

**May you be strengthened** with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. —*Colossians 1:12–18*

**St Paul says that we** were “in darkness.” He includes himself in that description, since before Christ came to him, St. Paul thought that in arresting Christians and having them stoned was a righteous thing. Zeal without knowledge is still darkness. Christ has freed us from darkness, since knowing Christ, not just about Him, but to know Him via Baptism, Chrismation, Eucharist and the life of the Church, is to be enlightened to one’s own condition, because the Light of Christ—His love and mercy, which “illuminates all” as we say at the Presanctified, are active in our lives. St. Paul uses the word “redemption” to emphasize that we have been brought out of slavery, received manumission. Christ has set us free from the power of satan and death. It’s simply the reality that one can be enslaved by sin and death, or ignore it all, justify it or pretend it’s all ok. This freedom is accomplished because of Who Jesus is, as St. Paul describes Him in the above verses and our union in Him.

**Church Camp is on track for 2024**—June 24 through 29 at the Armenian Camp in Dunlap, CA! If you have children in your parish who attend St. Eugene Camp, then you know that Summer 2023 once again proved to be not just a lot of fun, but also an invaluable experience of coming together as Orthodox Christians in fellowship and common worship. Please join all the other parishes in California in holding a collection for St. Eugene Camp on Sunday, January 28th (New Martyrs and Confessors). Funds from this collection will go toward funding the cost of counselors. We wish we could pay them all handsomely, but at the very least we should not ask them to pay their own way! —*Fr. Andrew Smith, Camp Coordinator*

# ST. SERAPHIM CATHEDRAL

## PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN ORTHODOX CHURCH



**January 21, 2024**

**St. Maximos the Confessor & St. Mark of Ephesus**



- TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION, Tone Eight:  
Thou didst descend from on high, O Merciful One; Thou didst accept the three-day burial to free us from our sufferings. O Lord, our Life and Resurrection, glory to Thee.
- KONTAKION OF THE RESURRECTION, Tone Eight:  
By raising from the tomb, Thou didst raise the dead and resurrect Adam; Eve exults in Thy resurrection; and the world celebrates Thy rising from the dead, O Greatly Merciful One.

### ACTIVITIES & EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Saturday, Jan. 20:                   8:30 AM, *Divine Liturgy at Holy Trinity in SF*  
  *Noon, Walk for Life in SF*  
  5 PM, Great Vespers / Confessions
- Sunday, Jan. 21:                   10 AM, Divine Liturgy  
  11:45 AM, Agape Meal / Mentorship

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- Mon–early Wed: *Fr. Lawrence at Dean’s Retreat in San Diego*
- Wednesday, Jan. 24: 5:30 PM, Akathist to Matushka Olga  
6 PM, Vespers  
6:30 PM, Parish Council Meeting
- Thursday, Jan. 25: 9 AM, Divine Liturgy for the *Feast of St. Gregory the Theologian*  
7 PM, Bible Study with Fr. James via Zoom
- Friday, Jan. 26: 11:30 AM–1:30 PM, Confessions

**This Sunday** has been designated by the Holy Synod of the OCA as [Sanctity of Life Sunday](#). His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon has written the following for this commemoration: “As we mark *Sanctity of Life Sunday* this year, there will be much discussion of the “right to life.” Of course, we Orthodox Christians believe that certain rights, the right to life among them, should be respected, enshrined in law, and protected by civil authority. But human life is something even more precious than a mere right: it is a divine gift. ‘Lo, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward,’ as the Psalmist says (Ps. 126:3). We are called to recognize every human life, from conception to natural death, as a gift of the Lord. This means protecting the unborn, but in a broader sense this means helping our broken society and broken world to view our fellow human beings not as mere mouths to feed or potential threats or problems to be solved or subjects to be controlled, but as blessings from above. The unborn are a blessing; children are a blessing; the elderly are a blessing; the difficult people in our lives are a blessing; even our enemies—perhaps especially our enemies—are a blessing. Moreover, we speak of the sanctity of life for two reasons: because life comes from the Lord, and because it should be offered back to the Lord through service to him and to others, resulting in sanctity. If we understand that we are merely servants, doing as we have been bidden (Lk. 17:10), and if we recognize that the greatest and holiest is the one who became a servant of all through his Incarnation, his ministry, and his Passion and Rising (Mt. 23:11), then we are in the best position of all to treat each human being as a blessing, not in an abstract sense, but in the sense of someone whom we are privileged to serve.”

**It is ironic to see** the heightened emphasis on abortion this year from those in favor of it, considering how often Christians are accused of being

“one issue” voters. Perhaps Post-*Roe*, so-called *Choice* politicians, will be more honest about abortion’s central role in their political project as imaging technology in neonatal care has made the humanity of pre-born babies undeniable. It’s about biology, isn’t it. Abortion is central not only to a progressive political agenda because it symbolizes the worldview in which autonomy and self-expression are the highest possible values, it’s the logical endpoint of the pursuit of freedom *from* constraints, devoid of any notion of freedom *for* a created purpose. Finally, one frequently hears that those who are Pro Life fail in offering any practical response to needs of women in crisis. A casual inquiry will show this to be false. Here in Sonoma County, not to mention the national scene, we have Catholic Charities, Bridges, Redwood Gospel Mission, the Rainbow House and our own Matushka Olga Diaper Bank. Learn more about all this at the [Orthodox Christians for Life](#) website. A year ago at the conclusion of Liturgy I challenged the parish: *How can we help mothers in need, expecting or with children?* I am grateful for those who did respond and then organized the Diaper Bank. But, we can and must do much better: The Diaper Bank needs a coordinator and more team members. Step up, brothers and sisters, and do the works of mercy that are impactful and practical. Almsgiving, i.e. works of mercy, are not optional for the Christian—as the Savior taught in Matthew 25. We minister to the “least of the brethren” and so honor our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ. —  
*Fr Lawrence*

**The Parish Council** will gather for its monthly meeting on Wednesday, January 24, after Vespers.

**The Parish Members are expected** to gather for the *Annual Meeting* on Sunday, February 4, 2024, in accordance with the Parish By-laws. The meeting will begin after the Divine Liturgy at 12:30 PM. The *Annual Report Booklet* will be ready to distribute on Saturday, January 27.

