



Sunday Bulletin February 7, 2016

Greek Orthodox Church of the

Annunciation

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Rev. Dr. Michael Bahlatzis, Presiding Priest-Proistamenos

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### **Epistle Reading     2 Corinthians 6:1-10**

BRETHREN, working together with him, then, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, "At the acceptable time I have listened to you, and helped you on the day of salvation." Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. We put no obstacle in any one's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors, watching, hunger; by purity, knowledge, forbearance, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

### **Gospel Reading     Matthew 25:14-30**

The Lord said this parable: "A man going on a journey called his servants and entrusted to them his property; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them; and he made five talents more. So also, he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.' And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.' He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed, and gather where I have not winnowed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to every one who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.' As he said these things he cried out: 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear!'"

Message from Fr. Michael....

Dearly Beloved Faithful:

Today, February 7th, we are excited by the fact that it is Superbowl Sunday. However, during this past week we take note that the feast day of the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple was this past Tuesday. To many, this Presentation of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Temple is viewed as a family ceremony. Probably some viewed this ceremony as a rite of passage, perhaps, or an event for the proud new parents. For Orthodox Christians, who read the Gospel with eyes of faith, the Fortieth-Day Blessing of Our Lord is regarded as a great Feast. This feast marks an important event in the course of our salvation. Judaic Law of that time had decreed that the firstborn son who opened His mother's womb was to be brought to the Lord on the fortieth day in a solemn act of worship, to be sanctified unto God as His special possession (Exodus 13:2, Leviticus 12). Therefore, in adhering to this ancient commandment, the Virgin Mary and Joseph brought their child Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem. They sought to comply with this law. However, to the surprise of those in attendance, had the opportunity to view a transformation of the very nature of worship itself. Through the Lord's Incarnation, Christ transformed the very essence of our humanity. At the blessed Theophany of our Lord, when the Lord entered into the Jordan, a tributary of the Dead Sea, He transformed the nature of the waters, into a medium of blessing and new life by His Baptism. Simultaneously, He transformed all the waters of earth. At this great Feast, our Lord transformed the nature of worship through His ritualistic worship of the Old Covenant, signaling the revelation of grace upon grace. Through this He came to the worship of the New Covenant in His blood. The aged eyes of Simeon beheld the transformation as the Christ-child. Through the Lord's presentation in the Temple, He blessed and established the basics of Christian eucharistic worship. Simeon declared, "Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word, for mine eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples" (Luke 2:29-31). During that time, the faithful worshipped through the offering of sacrifices as an expression of fear. These offerings were but a small portion of one's possessions. These offerings were considered substitutes for their souls. Through the fires of sacrifice, the faithful sought atonement of their sins. In the same manner, on this day the humble new parents from Bethlehem brought an offering of two turtle doves (Luke 2:24) to the God of Israel. But something happens today that marks the end of the era of animal sacrifice and the advent of New Covenant worship. From henceforth we shall say with blatant truth, "Thine Own of Thine Own we offer to Thee." For the offering unto God will be God Himself in the flesh, and the broken body and spilt blood will belong to the Lord alone, who in His own person establishes the reconciliation of God and man. Therefore, one can see that the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple was the Lord being brought to eventually serve as the sacrificial Lamb for the many. Like Simeon, every Orthodox priest receives Christ into his hands in the form of the amnos which represents the Lamb of God. He receives this Gift at the hour of his ordination, when the Church, who is the Mother of us all, through the hands of her hierarchs. Thus the bishop places into the newly ordained priest's hands the bread that is consecrated to be the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ. Like Simeon, therefore, every priest bears up Christ within the holy place, with voice lifted up to bless the Most High God (see Luke 2:28). And like Simeon, the priest comes forth again from the holy place to give Christ back to the Church, to distribute His all-pure Body and Blood to the faithful, for the forgiveness of sins and for life everlasting. At the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple, the righteous Simeon saw the revelation of God's plan of salvation in the face of the forty-day old baby Jesus in his arms. He foresaw the end of blood sacrifices on altars. Like Simeon, at the end of our life's calling, may we be inspired to say, "My eyes, Lord, have seen your salvation. I have seen your light to the nations. I have seen the glory of your people . . . their consolation, and their redemption." May Christ our True God, who condescended to be carried in the arms of the righteous Simeon for our salvation, bless and strengthen you, and may He always remember you in His kingdom, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen. May our eyes be so amazed like those of the righteous Simeon to see the countenance of our Lord and may we be truly inspired by His awesome presence!

Prayerfully, in His service,  
+Fr. Michael

## **Parthenius, Bishop of Lampsacus**

Saint Parthenius was born in Melitopolis on the Hellespont, the son of a deacon named Christopher. Because of the miracles that he wrought even as a young man, he was ordained a priest and then Bishop of Lampsacus in the days of Saint Constantine the Great, from whom he received great gifts and authority both to overturn the altars of the idols and to raise up a church to the glory of Christ. Working many miracles throughout his life, he reposed in peace an old man and full of days.



## **Luke of Mount Stirion**

Saint Luke was the descendant of a family from Aegina which, because of the frequent invasions of the Saracens, left Aegina and dwelt in Phocis, where the Saint was born in 896. From his earliest childhood Luke ate neither flesh, nor cheese, nor eggs, but gave himself over with his whole soul to hardship and fasting for the love of heavenly blessings, often giving away his clothing to the poor, for which his father punished him. After his father's death he secretly left home to become a monk, but the Lord, inclining to the fervent prayers of his mother, made him known, and he returned to her for a time to care for her. For many years he lived as a hermit, moving from place to place; he spent the last part of his life on Mount Stirion at Phocis, where there is a city named Stiris. The grace of God that was in him made him a wonder-worker, and his tomb in the monastery of Hosios Loukas, famous for its mosaics, became a source of healings and place of pilgrimage for the faithful. According to some he reposed in the year 946; according to others, in 953.

### **Apolytikion of Luke the Righteous in the First Tone**

O God of our Fathers, ever dealing with us according to Thy gentleness: take not Thy mercy from us, but by their entreaties guide our life in peace.

### **Kontakion of Luke the Righteous in the Plagal of the Fourth Tone**

God, Who by judgments known to Him chose thee ere thou wast formed that thou, O Luke, mightest be right well-pleasing unto Him, from the womb made thee His own and He sanctified thee; as His own true faithful servant hath He shown thee forth and hath set aright thy footsteps, ever guiding thee as the Friend of man; thou rejoicest before Him now.

**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, Presbytera 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.

## **ANNUNCIATION CHURCH MEGA WEEKEND**

Hockey Sunday School fellowship night: Friday, February 19, 2016. Details below, see Jackie Buchta.

MIDWINTER VALENTINE'S DANCE at our Church Fellowship hall: Saturday, February 20, 2016. See Steve Anastos for details.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING in our Church Fellowship hall at the conclusion of Divine services on Sunday, February 21, 2016.

Parish Council members are reminded that your dues must be paid by **March 31**; for all other members, you are strongly encouraged to have your dues paid no later than **June 30**. Please submit your payment to Sophia Papastratis or Steve Anastos. ***Single rate is \$200/year, which is for one member; family rate is \$400 which means more than one member of a family, such as husband and wife.*** Children under the age of 18 are not included in these rates. Anyone with financial concerns regarding their dues is encouraged to speak with Fr. Michael or Steve Anastos.

Binghamton Senators Hockey: All current/active Sunday School students and teachers are invited to attend a hockey game between the Binghamton Senators and the St. John Ice Caps on Friday, February 19, 2016. This will be free of charge for all current Sunday School students and teachers; all other church members are invited to attend at a cost of \$15 per person. Please sign up for this trip with Jackie Buchta by February 1, 2016 so that we can purchase the tickets in advance.

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.