

St. Mary Magdalene Orthodox Church
1635 Shaffer Road
Atwater, CA 95301
209-812-6332

<http://orthodoxmerced.org>

Father Lawrence Gaudreau, Rector

Sunday September 19th 2021
13th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
Sunday after the Exaltation of the Cross
Afterfeast of the Exaltation of the Cross
The Holy Martyrs Trophimus, Sabbatius, and Dorymedon of Synnada

Announcements

1. **Catechism/ Adult Education classes** – Saturdays 3:30pm – 4:30pm
2. **Grave Blessings** – Saturday September 25th we will be at the Winton Cemetery at 10am.
3. **Parish Council Happenings**
 - a) We will be ordering Purple Altar Vestments in time for the Great Lent. It is good if we are able to get at least one color per year until we have all the liturgical colors – 6-7 of them.
 - b) We are putting in a bid for some furniture that will match the iconostasis – analogians, a center table, stands for flowers and plants etc.
 - c) We are purchasing a Panikhida table that will replace the little sand thing we have in front of Golgotha.
 - d) Roofing project is complete – and we once again have facebook.
 - e) We are planning a “major” clean- up day for Saturday November 13th. It would be good if everyone is involved to some level as we also plan to have lunch and give thanks to God for what we have.
4. **Nativity of Our Lord** – is fast upon us. The Nativity fast begins on November 15th. Please consider our little bookstore/liturgical supply store for Nativity gifts and the enhancement of your personal prayer life. All proceeds go to purchasing supplies for our social activities.

Embracing Our Cross

I remember reading one time something written by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann where he said the spiritual life is akin to dealing with “what you have been dealt.” I liken it to a poker game – you have to deal with the cards that are in your hand. You may be able to trade out some of them – or even all of them – but nonetheless, you must start with what you been dealt.

All of us have been dealt something in our lives. Sometimes these things are truly a cross and sometimes we are given real blessings. I think it is probably a mixture of both even though we often fail to see those things through which God has blessed us.

There are many “cards” we never asked for in our life. For example, none of us asked for a laboratory fashioned virus developed in a country that features an evil and oppressive regime, with the aid of American taxpayer dollars, and eventually, and purposefully, unleashed onto the world. No one asked for this in their hand of cards. And while it is not “politically correct” to speak of such things – nonetheless, reality is reality. In our lives we have to deal with the harsh and brutal truth of what has been laid upon us.

Concerning the present pandemic, I have heard over and over again the anger expressed by many, the feeling of hopelessness, isolation, loneliness, sickness and the realization that everything is decided in an environment of absolute insanity. This is the cross that we presently have to bear as we live in a death bound and demon ridden world. We have no reason to expect any better. I would argue that the only expectation we should have in this world is to be fiercely tempted to the very last breath we take.

The spiritual life is taking those cards dealt us and through a life of prayer, fasting, asceticism, participation in the sacraments, and reading the Holy Scriptures that we not desire to get rid of our cards – sometimes we cannot – but be given the strength to deal with those cards given to us – to the point that we do not allow outside influences to disturb our inner peace. Our firm confidence is that in Jesus Christ and the Church that He established, we find and experience power far beyond the understanding of “this world.” The poker hand we have been dealt, the cross we have to carry has been fashioned for us, and us alone. Do not let the evil that is more and more prevalent in our world and in American society disrupt us – for we are not playing a “game of poker”, we are actively engaged in the very salvation of our souls.