

St. Rafka Maronite Catholic Church

2301 Wadsworth Boulevard,
Lakewood, CO 80214

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Email: StRafkaLkwd@outlook.com



September 10, 2023 Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Schedule of Masses & Services

Sunday Mass 11:00 AM

Tuesday-Thursday Mass 5:00 PM

Friday Mass 6:30 PM

Saturday Mass 11:30 AM

Holy Days on Weekdays 6:30 PM

Confession: Tuesday-Thursday 4:00 – 4:45 PM

**Please call the office to alert us to any
Pastoral Care needs**

(Hospital, Homebound, Etc.)

Office Hours

9:30 am-3:30 pm, Wednesday & Friday
720-833-0354

StRafkaLkwd@outlook.com

Rev. El-Badaoui Habib, Parochial Administrator

Linda Craven, Office & Business Manager

*Philip Kyburz, Grand Knight,
St. Rafka Council of the Knights of Columbus*

Linda Craven, Religious Education
lhalpinraven@gmail.com

Contact the office to register in the Parish

Spiritual Message from Father El-Badaoui Habib

The Feast of the Holy Cross John 12:20-32

“Sir, we want to see Jesus...” On the 14th of September we celebrate the feast of the Exaltation, Holy and life-giving Cross. I am not going to speak about the history of the Holy cross but about the few fundamental lessons that this feast teaches us.

We all know that we live in a consumer driven society. The consumer mentality dominates every aspect of our life- economic, political, and even religious life. There is no part of our life that is free from this mentality. We demand choices and we all want the very best choice—not just for ourselves but for our children and those we care about. We have come to believe that having all the options and choosing the best is what makes us free and happy. We all believe (not only the rich but the poor also) that we have the right to demand the very best for ourselves and for our families.

How does this mentality survive in a so-called “Christian” country like ours? What happens when this mentality comes up against the Cross of Christ? One way it survives is by recreating a form of Christianity without the Cross. Our consumer mentality is simply transferred over to the spiritual life. We have the right to salvation and heaven without any effort on our part.

In this way of thinking, God really doesn’t want us to struggle or be humbled; rather He wants to give us a successful and prosperous life as a sign of His special favor for us, a sign that we have been chosen to live a care-free life. This form of Christianity is very popular here in the United States, with many well-

DAILY READINGS & MASS INTENTIONS

Sunday, September 10

Exaltation of the Holy Cross (observed)

Book of Offering Page 606 + rite

Ex 17:8-15

1 Cor 1:18-25

Jn 12:20-32

Monday, September 11

St. Theodora of Alexandria

Book of Offering Page 436 or 502

Jas 3:13-18

Lk 18:15-17

Tuesday, September 12

St. Cornelius the Centurion

Book of Offering Page 445 or 512

Jas 4:1-10

Lk 18:18-23

Wednesday, September 13

St. Christopher

Book of Offering Page 454 or 521

Jas 4:11-17

Lk 18:24-30

Thursday, September 14

Exaltation of the Holy Cross (actual feast)

Book of Offering Page 606 + rite

Ex 17:8-15

1 Cor 1:18-25

Jn 12:20-32

Friday, September 15

St. Shaina, St. Sassine

Book of Offering Page 445 or 658

1 Cor 3:1-9; Lk 12:35-44 or

2 Pt 1:1-11; Jn 3:11-21

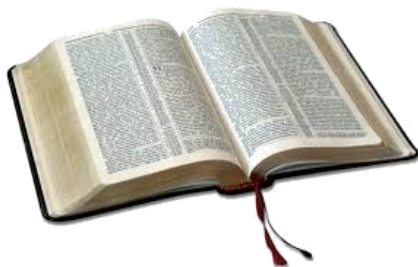
Saturday, September 16

St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage

Book of Offering Page 473 or 668

Phil 1:1-12; Lk 21:10-19 or

2 Pt 1:12-21; Jn 8:21-30



Today's Gospel

Some Greeks Wish to See Jesus and Jesus Speaks about His Death. (John 12:20-32)

²⁰ Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." ²² Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³ Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵ Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

²⁷ "Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say— 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." ²⁹ The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." ³⁰ Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

Spiritual Message (continued)

known TV evangelists and mega-churches. It fits perfectly with our consumer mentality. And while we the true believers reject this type of Christianity, unfortunately we ourselves are not free of it. This way of thinking seems to have settled into our way of life and even into our hearts.

But Christ didn't become incarnate so that we could live a comfortable life free of all illness and be a financial success. Christ didn't come so that we could live a painless life. Christ didn't carry His cross so that we would never have to carry a cross. Rather, Christ came that we might have life and have it more abundantly. But not the life of financial success and pain-free existence where we have all the pleasures we want and the very best of material things. Real life, the authentic life that Christ has taught us and lived Himself, is made very clear in the Gospel: "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24). Where is the false promise of wealth and good health here?

NEWS & EVENTS

This week at St. Rafka Church

Sun 10	Mon 11	Tues 12	Wed 13	Thurs 14	Fri 15	Sat 16	Sun 17
Exaltation of the Holy Cross (observed) Mass 11:00am	<i>No Mass</i> <i>St. Theodora of Alexandria</i>	<i>Mass 5 pm</i> <i>St. Cornelius the Centurion</i>	<i>Mass 5 pm</i> <i>St. Christopher</i>	<i>Mass 5 pm</i> <i>Exaltation of the Holy Cross (actual feast)</i>	<i>Mass 6:30 pm</i> <i>St. Shaina, St. Sassine</i>	<i>Mass 11:30 am</i> <i>St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage</i>	1st Sunday after Holy Cross Mass 11:00am
The deadline to receive events and articles for the bulletin is Thursday at 12:00 PM Submit them to the Parish Office at StRafkaLkwd@outlook.com							

Learning About the Saints

September 15—Sts. Shaina & Sassine

Saint Abramius, also called **Shaina** (which means protection), was from Antioch, chief of a band of thieves. One day he wanted to rob a convent of nuns. He and his fellows dressed up as monks and entered the convent to rob it. The nuns received them in and one nun started washing his feet following the customs of the time and the place in receiving guests. One of the nuns was sick and paralyzed. She anointed herself with the dirty wash water and was healed. When Abramius saw this miracle along with the righteousness and holiness that reigned in this convent, he was so moved and immediately touched by grace that he decided to repent and give up his sinful way of life. At once he revealed his identity to the nuns and told them about his purpose for entering their convent. And to prove that, he showed them his hidden sword then put it in their hands to indicate granting them protection; therefore he was nicknamed Shayna meaning protection. He and his fellows became monks and ended their lives in works of repentance and asceticism. Shayna became their prior in the monastery. Through his guidance he converted a great number of pagans, then died in peace.

Saint Sassine was the bishop of the city of Cozakis. The governor of Cozakis arrested him. He bravely admitted his Christian faith. The governor got angry and ordered him to offer up to idols. He refused and began demonstrating that pagan worship and its superstitions are vain and that the Christian religion is the true religion. The governor raged and ordered him to be tortured. They tied him to untamed horses until his body got smashed. Then they whipped him hard but he held fast in his faith. They threw him in prison shackled with iron cuffs. When King Constantine the great rose to power, he defended the Church and liberated her from persecution; he released the holy bishop and restituted the bishopric seat to him. When the Arius heresy appeared, and the first Nicene Council convened in the year 325, Sassine began debating the followers of Arius and confuting them with his sound demonstrations. Then he returned to his seat spreading the teachings of the Nicene Council. Galius was an enemy to Constantine and the Christians. He arrested bishop Sassine and inflicted upon him the worst tortures. He was beheaded and dies around the year 328.



St. Rafka Parish Mission Statement

Faith, hope, and love, reinforcing our family values, promoted through heritage and prayer for the glory of God, the edification of the Holy Church and the salvation of the world.

Spiritual Message (continued)

The Precious Cross of Christ is a paradox:

It is precisely in dying to ourselves that we are reborn.

It is through dying to ourselves that we find our true self, made in the image and likeness of God.

It is through dying to ourselves that we are finally able to love God and others.

It is through dying to ourselves that we finally find peace and true joy.

It is through dying to ourselves that we are no longer obsessed with ourselves!

By accepting the cross we no longer fear suffering or death. By dying to ourselves, carrying our cross, and following Christ, we can become his disciples and one with Him.

The story is told of St. Ambrose of Milan and his deacon as they were traveling a long distance. They stopped to rest at the home of a pious farmer. The farmer and his wife were very pleased to see their holy bishop St. Ambrose and prepared a great feast for him. As the meal progressed and all the servants were waiting on the guests, St. Ambrose asked the farmer, "How is your health?" And the farmer said "Excellent, no illnesses." "And how is your wife," the bishop asked. "She's in excellent health also." "And how are your children?" "They are all well," he said, "and very intelligent." Then St. Ambrose asked, "And how is your farm doing?" "Oh, excellent," the farmer said, "I've had a bountiful harvest and am building new barns to hold all the crops." At that point St. Ambrose stood up and said to his deacon, "Come, we must leave this place, God doesn't dwell here."

The Cross is not just the symbol of Christianity, it is the essence of Christianity. Every true and faithful Christian wears a cross around his neck and would never be without his cross. There is an old Russian saying when someone misbehaves: "he acts like he doesn't have a cross." Every Orthodox\Catholic Church has not just one but many crosses on its domes and towers, proclaiming the triumph of the cross and scattering the demons. The mystery of the Cross and Resurrection of Christ is what real Christianity is all about. It is precisely through the cross that we find Christ. It is impossible to follow Christ without carrying the cross—impossible.

In St. Mark's Gospel we hear the story of the young man who came running after Christ and knelt before Him asking, "Good master, what must I do to gain eternal life?" And Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, "*One thing you lack: go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up your cross and follow me.*" And he was sad at this word and went away sorrowful because he had many possessions. And Jesus in this passage of the Gospel is calling us to carry his cross, to die for the world and live only for Christ. The grain of wheat if it did not die it will remain just a single grain, but when it dies, it produces many fruits.

Our Savior says: "*For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it*" (Matthew 16:25). From a practical point of view, to die to ourselves means that we don't have to be preoccupied with ourselves anymore. We must no longer try to get our way all the time or try to get people to notice how smart we are or how good looking we are. We can be free from constantly seeking pleasure and comfort. We can be free from needing the approval of others. As we die to ourselves the "new man", made in the image and likeness of God, can emerge, and grow. As all the selfishness and self-centeredness dies away, as we pick up our cross without complaining, more room is made for Christ, for His love and for love of others.

At that time, the cross that you see behind the altar won't be only the precious Cross of Christ, but it is also the cross that each one of us must carry. How sweet this burden is when it is united to Christ but how heavy it is when it is carried alone. Amen.