



Sunday Bulletin February 5, 2017 *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 Second Letter to Timothy 3:10-15**

TIMOTHY, my son, you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions, my sufferings, what befell me at Antioch, at Iconion, and at Lystra, what persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

### **Gospel Reading     Luke 18:10-14**

The Lord said this parable, "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

*Message from Fr. Michael...*

Dearly Beloved Faithful:

In today's gospel reading, we read about the Publican and the Pharisee. The tax collector (the Publican) stated "God be merciful to me a sinner?" He stated this as he realized Who God was. The publican recognized, with humility, his unworthiness. Brothers and sisters, in like manner, we must also ask for God's mercy, with humility and contrition of heart. The Publican's prayer is a version of the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy upon me the unworthy sinner." This is the prayer which we should be reciting constantly. We should recite this prayer when we are idle. Such a prayer prevents unclean and sinful thoughts from entering our minds. The publican gained knowledge of God. As one grows in knowledge of God, he or she begins to recognize how great God is and develops spiritual confidence. Additionally, such an individual develops a desire to become holy.

Jesus Christ enlightened us and came to us all, including the unworthy ones. He came not to the worthy, but the unworthy. Not to the clean, but to the unclean. He came not to the sinless but to the sinful. As we gain spiritual knowledge, we become pure. Such knowledge is derived from attending church services, from reading the scriptures, and from keeping the fasts. We must not be like the Pharisee who bragged about his fasting. Not because of the sin of not fasting this is what the publican did. He knew who God is, and he knew himself.

The Pharisee fell away and made the publican cling to Christ. The Church attempts to prepare us as we look inside ourselves and learn of ourselves. We learn of God during great fast periods. While studying theology, I learned that the priest's job is not only in front of the altar with vestments on. Instead, the priest is even more in touch with his parishioners when he is not vested and not standing before the altar. My studies have taught me that the priest is in greater touch with his people when he is humble and more like the publican rather than the Pharisee.

Brothers and sisters, we all need to have humility...the humility of the Publican. This is what will allow us entry into the Kingdom of God. Without it, we might as well be walking on the moon by ourselves. I pray that we gain the spiritual knowledge to be able to see God and gain the desire to become Holy.

With the humility of the publican, I remain

Your fervent supplicant,  
+Fr. Michael

## Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee: Triodion Begins Today



The Pharisees were an ancient and outstanding sect among the Jews known for their diligent observance of the outward matters of the Law. Although, according to the word of our Lord, they "did all their works to be seen of men" (Matt. 23:5), and were hypocrites (ibid. 23: 13, 14, 15, etc.), because of the apparent holiness of their lives they were thought by all to be righteous, and separate from others, which is what the name Pharisee means. On the other hand, Publicans, collectors of the royal taxes, committed many injustices and extortions for filthy lucre's sake, and all held them to be sinners and unjust. It was therefore according to common opinion that the Lord Jesus in His parable signified a virtuous person by a Pharisee, and a sinner by a Publican, to teach His disciples the harm of pride and the profit of humble-mindedness. Since the chief weapon for virtue is humility, and the greatest hindrance to it is pride, the divine Fathers have set these three weeks before the Forty-day Fast as a preparation for the spiritual struggles of virtue. This present week they have called Harbinger, since it declares that the Fast is approaching; and they set humility as the foundation for all our spiritual labors by appointing that the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee be read today, even before the Fast begins, to teach, through the vaunting of the Pharisee, that the foul smoke of self-esteem and the stench of boasting drives away the grace of the Spirit, strips man of all his virtue, and casts him into the pits of Hades; and, through the repentance and contrite prayer of the Publican, that humility confers upon the sinner forgiveness of all his wicked deeds and raises him up to the greatest heights. All foods are allowed the week that follows this Sunday.

## Agatha the Martyr



This Martyr, who was from Panormus (that is, Palermo) or perhaps Catania of Sicily, was a most comely and chaste virgin. After many exceedingly harsh torments, she gave up her spirit in prison at Catania in 251, because she did not consent to the seductions of Quintian, the Governor of Sicily. At her burial, an Angel placed a stone tablet on her grave inscribed with the words, "A righteous mind, self-determining, honor from God, the deliverance of her father-land." The following year this was fulfilled when Mount Etna erupted, spewing forth violent fire from which Catania was manifestly saved by Saint Agatha's prayers. The holy Martyr Agatha, the protectress and chief patroness of Sicily, is, with perhaps the exception of Saint Agnes of Rome, the most highly venerated Virgin Martyr of the West. Saint Damasus, Pope of Rome, and Saint Ambrose of Milan both wrote in praise of her.

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.

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy today, we will have a 1 Year Memorial Service for George, beloved son of Evangelos and Paraskevi Drivas and brother of Georgia Papastrat. At the same time, we will also have a 1 Year Memorial Service for Sophia, sister of Evangelos Drivas. May their memory be eternal! Our prayers and best wishes go out to their families.

Also at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy today, we will have a Trisagion Service for the 7th year Anniversary of the passing of Anesti Sousouris, beloved son of Panagioti (Peter) and Stavroula (Stella) Sousouris and a Trisagion Service for the 4th year Anniversary of the passing of George Stephan, beloved brother of our Choir Director, Jeanet Hazar. May their memory be eternal! Our prayers and best wishes go out to their families.

It is with sadness that we announce the passing of Lula (Florindia) Packs, beloved wife of Nicholas Packs, one of the founding members of our Vestal church location. Our prayers and best wishes go out to the entire Packs family. May her memory be eternal! Her name will be included in the Trisagion service today at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy today.

Attention parents of GOYANS, this is the notification we received from the Metropolis of Detroit, please register your child and if you wish to be a chaperone for this event, you must register yourself as well or you will not be permitted to attend.

**Registration is NOW OPEN for the 2017 Upstate NY GOYA Lenten Retreat!**

All GOYANS in the Upstate NY area are invited to attend this annual regional Metropolis event!

**Saturday, March 18, 2017 Holy Spirit Church - Rochester, NY 9 am - 7 pm**  
**ALL PARTICIPANTS (Youth, Parents, and Chaperones) must register online by**  
**March 11, 2017 at [www.detroit.goarch.org/nygoya](http://www.detroit.goarch.org/nygoya)**

Visit the website to register for the event. You may also download the official flyer AND the Retreat Info and Schedule. This event is FREE for all participants. However, we are asking for donations of non-perishable food items OR new winter items (more information in the Retreat Info Packet). Please direct questions to [youth@detroit.goarch.org](mailto:youth@detroit.goarch.org). SEE YOU THERE!

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 at (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.