



Sunday Bulletin December 31, 2017
Greek Orthodox Church of the
Annunciation

4121 O'Hara Drive Vestal, NY 13850
Phone: (607) 797-0824 Fax: (607) 797-0824
<http://www.annunciationvestal.ny.goarch.org>
Rev. Dr. Michael Bahlatzis, Presiding Priest-
Proistamenos

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## **Sunday before Epiphany**

### **Epistle Reading**

**Prokeimenon. Plagal Second Mode. Psalm 27.9,1.**  
**O Lord, save your people and bless your inheritance.**  
**Verse: To you, O Lord, I have cried, O my God.**

**The reading is from St. Paul's Second Letter to Timothy 4:5-8**

TIMOTHY, my son, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry. For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

### **Gospel Reading**

**Mark 1:1-8**

The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophets, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who shall prepare your way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.' John was baptizing in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

*Message from Fr. Michael:*

Dearly Beloved Faithful:

On St. Basil's feast day, the annual family celebration of the Vasilopita occurs. This original event which happened in Cappadocia of Caesarea in the last half of the fourth century is continued in the homes of Orthodox faithful annually.

The Greek word Vasilopita is directly translated as "Sweet Bread of Basil". When the Vasilopita is prepared, a coin is baked into each loaf. Sweet flavouring is added to the bread which symbolize the sweetness and joy of life everlasting. Sweetness also symbolizes that the hope we have, going into the New Year, will be filled with the sweetness of life, health, freedom, and joy for all who participate in the Vasilopita Observance.

When the observance begins, usually on New Year's Day, the bread is traditionally cut by the senior member of the family, in the home, or the priest at the Church. The person who receives the portion of the Pita which contains the coin is considered blessed for the New Year.

Each portion of the Vasilopita are distributed as follows: The first portion is cut in remembrance of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. The second is for the Holy Mother of our Lord, The Theotokos and Virgin Mary. The third is for St. Basil the Great, the other portions are cut for the members of the family beginning with the most senior in age. Portions may also be cut for the Church, the house, the traveller, the visitor and the poor.

St. Basil the Great, who was a bishop, wanted to distribute money to the poor in his Diocese. However, Basil desired to maintain the dignity of the poor. He did not want his good intentions to appear as charity. So as not to offend anyone. Therefore, he asked some women to bake sweetened bread, in which he arranged to place coins. This would allow families, in cutting the bread, to nourish themselves and at the same token, pleasantly give such individuals some economic relief through their discovery of coins baked into the bread.

May the sweetness of the Vasilopita rub off onto you throughout this New Year and may our Lord hear our prayers through the intercessions of the Theotokos and St. Basil, for that gold coin that St. Basil offered is symbolically in each of us.

Prayerfully, I remain  
In His service,

+Fr. Michael

**January 1, 2018**

**Feast of Saint Basil and New Year**

*To the Most Reverend Hierarchs, the Reverend Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, the Presidents and Members of the Parish Councils of the Greek Orthodox Communities, the Distinguished Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Day, Afternoon, and Church Schools, the Philoptochos Sisterhoods, the Youth, the Hellenic Organizations, and the entire Greek Orthodox Family in America*

**Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**

In the Holy Gospel of Luke we read about the beginning of our Lord's earthly ministry. As He traveled throughout Galilee teaching in synagogues, He came to Nazareth where He had been raised. When Christ stood to speak, He read from the book of Isaiah: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and the recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.* (Luke 4:18-19). At the inception of this New Year of 2018, we affirm as Orthodox Christians that the words above offered by our Lord in reference to His divine work are also the focus of our worship and ministry. In all that we do as the Greek Orthodox Church in America, we look to Christ as our Savior and Guide, we offer the Gospel of life and truth, and we demonstrate the grace of God in our service to others. We preach the message of salvation. We speak of liberty in Christ to all who are in bondage to sin and the burdens of this life. We offer a witness of the healing and transformation that we find in Him. We proclaim constantly and consistently that this is *the acceptable year of the Lord.*

The emphasis on the Gospel of life and truth and on service to others is also the focus of the ministry offered at Saint Basil Academy. In an environment of love and faith, the staff nurture the children and youth. They constantly demonstrate the grace of God and reveal that Christ is present. Through faith they offer hope and healing, so that the promises of liberty in Christ and abundant blessings from Him are experienced by all who reside at Saint Basil's.

In support of this vital ministry, our Ladies Philoptochos Society leads our parishes each year on this Feast and in our traditional cutting of the Vasilopita. As we commemorate Saint Basil and anticipate the blessings of our Lord in 2018, I ask that you show your support through prayers for the residents, staff, directors and benefactors of Saint Basil Academy. I also ask that you give generously to assist this ministry. Your gifts will strengthen a ministry that reveals the promise and potential of life in Christ.

As we look ahead to a year full of opportunities and blessings, may we join together in praising and thanking God for all that He has given us for our lives, our communities, and for the work of ministry. May this year be acceptable to the Lord through our worship and our offering of service through the message, programs, and resources of our Holy Archdiocese. May we stay focused on our calling and commitment to share our saving faith and our dynamic heritage, and above anything else *to grow in the knowledge and grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; to Him be the glory to the day of eternity, Amen.* (II Peter 3:18)

Have a blessed and happy New Year.

**With paternal love in Christ,**

**† DEMETRIOS**

**Archbishop of America**

# **Apodosis of the Nativity of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ**

## **Melania the Younger, Nun of Rome**

Saint Melania the Younger, who was born in 388, was the grand-daughter of Saint Melania the Elder (see June 8). Her father Publicola was an Eparch of Rome. She was joined in wedlock to a husband and became the mother of two children, both of which she lost shortly thereafter. Thus, having agreed with her husband to pass the rest of their lives in abstinence and chastity, and taking her mother Albina with her, she went off to Africa. They ransomed 8,000 captives; furthermore, they built two monasteries - one for men and one for women - in the city of Tagaste, which was in the district of Tunis. After seven years they moved to Jerusalem. Thereafter Melania shut herself up in a small and narrow hermitage by the Mount of Olives, and wearing away her body with fasting and vigil, she reposed in 434.

**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, and Presbyteria Magdalena Michalopoulos. 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.

### **SCHEDULE OF CHRISTMAS SERVICES FOR 2017 CHRISTMAS SEASON**

#### ***Monday, January 1, 2018***

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

#### ***Saturday, January 6, 2018***

Feast of Holy Theophany  
Orthros 8:45 am and Divine Liturgy 9:45 am  
The Great Blessing of the Waters is to be at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy on this day

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.***