christian conscience is one aspect of the believer’s interior life. A person who ignores self-reflection remains weak and susceptible to every changing fad. When faced with a moral dilemma he is unable to make his decision based on clear principles – biblical or otherwise – and usually just does what “everyone else” is doing. Like their first century forebears, they have a weak conscience.

## Food Offered to Idols Today?

Recently a group of Pentecostals in Australia mounted a campaign against Cadbury chocolates, claiming that the company was offering the candy to idols. Their “proof” was that packages were imprinted with the Halal insignia, evidence that the candy was offered to the “Muslim idol,” Allah! The insignia actually signified that there were no pork products in the candy (some cream fillings have gelatin stabilizers). As St Paul said, “*... if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.*”

We well may encounter groups in our multicultural societies today who offer food to idols. Hindus and hare Krishna devotees, for example, have the custom of prasadam (food “transformed into the grace of God,” as one writer expresses it). These would be vegetable offerings that are “acquired without pain and suffering on the part of any creature,” offered before an altar in a meditation rite, then mingled with other foods once the god or goddess has had a chance to partake.

Could you accept such food in the spirit of love with which it was offered without acknowledging the god or goddess to whom it was offered? What do you think St Paul would say?

# FASTING FROM MEAT

IN THE PAST ONE HUNDRED YEARS meat consumption in the U.S. has risen dramatically. We now consume over 270 pounds per person per year. In contrast a person in the countries of the former Roman Empire eats an average of from 167 (Greece), to 49 (Syria) pounds annually. What is a luxury in many parts of the world has become a necessity for many in our country.

In the Roman period many ordinary people ate most of the meat they consumed at religious banquets. In both Judaism and the pagan religions animals would be sacrificed to God (or a god) and the blood would be poured out as an offering to the divinity. Certain parts would be given to the priests and the rest returned to the person offering the sacrifice to be served in a banquet to friends and neighbors.

This created the dilemma for the first Christians which St. Paul addressed in 1 Corinthians. Should a believer eat the meat that his neighbor had offered to Jupiter or any pagan divinity? Would that be an acknowledgement that there were many gods and goddesses as the pagans claimed? Would they be “taking communion” with these gods?

St Paul presents two important principles in his response. First he affirms that the idols which the pagans worshipped were nothing, so the food offered to them was nothing special either. Christians would not sin by eating their fill. But there was a more important consideration: what would less informed believers think if they saw their leaders eating at these festivals? They may be led to think that the pagan gods are real and their faith in one God may be weakened. “Therefore,” Paul affirms, *“if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat again, lest I make my brother stumble”* (v.13).

## Ordinary Christians vs. Gnostics

This controversy exposed a divide in the early Church between those educated in classical philosophy and ordinary believers. The educated considered themselves to be “Gnostics,” those in the know, and sometimes looked down on the rest. St Paul had little sympathy for their attitudes and spoke with some derision, *“For if anyone sees you who ‘have knowledge’ eating in an idol’s temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols?”* (v.10)

St John Chrysostom spoke even more harshly: “Don’t tell me that such a man is only a shoemaker, another a dyer, another a brazier: but bear in mind that he is a believer and a brother. Whose disciples are we? - of fishermen, publicans and tent-makers! Are we not followers of Him who was brought up in the house of a carpenter; and who deigned to have the carpenter’s betrothed wife for a mother; and who was laid in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and who had nowhere to lay His head—of Him whose journeys were so long that His very journeying was enough to tire Him down; of Him who was supported by others?” (20th Homily on 1 Corinthians) Followers of an itinerant carpenter-preacher have no cause to look down on fellow believers because they do not know philosophy. By God’s grace they know Christ.

Not a few groups of early gnostic Christians ended by devising their own belief systems, often denying that God was the source of the material creation, something they were too “spiritual” to admit. One could rise above the material by acquiring gnosis (superior knowledge) not obvious to the ordinary man. They found their salvation, not in union with Christ but in the acquisition of gnosis. Groups of Gnostics could be found in the East until the rise of Islam.

# SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

## EVENTS IN FEBRUARY

Saturday, February 19th

*Confessions: 3:00 p.m.*

*Great Vespers: 3:15 p.m.*

*Divine Liturgy: 4:00 p.m.*

Sunday, February 20th

*Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.*

Sunday, 20th – Sunday 27th

*Cheese fare Week:*

*Last week to eat dairy products*

Sunday, February 27th

*Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.*

*Parish Potluck*

*Ice Cream Social*

*Forgiveness Vespers: 2:00 p.m.*

Monday, February 28th

*Beginning of Great Lent*

*Presanctified D. Liturgy 6:00 p.m.*

## THE FAST OF GREAT LENT

† On weekdays of Great Lent, Monday through Friday, there are restrictions on both the number of meals taken daily and on the types of food permitted; but when a meal is permitted, there is no limitation to the quantity of food that may be eaten.

† On weekdays, fast is broken [the first meal of the day is taken] at/after the noon hour.

† Throughout Great Lent, the fast excludes the eating of meat and meat products, cheese, milk, butter, fish, olive oil, wine and alcoholic beverages.

† On the Feast of Palm Sunday the eating of fish is permitted.

† Olive oil, as well as wine, is permitted on various feastdays (consult the calendar), as well as on Saturdays and Sundays.

† While the above rules of fasting are to be encouraged, in all things the Christian is called to exercise moderation and charity. The elderly and those in poor health, especially, are urged to be prudent. If in doubt, speak with your spiritual father or confessor.

## PRAYER TO ST. JOSEPH

O St. Joseph, chaste spouse of the Lady Theotokos, head of the Holy Family, we again place ourselves under your patronage. † Through your powerful intercession, bestow up on us every good thing both spiritual and temporal. † Protect this your parish from all spiritual harm and renew in us the spirit of repentance and a fervent desire for the kingdom of heaven. † Make this vineyard flourish with new souls and by an increase of faith, hope and love; may forgiveness, peace and joy reign within our holy fellowship. † In all we do, may the Name of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be glorified, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.  
Amen.

## DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

19 February: Lost Sheep of St. Joseph  
from Judith Manuele

20 February: ✠Elizabeth Pendrak  
from David & Stephanie Michaels

26 February: Joseph Viola Family

27 February Joseph Viola Family

## 2022 Lenten Schedule of Services

Tuesday: Pre-sanctified 6:00 p.m.

Thursday: Pre-sanctified 6:00 p.m.

Friday: Akathist Hymn 6:00 p.m.

## 2022 Lenten Catechetical Series

*with Dr. Nathan Lefler*

*Each Sunday beginning March 6*

*after Divine Liturgy and potluck brunch.*

## 2021 WEEKLY COLLECTION

February 13

Total:

\$ 350.00



# FOOD OFFERED TO IDOLS

One of the issues facing the early Church was the question of food offered to idols, as described in the Epistles of St Paul. As the Church moved into Europe it encountered groups that observed religious meals in which food offered to deities, or even the spirits of the dead, was consumed. Consuming the sacrifice was an important part of the ritual and people would invite their relatives and friends to these meals, particularly when a large animal had been sacrificed. St Paul's converts might have been frequent guests at such meals before their baptism.

Strictly speaking, sharing in such a meal might be a sign that the participants believed in these pagan gods, which would have been unthinkable for a Christian. Eating sacrificed meat at an idol feast was equivalent to practicing idolatry and therefore could never be condoned. In Acts 15 we read how the apostles explicitly determined that Gentile converts to Christ were to "*abstain from things polluted by idols*" (v. 20).

St Paul went further and declared, "... *the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons*" (1 Cor 8:20). Some believers were scandalized to see other Christians sharing in these meals. Paul begins his response to this question by saying, "*Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge*" (1 Cor 8:1) By this he meant that we know that this means nothing because idols are nothing: "*We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one*" (v.4). In essence, then, eating this food didn't matter because all the idols in the world couldn't make food anything other than God's creation.

There was another side to the question which Paul finds even more important. Some new believers didn't understand this principle and so were shocked to see other – presumably more mature – Christians eating food sacrificed to an idol as though the idol must be real after all. So Paul recasts the question: it's not about eating food but about the effect on new believers. "Knowledge puffs up," he writes, "*but love edifies. And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. ... for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled*" (v. 1-2,7). So don't eat, not because of the idols, but because harming the faith of the weak is more unchristian than eating this food.

As he became more acquainted with pagan practices in Asia Minor, St Paul came to make a distinction. He found that not all food sacrificed to idols was consumed in idolatrous feasts. Some was given to the poor, some was given back to the donors, and some was even sold in the marketplace. As a result, eating food offered to idols but not in an explicitly idolatrous feast was not itself idolatrous; it was the inevitable consequence of living in a pagan world.

## Why Avoid Foods Offered to No-gods?

St Paul understood that the Greco-Roman gods did not exist: "*We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one*" (1 Cor 8:4). Food which their devotees offered might as well have been sacrificed to the Great Oz. Yet, he counseled the Christians in Corinth to avoid eating such foods, but not for the sake of the food itself. No food is, by definition, unclean. As the Lord Jesus had said, "*Hear and understand: Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man*" (Mt 15:10, 11). Nor did any food offer communion with a pagan god.

Rather St Paul taught that eating food sacrificed to idols should be avoided for another reason: the scruples of less informed brethren. As he wrote to the Romans, "*Let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is of-*

*fended or is made weak*" (Rom 14:18-21).

There were new Christians who would have believed that idols were real if they saw their more mature fellows eating foods from pagan sacrifices. Care for the brethren was more important than displaying one's knowledge that sacrificial meat was nothing. And so St Paul affirmed, "*If food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble*" (1 Cor 8:13).

## Avoiding Meat in Our Day

We may never be offered food that has been sacrificed to idols. Nonetheless the Church reads this passage to us as we prepare to avoid meat and other foods for a different reason. During the Great Fast Byzantine Christians are presented with an entire range of foods to be avoided: meat (including fish) and animal products, such as eggs and dairy, as well as wine and, in some traditions, oil as well.

We do not abstain from these foods because there is anything wrong with eating them, as some contemporary vegans believe. Our Church fasts from these foods, particularly at this time, because we are limiting our diet to the "food of the Garden," the foods of the earth provided at the creation, according to Gen 1. In that Biblical book the consumption of animal products and wine are described as arising later in human history. When we fast, we eat only the food of Paradise as a sign that we wish to recover our original union with God symbolized by the Garden of Eden.

In our Tradition there is room for customizing the practice of fasting for each believer, under the guidance of his spiritual father. According to her physical strength and spiritual growth, a person may be able to fast from all foods until noon; another may be able and led to fast until evening. The individual believer who does not have a spiritual father should follow the guidelines of their own eparchy without adapting them to personal taste.

People who envision a one-size-fits-all rule of fasting may be put off by seeing someone fast differently from them. This brings us back to the principle which St Paul taught the Corinthians: "If food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble" (1 Cor 8:13). Our fasting should be informed by love. This may mean fasting the way my neighbor is fasting when in his company, whether this is more or less than my own rule prescribes. Needless to say, we should not seek out such circumstances which would lessen our practice of fasting with that end in mind.

Sad to say, our fasting and other religious practices often mask our inner feelings of self-righteousness and superiority. St Paul would probably endorse these words of Metropolitan Athanasios of Limassol in Cyprus (the "Father Maximos" of The Mountain of Silence and its sequels): "How is it possible to pray and still be full of bile against another person? How is it possible for you to read the Gospel and not accept your brother? ... What's the point if I eat oil today and don't eat oil tomorrow? Though I may not eat oil, I still eat my brother day and night! They would say on Mount Athos not to ask whether someone eats fish. Eat the fish, but don't eat the fisherman. Have a tablespoon of oil, but don't eat the man who draws oil. To eat one another with your tongue is much worse than eating a tablespoon of oil" (from Therapy from the Sickness of Pharisaism). Fasting, like feasting, should be a communal celebration of the love of God.

We hear St Paul's teaching today to remind us that our fasting is not about right and wrong food so much as it is about supporting the faith of our fellow believers. The Church's fasting days and seasons are shared experiences, actions that we are meant to do together. There are times when a person may fast privately and this fasting should be done in secret. Fasting seasons, however, are common activities and if I denigrate them or excuse myself from them I am weakening the resolve of others. In addition, I am missing out on an experience that will heighten the joy of Pascha, when the Bridegroom is with us again.