

19/12/2019

## Fifty Years of Orthodox Christian Witness Celebrated at Holy Resurrection Church in Tucson



“This church was born to be alive,” His Eminence Metropolitan Joseph told attendees of the **Antiochian parish in Tucson**. “It is no coincidence that it was named for the Holy Resurrection.”

Sayidna Joseph, along with past and present clergy of the parish, and hundreds of faithful gathered on the weekend of December 14-15, 2019 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the community. They welcomed back former pastors to celebrate.

The current pastor, V. Rev. Fr. Gabriel Bullock came to this flock 15 months ago. “I was born in 1969,” Fr. Gabriel said. “Holy Resurrection Church was born in 1969. The church looks better than me.”

He and Sayidna Joseph congratulated the congregation on the half-century of

witness to our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ in southeast Arizona – from the immigrants who came to the area with very little, to their descendants who helped build the permanent church temple in recent years, to families new and old who want to live the true faith.

His Eminence then reminded them that while they can celebrate the past, they must look to the present and future, and enhance their relationships with Christ at all times through His Church.

“We never say ‘yesterday’ in our prayers,” Sayidna said. “We always say ‘today.’ Today the Virgin comes to the cave. Today the waters are sanctified. Today salvation comes into the world. The Church is here now for the salvation of our souls. Christ was born once in our history, but He is above time, and must be born in our lives today and every day.”

The celebration banquet on Saturday not only came with good food and fellowship, but also with Christmas hymns beautifully sung by Holy Resurrection’s chanters, adult choir and children’s choir. Their leader is Mareena Boosamra-Ball, whom Sayidna Joseph recently appointed as the chairwoman of the Archdiocese’s Department of Sacred Music.

The next morning, their voices filled the church for Orthros and the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy on what was the Sunday of the Forefathers of Christ – those righteous ones who foretold of the coming of our Savior in the flesh. And the Gospel reading from St. Luke told the parable of the invitation to the eternal banquet – not a banquet that celebrates an anniversary as Sayidna Joseph pointed out.

“God Himself invites us to this banquet,” His Eminence said in his homily. “Who are we to say ‘no’ to Him? God Himself is at the head of this table. And the food at this table is not human, but it is a banquet of virtues, godliness, humility and love.”

This Gospel reading always comes two Sundays before Christmas as part of preparation for Orthodox Christians. Sayidna says it reminds us that we run to Christ Who comes to meet us and elevate us, and we are not to make excuses to skip the banquet like the people in the parable.

“The Forefathers made no excuses to Jesus,” Sayidna said. “They accepted His invitation with love and joy.”

And in thinking of the future, Sayidna Joseph and Fr. Gabriel commissioned the faithful to help them evangelize Tucson to show them the true joy that Christ brings

in order to build Holy Resurrection Church even more.

Toward the conclusion of the Liturgy, Sayidna Joseph led the Trisagion Service for the newly-departed Elder Hieromonk Ephraim of Philotheou Monastery on Mount Athos and Arizona, who peacefully fell asleep in the Lord at Saint Anthony Monastery in Florence, Arizona at the age of 92. May his memory be eternal.

**[Photo gallery from Saturday](#)**

**[Photo gallery from Sunday](#)**

— Source: [antiochian.org](http://antiochian.org)