



*Sunday Bulletin May 15, 2016*  
*Greek Orthodox Church of the*  
*Annunciation*

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

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**Epistle Reading The reading is from Acts of the Apostles 6:1-7**

IN THOSE DAYS, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the body of the disciples and said, "it is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And what they said pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochoros, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaos, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands upon them. And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

**Gospel Reading Mark 15:43-47; 16:1-8**

At that time, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. And Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. And he bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud, and laid him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid. And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week they went to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?" And looking up, they saw that the stone was rolled back; for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe; and they were amazed. And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you." And they went out and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

*Message from Fr. Michael.....*

Dearly Beloved Faithful:

Christos Anesti! Christ is risen! Meci hakam! Christos Imviat! On this second Sunday following Pascha, we commemorate the Myrrhbearing Women, the Righteous Joseph of Arimathea, and the Righteous Nicodemus. They were our Lord's faithful followers who witnessed His crucifixion and Resurrection. The Gospel of St John tells us that Nicodemus was a Pharisee who spoke to Christ under the cover of darkness, spent a hundred pounds for the purchase and acquisition of myrrh and aloes. Nicodemus was actually cast out of the synagogue and suffered for having disclosed the Jewish plots to hide, cover up, and deny the truth about our Lord's Crucifixion and Resurrection.

Joseph, Jesus' disciple, pleaded for the body of our Lord from Pilate, gave money for a shroud, gave up his own tomb which had been hewn out of rock, and was then caustically persecuted by the Jews for proclaiming the truth about our Lord and his crucifixion and resurrection. The myrrhbearers, who selflessly sacrificed all for the treasured myrrh with which to anoint and care for the Body of our Lord, and then announced the Resurrection of the Crucified, when others hid for fear of the Jews. The myrrhbearers loved the Lord that they did not possess fear, and they revealed the truth of His Crucifixion and Resurrection and suffered for it.

In a way, we are all myrrhbearers. Since the Body of Christ, in the words of St. Paul, is the Church, therefore all members of the Church are members of the Body of Christ. We confess the truth of the Lord's Crucifixion and Resurrection, and therefore, have become myrrhbearers. We can appreciate the difficulty in becoming a myrrhbearer, to care for the Body of Christ, to care for the Church. As the world has become obsessed with self-gratification, it attempted to condemn the Church, because the Church's values are contrary to those of this materialistic and selfish world, 'which lies in evil'. Those who have drifted away accomplish the will of this world, and of the Prince of this world, Satan, and have fled from the Price of Peace.

In this world, one must possess faith in the Church, the Body of Christ. Those who lack faith have little time and patience for the Church/the Body of Christ. For instance, recently a woman approached me and said: 'You are so lucky, you have a beautiful church'. I was astonished by such an attitude. First, the entity of 'luck' does not exist. Second, the little that we have here belongs not to us, but to God. Lastly, anything that is here is not the result of luck, but of one of the following: it is the result of God's undeserved blessing, which can be given to us and can be taken away from us. Or alternatively, it is the result of sweat, blood, sacrifice and hard work. In other words, it is the product of myrrhbearing, selfless caring for the Body of Christ. Myrrhbearing is not exclusively the act of participating in the sacraments, preaching the Gospel and confessing the Faith. It is also doing things which difficult because they require our sacrifice.

Those who sing in church are myrrhbearers.

Those who clean the church are myrrhbearers.

Those who prepare the flowers for the services are myrrhbearers.

Those who bake Prosfora are myrrhbearers.

Those who labor for our church are myrrhbearers.

Those who sew vestments and altar-coverings are myrrhbearers.

Those who prepare the coffee fellowship or donate food are myrrhbearers.

Those who donate icons or make offerings of money are myrrhbearers.

Even those who simply come and pray for the salvation of all are myrrhbearers.

All those who work for the Body of Christ, the Church, in this world, but are not of this world, are myrrhbearers, because they show that they too selflessly love Christ. The reward for being a myrrhbearers is the Kingdom of Heaven through being risen with our Lord.

May we all always be caretakers of sharing the truth of our Lord's Crucifixion and Resurrection, through our being myrrhbearing witnesses in His name.

In the risen Christ, I remain

Your faithful and humble servant,

+Fr. Michael

## Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women



About the beginning of His thirty-second year, when the Lord Jesus was going throughout Galilee, preaching and working miracles, many women who had received of His beneficence left their own homeland and from then on followed after Him. They ministered unto Him out of their own possessions, even until His crucifixion and entombment; and afterwards, neither losing faith in Him after His death, nor fearing the wrath of the Jewish rulers, they came to the sepulchre, bearing the myrrh-oils they had prepared to anoint His body. It is because of the myrrh-oils that these God-loving women brought to the tomb of Jesus that they are

called the Myrrh-bearers. Of those whose names are known are the following: first of all, the most holy Virgin Mary, who in Matthew 27:56 and Mark 15:40 is called "the mother of James and Joses" (these are the sons of Joseph by a previous marriage, and she was therefore their step-mother); Mary Magdalene (celebrated July 22); Mary, the wife of Clopas; Joanna, wife of Chouza, a steward of Herod Antipas; Salome, the mother of the sons of Zebedee, Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus; and Susanna. As for the names of the rest of them, the evangelists have kept silence (Matt 27:55-56; 28:1-10. Mark 15:40-41. Luke 8:1-3; 23:55-24:11, 22-24. John 19:25; 20:11-18. Acts 1:14).

Together with them we celebrate also the secret disciples of the Saviour, Joseph and Nicodemus. Of these, Nicodemus was probably a Jerusalemite, a prominent leader among the Jews and of the order of the Pharisees, learned in the Law and instructed in the Holy Scriptures. He had believed in Christ when, at the beginning of our Saviour's preaching of salvation, he came to Him by night. Furthermore, he brought some one hundred pounds of myrrh-oils and an aromatic mixture of aloes and spices out of reverence and love for the divine Teacher (John 19:39). Joseph, who was from the city of Arimathea, was a wealthy and noble man, and one of the counsellors who were in Jerusalem. He went boldly unto Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus, and together with Nicodemus he gave Him burial. Since time did not permit the preparation of another tomb, he placed the Lord's body in his own tomb which was hewn out of rock, as the Evangelist says (Matt. 27:60).

## Achillius the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Larissa

Saint Achillius was one of the 318 God-bearing Fathers who were present at the First Ecumenical Council; after returning to Larissa he cast down many pagan temples, delivered many from the demons, and raised up churches to the glory of God. He reposed about the middle of the fourth century.

**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, Henry Nussbaum, and Sam Kashou. 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.

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, today we will have a Trisagion Service for Brenda Halpin, beloved sister of Susan Papatomopoulos. Brenda tragically passed unexpectedly and our prayers go out to the Halpin and Papatomopoulos families. May her memory be eternal!

### **Grecian Festival News:**

Your assistance is needed on May 17<sup>th</sup> with preparing the Kolouraki. Please see or call Mrs. Rina Koutsaris at (607) 754-1179.

Also, volunteers are again needed this year to assist with the cash registers. Please see Steve Anastos or Pam Yacalis to volunteer. Thank you.

Thank you to Louis Diamantakos for his gift of serving trays, and to the Papatomas family for their generous donation of speed racks for the kitchen.

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.