



## *Sunday Bulletin November 22, 2015* *Greek Orthodox Church of the* *Annunciation*

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**Rev. Dr. Michael Bahlatzis, Presiding Priest-Proistamenos**

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### **Epistle Reading**

**Prokeimenon. Plagal Fourth Mode. Psalm 75.11,1.**

**Make your vows to the Lord our God and perform them.**

**Verse: God is known in Judah; his name is great in Israel.**

**The Reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians 4:1-7**

BRETHREN, I, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

### **Gospel Reading**

**Luke 12:16-21**

The Lord said this parable: "The land of a rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." As he said these things, he cried out: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

*Message from Fr. Michael....*

Dearly Beloved Faithful in the Lord:

As the gospel reading of today encourages us to lay up treasures in Heaven rather than build "bigger barns" to store our crops or goods. It is angelic figures or heavenly hosts who inspire us to look toward the Divine. As we approach the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord (Christmas), we think of the angels that gathered on this most holiest of nights. Every time we gather together to celebrate as a spiritual family the Divine Liturgy, we proclaim our faith in "One God, Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth and of everything visible and invisible." We recall from the writings of St. Paul to the Colossians: "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him" (Col. 1:16). The Greek word "angel," or "angeleophoros," means literally a messenger or carrier, whose task is to deliver the directives and messages of God to the people; and, in return, from the people to God. This is the role and mission of the order of beings of the spiritual world, the angels. In both the Old and New Testaments, the angels are presented as Divine messengers to the people inhabiting the earth. The angels bring expressions of God's will and His desires to all of humanity. Origen and Chrysostom wrote: "We learn to call them 'angels' from the manner of tasks that they perform ... because they announce to the people the messages of God." Prophets, bishops, and priests, having the same sort of function, are also referred to in the Scriptures as "angels." This is especially true in regard to St. John the Baptist, who came to proclaim the advent of the Messiah: "Behold, I send My messenger (the angel) before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee" (Mark 1:2). However, the word "angel" is used most frequently in the Scriptures to refer to invisible, heavenly spiritual beings.

The Scriptures contain accounts of the appearances of angels. In the third chapter of Genesis, for instance, we read that when God had cast our first parents, Adam and Eve, out of Paradise, "He placed at the east of the garden of Eden the Cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (vs. 24, American Standard Version). An angel spoke to Hagar in the desert. An angel miraculously saved the life of Lot. Also, an angel spoke to Abraham, as he was preparing to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. Angels spoke to the prophets, directing their ministries. In the New Testament as well, from the very first pages, we read of the appearance of angels. At the Annunciation (the patron feast of our beloved church), the angel, Gabriel, announced to the Virgin Mary the Nativity of Christ: "And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women ... And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name Jesus" (Luke 1:28, 31). Angels hail the birth of Christ in Bethlehem of Judaea: "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:13,14).

Angels appeared to the Magi and warned them to return home "another way," inasmuch as Herod was seeking to slay the newly born Christ Child. Angels appeared to strengthen Christ during the period of His temptation following His forty-day fast. Moreover, angels accompanied His entire public ministry of three years. They were present during His Divine Passion in Gethsemane and on Golgotha. Finally, the angels hailed His Resurrection, and accompanied Him into heaven at His Ascension. The ministerial activities of the Apostles were marked by angelic presences. This was very obvious in the life of St. Paul. Whenever the Apostle to the Gentiles came to a spiritual road block, and knew not which way to turn, angels appeared to him and answered his prayers and illuminated the path for him to follow the road of God's will. The Book of the Revelations of St. John we read of testimony to the angels in almost every chapter. The faith of the Holy Fathers in the existence of the angels is very concrete. Our entire Orthodox hymnology and liturgical literature is living testimony to this fact. The rational mind of man also accepts the existence of angels. The relation between man and angels is not with great distance from one another as we read: "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownest him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of Thy hands" (Heb. 2:7). The angels too are creatures of the Divine and free creative love of God, who created them before the creation of the visible world. The nature of angels is that of pure spiritual beings (spirits), that of "immaterial and bodiless beings," as written in the Scriptures, and the proclamation of the Seventh Ecumenical Synod. But here the Fathers of the Church believe that the immateriality of the angels is not the same as that of God. They are not called "bodiless" to liken them to God (St. John Damascene), but because they neither multiply and increase, nor reduce and decrease. They come into being only by a specific Divine creative act. They are not omnipresent; that is a property of God alone. Therefore they must "travel" (if we may use that word in connection with angelic movements) from one place to another. Their mission is to serve and contribute toward the salvation of men. This is the teaching of Scripture.

In the Scriptures three archangels, although there are many more which exist, are named: Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. Each man, particularly every pious person, has his own "Guardian Angel." In the liturgical services of the Church we ask in our petitions "for an Angel of peace, a faithful Guide, a Guardian of our souls and bodies." Fathers, such as John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, and Origen, believe that nations and sovereign states also have their own patron angels.

Finally, the ranks of angels are divided into three hierarchies, each containing three choirs. They are as follows: (1) Cherubim, Seraphim, Thrones; (2) Principalities, Powers, Authorities; and (3) Dominions, Archangels, and Angels.

May the Heavenly Hosts encircle us so that our prayers may ascend as one, I remain

Your humble pastor in His service,  
+Fr. Michael

## **The Art of Thanksgiving**

by Wilferd Peterson

The Art of Thanksgiving is THANKSLIVING. It is gratitude in action. It is applying Albert Schweitzer's philosophy, "In gratitude for your own good fortune you must render in return some sacrifice of your life for other life."

It is thanking God for the gift of life by living it triumphantly.

It is thanking God for your talents and abilities by accepting them as obligations to be invested for the common good.

It is thanking God for all that men and women have done for you by doing things for others.

It is thanking God for opportunities by accepting them as a challenge to achievement.

It is thanking God for happiness by striving to make others happy.

It is thanking God for beauty by helping to make the world more beautiful.

It is thanking God for inspiration by trying to be an inspiration to others.

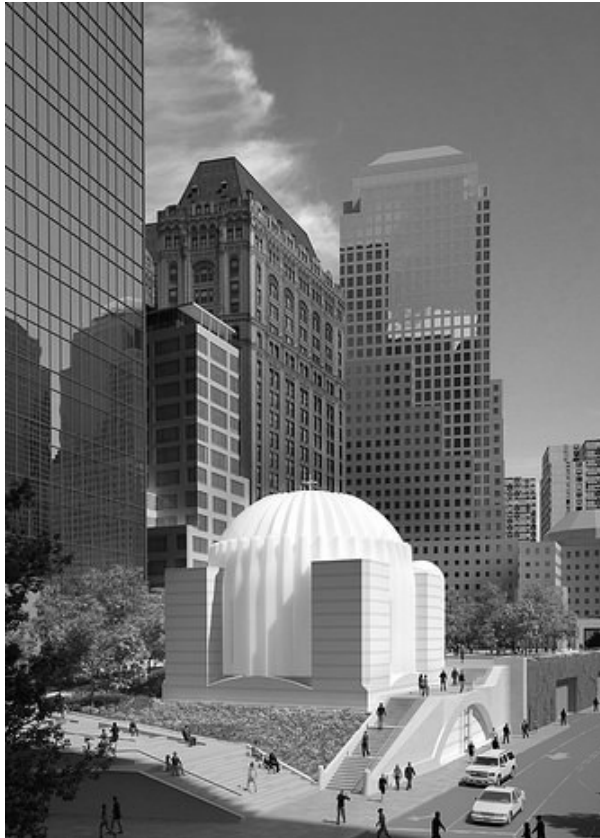
It is thanking God for health and strength by the care and reverence you show your body.

It is thanking God for the creative ideas that enrich life by adding your own creative contributions to human progress.

It is thanking God for each new day by living it to the fullest.

It is thanking God by giving hands arms legs and voice to your thankful spirit.

It is adding to your prayers of thanksgiving, acts of thanksgiving.



Dearly Beloved in the Lord:

The Chancellor, Fr. Dean, on behalf of our beloved Metropolitan Nicholas, had requested that we initiate a fund drive to raise money for the construction of the St. Nicholas National Shrine at Ground zero in NYC. This will be an incredible piece of architecture and a holy place where people from all faiths throughout the world may come and worship The Lord. It truly places Orthodoxy in the national lime light. Should you choose to make a donation (usually a minimum of \$100), please make out your check to our church "Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church." Please ear mark the check in Bold writing: donation: St. Nicholas National Shrine in

the memo section of your check. Please give your check only to Peter Diamantakos and no one else so that it does not get mixed up with any other accounts. This donation has nothing to do with your annual dues payment to our church. This donation for this National Shrine Project is purely voluntary. May God bless you for your generosity. You will receive a certificate of recognition for your generous donation. Once our church has collected the funds, the church will forward the monies to the Metropolis of Detroit or Archdiocese for the St. Nicholas National Shrine Project. Thank you and God bless!

+Fr. Michael

***As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. "I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."***

**Luke 20:45-21:4**

**FATHER MICHAEL REQUESTS**...that we, as a faithful community keep the following individuals in our prayers: Michalena (Skiadas) Sukenik, Suzanne Vaishnani, daughter of Ted Simon, Presbyteria Magdalena Michalopoulos, Helen Economides, and Henry Nussbaum. Please notify Fr. Michael if you have anyone else who should be included for special prayers. May they be under the grace and tender watch of our Lord.

Lebanese Independence Day is today November 22nd. Lebanon gained its independence from the French Mandate on Nov. 22, 1943. The independence government consisted of leaders from the different religious Lebanese factions who collaboratively fought together against the French occupation. Since independence, the Lebanese govern together based on religious representation. The Cedar tree is the national emblem and figures on the flag. The cedars of Lebanon are referenced in the Book of Psalms in the Holy Bible. Congratulations to our Lebanese brothers and sisters on celebrating and honoring their wonderful Independence Day. May God bless our Lebanese faithful!

#### **2015 Christmas Card:**

There is a signup sheet located in the Narthex for this year's Christmas Card. Please print your name(s) clearly so that there are no errors once the names are sent to the printer. Cost is \$10.00 for one line, \$20 for more than one line. Please have your name(s) completed no later than November 29, 2015 to allow enough time for printing. Thank you.

#### **Altar Server Meeting:**

There will be an Altar server meeting next Sunday, November 29<sup>th</sup> immediately following the Divine Liturgy. All altar servers are required to attend unless it is not possible due to other obligations.

Whether you are an Orthodox Christian, or this is your first visit to an Orthodox Church, we are pleased to have you with us. Although Holy Communion is reserved for baptized and chrismated (confirmed) Orthodox Christians, all are invited to receive the "ANTIDORON" (blessed bread) which is not a sacrament, but is a reminder of the "agape feast" that followed worship in the early Church. After the Divine Liturgy this morning, please join us in the Church Hall for fellowship and refreshments. We hope that you will return often to worship with us, to grow in Christ and in our Orthodox Faith. For any spiritual, religious, or sacramental matters, please contact Fr. Michael (607) 795-1474. For any building, facility or church property issues, please contact Parish Council President Steve Anastos, (607) 296-9799. Deadline for suggestions for the bulletin is 12:00 noon on Thursday.

## SCHEDULE OF CHRISTMAS SERVICES FOR 2015 CHRISTMAS SEASON

Saturday, December 12th

Feast of St. Spyridon

Divine Liturgy - 10:00 am (at Holy Trinity Church - Binghamton)

Sunday, December 20th

Sunday before the Nativity

Orthros 8:45 am, Divine Liturgy 9:45 am

Thursday, December 24th

Christmas Eve

Orthros 8:45 pm, Christmas Divine Liturgy 9:45 pm

Since we are having Christmas Liturgy which concludes at midnight or shortly before, there will be no services on Christmas Day in the morning

Sunday, December 27th

Sunday after the Nativity

Orthros: 8:45 am, Divine Liturgy 9:45 am

Friday, January 1st, 2016

The Circumcision of the Lord and the feast day of St. Basil the Great

New Year's Day: Orthros 9:00 am and Divine Liturgy of St. Basil 10:00 am

Sunday, January 3rd, 2016

Sunday before Holy Theophany

Orthros 8:45 am, Divine Liturgy 9:45 am

Wednesday, January 6th, 2016

Feast of Holy Theophany

Orthros 8:45 am, Divine Liturgy 9:45 am

The Great Blessing of the Waters is to be at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy on this day.