

The feast of the **Elevation of the Cross** is on Sept. 14. This feast honors first the finding of the Cross of our Lord by St. Helen, and then its recovery years later, after it had been captured by the Persians. In celebration, we lift up the life-giving Cross, so that we may bow down before the crucified Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we put all our trust. We will observe the feast with Great Vespers on Tuesday, Sept. 13, at 6 PM, and Divine Liturgy on Wednesday at 9:30 AM.

We are planning to resume **Children's Sessions at the beginning of October**. Details are still being worked out—look for more information in the next few weeks.

Chalk Art for Feast of the Cross: All ages are invited on Sunday, September 18. Weather permitting, we'll decorate our steps to celebrate the Elevation of the Cross.

We are resuming **Game Night** on Friday, September 30. All ages are invited for card and board games from 6:30 to 9:00.

Starting Wednesday, Sept. 21, we will begin a bi-monthly series **Exploring Our Faith**. Sessions will take place online via Zoom. We will explore your questions about the Orthodox Faith. If you have been wondering how our faith connects with a particular aspect of life, or you would like to learn more about a point of scripture, history, the saints, prayer or worship, submit your suggestion to Fr. Joshua.

The 2022 **FORCC Benefit Dinner** will be on Sunday, Sept. 25, at 1 PM, at St. Dimitrie Romanian Orthodox Church, 504 Sport Hill Rd, Easton. The Guest Speaker is His Grace, Bishop John, Auxiliary of the Diocese of Worcester and New England (Antiochian Archdiocese). If you are interested in attending please speak with Alexia Tassmer, our FORCC Representative. Reservations are required by September 24 (with a discount on tickets bought by September 17) — no tickets will be sold at the door and seating is limited. Tickets cost \$40 for adults and \$10 for children under 12 years of age.

Rector's Letter, September, 2022

Dear brothers and sisters:

“It's better to give than to receive.” We've heard this saying so often, but it is difficult to think of it as anything more than a cliché. Receiving good things has obvious benefits: just ask a child on Christmas or a worker on payday. Being a consumer — with every business and organization seeking to fulfill your desires — seems like a great deal. And even in the Church, it often seems rather one-sided: we come to receive the words of Scripture, instruction, encouragement, and the Holy Mysteries themselves. Why not consume as much as we can?

The problem is that consumption leaves us empty. It is pleasant as long as it lasts, like a cheerful fire consuming the last of its fuel, but it eventually burns out and leaves only the ashes behind.

Now, we need to eat, to heat our homes, to travel, to work, and so some amount of “creative destruction” is necessary. But focusing our plans, dreams, ambitions, and lives around consumption is truly destructive. We are trying to make our identity out of the stuff we claim for ourselves, and in fact we just make ourselves smaller and smaller.

The real source of identity is what we give of ourselves: “You are what you give.” Life is a course in becoming fully human, becoming what we were made to be. Being rich in possessions — wealth, yes, but also talents, experience, education, leisure, health, and every thing we call “our own” — adds up to very little at the end of our life, which is when we can be honestly judged for who we are. What truly testifies on that day is what we have done with our pos-

sessions, or, more properly, our God-given gifts. Did we consume them, use them up, and so consume the meaning of our life? Or did we recognize that every gift we had received was an opportunity to give of ourselves? Did we share in the divine work of giving and so grow into the persons we were created to be?

In other words, the judgment of our lives will be quite simple: did you love God with everything you have, and did you love your neighbor as yourself? Those are not small matters that we can accomplish in our spare time, that we can accomplish by fulfilling our minimum obligations. Everything that we treat as more important than serving God, everything we do without seeking to honor God with it is an idol that will lead to our destruction. And if we do not love our neighbor as God has shown love to us, we are not only dishonoring God, we are making an idol of ourselves. We take this idea of “Me” and build it up, and care for it and feed it, and consult self-help books and therapists about it, but it all will be consumed in the moment of our death. What lasts for all eternity is humble, hard-working, honest love. How that works out is of course the fabric of our particular stories, but let’s be sure to use the good material, as the Apostle Paul teaches us:

Brethren, you are God’s building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and

the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire (1 Cor 3.9–15).

Long after our good looks, nice houses, comfortable bank accounts, or favorite TV shows are forgotten, what will endure throughout eternity are our brothers and sisters in the presence of God. This life is the time to show love for God and our neighbor. It has been given to us by God in own his unfailing love. Let’s give thanks for the blessings we have received and share this divine work of giving gifts. As we say each Divine Liturgy: “Your own of Your own, we offer to You, on behalf of all and for all!”

May God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the giver of every good thing, bless us and guide us with His Holy Spirit.

Yours in Christ,



Around the Parish

We will celebrate the **Nativity of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary** on Sept. 8. The birth of the Theotokos was the fulfillment of promises made by God to her righteous parents, and also the fulfillment of the hope of generations of people who put their trust in God, from Noah to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to King David and his line. The birth of the Theotokos represents the best the human race has to offer to our Creator, and God accepts this gift and returns her to us as the mother of our Savior. We will observe the feast with Great Vespers on Wednesday, Sept. 7, at 6 PM, and Divine Liturgy on Tuesday at 9:30 AM.