



Sunday Bulletin October 16, 2016
Greek Orthodox Church of the
Annunciation

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**Epistle Reading St. Paul's Letter to Titus 3:8-15**

TITUS, my son, the saying is sure. I desire you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to apply themselves to good deeds; these are excellent and profitable to men. But avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels over the law, for they are unprofitable and futile. As for a man who is factious, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is perverted and sinful; he is self-condemned. When I send Artemas or Tychicos to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing. And let our people learn to apply themselves to good deeds, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not to be unfruitful. All who are with me send greeting to you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.

**Gospel Reading Luke 8:5-15**

The Lord said this parable: "A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell along the path, and was trodden under foot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns grew with it and choked it. And some fell into good soil and grew, and yielded a hundredfold." And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy; but these have no root, they believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. And as for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience." 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 today's Holy Gospel we heard the parable of the Sower. Why did our Lord speak in parables? These parables had hidden meanings. The Holy Fathers explain to us in their teachings that when we study something with seriousness and attention or when something takes us more effort to study, we have the tendency to develop more of an interest and understanding in what we are studying. If information is given to us without our participation and effort invested in it, then most of the time we will not develop a fluid understanding and interest in what we read, therefore we are less likely to absorb the information. It goes in one ear and out the other!

This principle can also be observed in our everyday life. Even though we are living in the age of knowledge, it is easy for one to observe that these days; there are many, in the world, that still cannot read and write or add and subtract simple mathematical problems, because of the laziness instilled upon us by our over reliance of technology such as things like television, computers and internet. Information is taken from these sources easily and freely, and so it takes very little effort for them to actually acquire information without even thinking, it is almost mechanical and this reason that information is rarely absorbed in their minds; they simply have not had enough interest or paid enough attention as they should have.

The Lord taught in parables because we are reminded that man must search if he is to learn the meanings of His Holy teachings, like He said to us in the Gospel; we must study the scriptures and the truth revealed to us, shall set us free. It is true that God will Judge us according to what we know, however, this does not excuse us and allow us to remain ignorant thinking that "the less we know the better off we are", because God will also Judge us for what we don't know, according to the Gospel, if we so CHOOSE to not know things. Ignorance is a result of poor spiritual state and it is a form of pride and sheer foolishness. People choose to be ignorant as a result of being unrepentant. We ask ourselves what then is the meaning of this parable? This parable explains many things to us; however, as we heard earlier, even the Apostles were unsure about this parable's teachings and so Christ explained it to them. "A sower went out to sow his seed". Who is the sower? He is the Lord Jesus Christ. By paying extra attention, we hear that "the Sower went OUT to sow his seed" and this "going out" symbolizes the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ and the seed is God's word. As he sowed, the seeds fell by various places; by the wayside, by the rock, among the thorns and on good ground. It "fell"; it was not thrown. It fell everywhere equally, meaning that the word of God is equally shared to all men, shared, not forced upon them; sowed to the entire universe, equally and freely to all men making it available for everyone, if they so choose to see this.

The four places mentioned in the passage where the seeds fell, which we mentioned before; by the wayside, by the rock, among the thorns and on the good ground, portray the four types of people, which God reveals His word to. Out of the four types of people in the parable, three of those kinds are portrayed as taking God's word for granted, sending us a clear message, that the inheritors of God's Holy and Eternal Kingdom will be the minority compared to the inhibitors of the world, not because God wants this, but because man does not take into consideration the word of God which has been revealed to him, or as it is referred to in the parable, the most seeds will not have fallen on the "good ground". And yet our Lord and Saviour still sows His seeds, and still gives man opportunities to accept Him and to follow His commandments.

The seed which fell to the ground by the wayside was taken by the birds of the sky immediately, symbolic of the way which God's word can be taken away from man's heart,

as a result of man never believing at all, or because he never wanted to even try to believe in God's word. These are the people who hear the word of God but do not accept it into their hearts. The wayside is hard and packed down making it impossible for a seed to penetrate into it, therefore it is eventually washed or blown away, or otherwise it sits there becoming prey for the birds of the sky. The birds symbolize the demons which snatch away God's word from man's heart when man disregards it. The demons do not have the authority to take away the word of God from your heart if you respect it. This is why, we must always be vigilant, because Christ may come and knock on the door of our hearts, and if we keep Him waiting outside too long, He will leave and the evil one will come.

Then there is the seed which fell upon the rock, and when it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. The rocky ground symbolizes the type of people, who initially accept the word of God, however, because of their lack of faith, and we see this in the parable as the lack of moisture; brings about the withering of the slowly growing seed. Some people spark up in the beginning of their spiritual struggle toward repentance, however, their carelessness causes them to neglect the Grace of the Holy Spirit and their Faith therefore, withers, just as the seed on the rocky ground which found no moisture. Some individuals are designated to be of the thorned area. In the parable, the thorns sprang up with the wheat, and choked it. This teaching describes the people, who hear the word of God and accept it, but eventually, they become tangled up by the world and its temptations so much that it spiritually chokes them; they are simply overcome by the world's temptations, family and friends. Just as the seed which falls into the thorned area, has little chance of prosperity and survival, this is how we Christians have little chance of spiritual prosperity and salvation if we let our love for people and pleasures exceed our love for God. On the other hand, the parable also refers to the seed which fell onto good ground eventually springing up to bear much fruit, according to Holy Apostle Luke. This symbolizes the people, who hear and accept the word of God, but also maintain themselves within the Faith through fasting, prayer, humility, almsgiving, patience, piety, purity and love, which are all virtues that allow us to remain united with Christ through our partaking in the seven mysteries of the Church.

We too will spring up fruitfully, but with fruit of the Holy Spirit, which are none other than virtues. However, we must harvest the ground first before it will become good ground. In other words, we must cleanse our souls through repentance and humility, before the word of God can enter our heart. We must water that ground and fertilize it, so that it will be nourished enough for the seed to gain growth and prosperity, in other words we should enrich our hearts by asking God to grant us these virtues of spiritual nourishment, so that God's word will flourish within us, which will help us bear spiritual fruit a hundredfold.

Prayerfully in His service,

+Fr. Michael

## The Two Soldiers martyred with Saint Longinus

### Sunday of the 7th Ecumenical Council

On the Sunday that falls on or immediately after the eleventh of this month, we chant the Service to the 350 holy Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, which gathered in Nicaea in 787 under the holy Patriarch Tarasius and during the reign of the Empress Irene and her son, Constantine Porphyrogenitus, to refute the Iconoclast heresy, which had received imperial support beginning with the Edict issued in 726 by Emperor Leo the Isaurian. Many of the holy Fathers who condemned Iconoclasm at this holy Council later died as Confessors and Martyrs for the holy Icons during the second assault of Iconoclasm in the ninth century, especially during the reigns of Leo the Armenian and Theophilus.

October 16

### Longinus the Centurion



This Martyr was in the service of Pontius Pilate at the time of Christ our Saviour's Passion. While standing guard at the Cross and beholding the earthquake and all that came to pass, he cried out with fear, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matt. 27:54). After the Resurrection, he forsook the military and departed for Cappadocia, his homeland, where he preached Christ. By the agency of Pontius Pilate, Tiberius Caesar had him arrested and beheaded.

October 16

**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, 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, during the Coffee Fellowship, we will have our first organizational meeting for GOYA! Everyone is invited. GOYA is a spiritual youth ministry for young people ages 12 years old to 18 years of age. Parents, Godparents, relatives, and your precious youth are all invited today to help launch this ministry for the benefit of our blessed church community. Your ideas and fellowship are welcome! God bless.

Congratulations goes out to Elias and Argyro Koutsaris on the recent marriage of their daughter, Georgia to Jimmy Stash, which took place last Sunday, October 9th at our church. May God bless the happy couple!!!!

THANK YOU to Panayoti Sousouris for his very generous donation of several Icons to our church. May God bless him for his generosity!

**VOLUNTEERS** are needed for the coffee hour fellowship, so that this can continue. Refreshments will be funded by the parish council and/or volunteers and other church groups, however we are in need of your time to assist in preparation, serving and clean up afterwards. Please see Steve Anastos, or any parish council member, to volunteer. Thank you.

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.