

WEEKLY MEDITATION

At St Mary's Cathedral, we celebrate our parish feast day on October 1 – the feast of the Protection of the Mother of God – but we will begin our celebration today with a fine lunch, fellowship and a spiritual talk. It will be good to be together, and I thank the organizers - Nick and Michelene Radulovich - and our special speaker - Dan Christopoulos - for helping us to mark this day. (Many of us know Dan through his work for International Orthodox Christian Charities. This is a pan-Orthodox charitable work close to our hearts!) On Tuesday evening we will celebrate the festal Vespers with litiya, and on Wednesday morning festal Matins and Liturgy, followed by a potluck meal at the parish center.

Our feast day reminds us that the spiritual life of Christians takes place within the context of the communion of the saints. All those who have been united to Christ, whether alive in *this* world or deceased, are mysteriously alive in Him. We are one in Christ, both the living and the dead. This is what we are meant to experience in our Divine Liturgy, isn't it? Our earthly worship is drawn up into the eternal, heavenly worship of the Kingdom of God. We here and now join in the praise and adoration of the Lord eternally celebrated by all the saints gone before us.

This communion of the saints is also manifested in our own everyday prayers. Just as we ask for the prayers of our family, friends and fellow parishioners, so too we seek in prayer the help and intercessions of the saints – and especially of the Mother of God. Praying with the saints is an expression of reality of our communion with them, a moment of encounter, a link made between the visible and invisible worlds. In asking their intercessions we affirm the bonds of love that unite us in Christ. In such prayer we can encounter the power of divine grace and the truth of the Kingdom of God, for as the Psalmist says, *God is glorified in his saints!* As with our closest and dearest friends we open our hearts in prayer and find hope and consolation.

May our festal celebration of the Protection of the Mother of God enrich our prayerful conversation with her, under whose heavenly protection and by whose intercessions may we all be saved!

~Fr. Andrew