

ST BASIL GREEK MELKITE CATHOLIC CHURCH  
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## JERUSALEM THE MOTHER CHURCH

The first Church depicted in Acts is the small community gathered in the “upper room” which had been put at their disposal. This group of Jesus’ followers were led by the remaining apostles, “*the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers*”: a group said to number “*about a hundred and twenty*” (Acts 1:14, 15). It is this group who chose Matthias to replace Judas and upon whom the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost.

In response to the Pentecost miracle of tongues and Peter’s preaching which followed (see Acts 2:1-42), “*that day about three thousand souls were added to them*” (v. 42). This number would have included natives of Jerusalem and its surroundings as well as “*devout Jews from every nation under heaven*” who had come to Jerusalem for the festival: “*both Jews and proselytes*” (vv. 5 and 10). Proselytes were those Gentiles who had come to believe in one God, accepted the teachings of Judaism, been circumcised and were now considered part of the people of Israel. Their mention here signifies that the Gospel has spread from Jesus’ Galilean disciples to the centers of the Jewish people.

The first few chapters in Acts focus on the growing Church characterized by the preaching of the apostles, the response of the Jewish leaders and the development of the office of deacons. The apostles all appear to still be in Jerusalem, at the heart of this community. St Luke summarizes this first phase in the Church’s life as follows “*... the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith*” (Acts 6:7).

**The Church Disperses:** The next period in the Church’s life comes as a result of the preaching of Stephen, one of the first deacons. Some members of the Synagogue denounce him to the council of Jewish leaders. Stephen is convicted as a blasphemer and stoned to death (see Acts 6:8-7:60). As a result, we are told, “*At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles... Therefore, those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word*” (Acts 8:1, 4). The scattered members of the original Church in Jerusalem found themselves preaching Christ and forming believers and Churches throughout these provinces.

THE FIRST MAJOR ISSUE confronted by the apostolic Church concerned the Torah, and particularly its law on separation from the Gentiles. Beginning with the call of Abraham, God had set apart a people to serve Him as priests and prophets. This people – named Israel, after Abraham’s grandson – was to be a distinct people, from whom God would select a Messiah, or Savior for the world.

There were Gentiles who were drawn to Judaism, usually by contact with Jews in Palestine or the diaspora. Some abandoned polytheism and adopted the worship of the One God. Those who in addition adopted the Jewish customs and laws – in particular, circumcision – were considered **proselytes**, Jews by adoption.

There were other Gentiles who believed in the God of Israel and were open to its practices but had not entered fully into the people of Israel. They were often Roman army officers or had positions in the structure of the Roman provincial administration. These were called the “**God-fearing**” – non-Jews who were sympathetic to Judaism but had not fully converted. The Roman centurion Cornelius (Acts 10:1-48) was one of these Gentile sympathizers to Judaism.

**When Gentiles Encounter Christ:** According to Acts 10, St Peter was in Joppa (modern Jaffa), a Mediterranean port city some 30 miles from Jerusalem, when he had the following experience: “*... he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’ ‘But Peter said, ‘Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.’ And a voice spoke to him again the second time, ‘What God has cleansed you must not call common.’ This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again*” (vv 10-16). (SeptLeaflets2019)

## SUNDAY 1<sup>ST</sup> AFTER THE EXALTATION OF THE CROSS Saturday, September 21 & Sunday, September 22, 2019

### WEEKLY SERVICES

**Daily Liturgy:** Monday-Friday at 8:30AM  
**Holy Liturgy:** Saturday at 4:30PM, Sunday at 11:00AM  
**Matins/Orthos:** Every Sunday at 9:00AM  
**Holy Confession:** Every Monday at 4-6PM  
**Vespers:** Every Saturday at 3:00PM  
**Holy Rosary:** Every Sunday at 10:30AM

### SPEEDY RECOVERY

Please continue to pray for our convalescing friends, including Archdeacon George Yanni, Jordan Barahmeh, Michael Klockowski, Eugene Hutchinson, Maggy Attalah, Nancy Gazzal, Rose Pawlinga, Jean Benoit and Fouad Marji. Please notify Fr. Shofany in case of illness.

### WEEKLY OFFERINGS: THANK YOU!

Weekly Collection September 14/15: \$ 376.00  
Fuel Offering: \$ 145.00  
St. Pauly Textile: \$ 191.94  
Memorial Offering: \$ 220.00

### † MEMORIAL MASSES †

#### THIS SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

† Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Mardenly, By their family

#### THIS SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

#### NEXT SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

#### NEXT SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 29

† William Chanatry, By Louis & Julie Shkane

### \* ANNOUNCEMENT \*

The next Parish Pastoral Council meeting will be held on Mon October 7, 6:30 PM, Rectory Meeting Rm

### IMPORTANT FINANCIAL RECORDS

July Church Income: \$ 3151.62  
July Church Expenses: \$ 5283.23  
July Church Loss: \$ 2132.23

August Church Income: \$ 1304.14  
August Church Expenses: \$ 4562.63  
August Church Loss: \$ 3258.49