

Sunday, October 13, 2013

Two Liturgies every Sunday

With the grace of Christ, we started conducting two liturgies every Sunday as of last week, October 6, 2013. Both liturgies start at 8:30 AM, one is conducted in Arabic on the upper level and ends at 11:30 AM, the other is conducted in English on the lower level in English and ends at 10:45 AM. The lower level has been setup nicely to appropriate for conducting the liturgy. This arrangement will continue on a trial basis for two months after which we will re-evaluate it and survey opinions on whether we continue or not.

Conducting two liturgies allows to:

- 1- Give an opportunity to everyone in church to enjoy the liturgy in their preferred language through which they experience God in their heart.
- 2- Provide a personal service that touches the heart of everyone in their preferred language and in a way they can taste it.
- 3- Reduce the time it takes to administer communion and reduce the crowdedness of a single liturgy.
- 4- Finish the English liturgy 45 minutes earlier so that the children and the youth would be more refreshed going into Sunday school and the youth meeting. As a result, Sunday school service will end much earlier. This will help families to spend more time with their children for the rest of the day. It is expected for all Sunday school servants to attend the English liturgy so they can start Sunday school with their students on time.

Some may say that **St Mary's congregation is one big loving family, and having two liturgies at the same time will split the church and split the unity of families.** I think there is misunderstanding in this point which needs to be clarified:

1- We thank God that we are truly one loving family here at in St. Mary's, but praying two liturgies does not mean splitting the family. To the contrary, the church wants to serve all members of the family, the young and the old, new and old generations. The church goal is to minister to each and every one in a personal and satisfying ministry. Praying two liturgies in two different languages will offer to everyone to be connected to God in their mother tongue without barriers. Variety of language doesn't mean division, we saw the Holy Spirit coming upon the disciples in the form of tongues of fire, giving them to speak 15 different languages, and we cannot consider this a division in the church, although they spoke in different languages with people from different backgrounds and cultures. They delivered one message even though in different languages. The message was the love of God and the salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ, and this is what we are doing now.

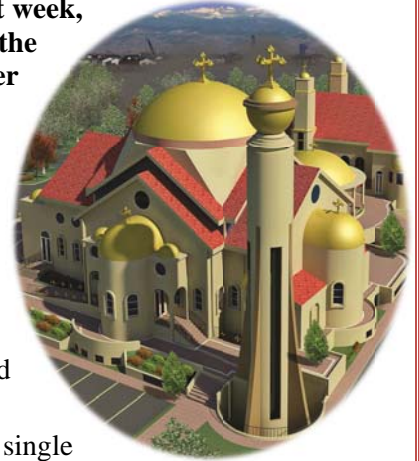
2- Unity doesn't mean that we physically stand next to each other in the flesh to attend the same liturgy. Rather It is the unity of heart, faith and love. Unity comes from partaking of the same body [of Christ] in any liturgy we attend and to work together with one heart to build one another within the one body of Christ.

3- There is no doubt that everybody prefers to pray the liturgy in their mother tongue, so it is fair treatment and loving behavior to provide the liturgy to everyone in their own language that touches their heart.

4- When we enter the church to pray, we should forget the family bonds, and focus only on the altar. It does not matter who is standing around us, we only need to be in harmony in prayers with all the church (the big family)... This is spiritual maturity. It is not important for family members to stand next to each other during the liturgy because we are all members of the church body as a whole. Except some parents who have to take care of their little kids, we should not focus on who is standing beside us but only focus on the prayers and the readings. Therefore every member of the same family will be able to pray the liturgy in their mother tongue, and this does not mean a division in the family.

5- There is a noticeable difference between the upper level and the lower level. Despite the remodeling efforts that we may do, it will not be as beautiful as upstairs. However, this is a temporary arrangement. God willing in less than two years we will have another beautiful church to pray two liturgies without any differences.

Therefore, even if there are different opinions about the idea of two liturgies, we have to keep the spirit of love in the church under all circumstances. We must recognize that we are all responsible for the peace of our beloved church. We should keep in mind that negative words put barriers among us and wound the love in the church. May God keep us always as one heart and one spirit. Amen.



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