

Message from Fr. Michael...

Dearly Beloved Faithful in the Lord:

As the gospel reading of today encourages us to lay up treasures in Heaven rather than build "bigger barns" to store our crops or goods. It is angelic figures or heavenly hosts who inspire us to look toward the Divine. As we approach the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord (Christmas), we think of the angels that gathered on this most holiest of nights. Every time we gather together to celebrate as a spiritual family the Divine Liturgy, we proclaim our faith in "One God, Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth and of everything visible and invisible." We recall from the writings of St. Paul to the Colossians: "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him" (Col. 1:16). The Greek word "angel," or "angelephoros," means literally a messenger or carrier, whose task is to deliver the directives and messages of God to the people; and, in return, from the people to God. This is the role and mission of the order of beings of the spiritual world, the angels.

In both the Old and New Testaments, the angels are presented as Divine messengers to the people inhabiting the earth. The angels bring expressions of God's will and His desires to all of humanity. Origen and Chrysostom wrote: "We learn to call them 'angels' from the manner of tasks that they perform ... because they announce to the people the messages of God." Prophets, bishops, and priests, having the same sort of function, are also referred to in the Scriptures as "angels." This is especially true in regard to St. John the Baptist, who came to proclaim the advent of the Messiah: "Behold, I send My messenger (the angel) before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee" (Mark 1:2). However, the word "angel" is used most frequently in the Scriptures to refer to invisible, heavenly spiritual beings.

The Scriptures contain accounts of the appearances of angels. In the third chapter of Genesis, for instance, we read that when God had cast our first parents, Adam and Eve, out of Paradise, "He placed at the east of the garden of Eden the Cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (vs. 24, American Standard Version). An angel spoke to Hagar in the desert. An angel miraculously saved the life of Lot. Also, an angel spoke to Abraham, as he was preparing to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. Angels spoke to the prophets, directing their ministries. In the New Testament as well, from the very first pages, we read of the appearance of angels. At the Annunciation (the patron feast of our beloved church), the angel, Gabriel, announced to the Virgin Mary the Nativity of Christ: "And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women ... And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name Jesus" (Luke 1:28, 31). Angels hail the birth of Christ in Bethlehem of Judaea: "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:13,14). Angels appeared to the Magi and warned them to return home

"another way," inasmuch as Herod was seeking to slay the newly born Christ Child. Angels appeared to strengthen Christ during the period of His temptation following His forty-day fast. Moreover, angels accompanied His entire public ministry of three years. They were present during His Divine Passion in Gethsemane and on Golgotha. Finally, the angels hailed His Resurrection, and accompanied Him into heaven at His Ascension. The ministerial activities of the Apostles were marked by angelic presences. This was very obvious in the life of St. Paul. Whenever the Apostle to the Gentiles came to a spiritual road block, and knew not which way to turn, angels appeared to him and answered his prayers and illuminated the path for him to follow the road of God's will. The Book of the Revelations of St. John we read of testimony to the angels in almost every chapter.

The faith of the Holy Fathers in the existence of the angels is very concrete. Our entire Orthodox hymnology and liturgical literature is living testimony to this fact. The rational mind of man also accepts the existence of angels. The relation between man and angels is not with great distance from one another as we read: "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownest him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of Thy hands" (Heb. 2:7). The angels too are creatures of the Divine and free creative love of God, who created them before the creation of the visible world. The nature of angels is that of pure spiritual beings (spirits), that of "immaterial and bodiless beings," as written in the Scriptures, and the proclamation of the Seventh Ecumenical Synod. But here the Fathers of the Church believe that the immateriality of the angels is not the same as that of God. They are not called "bodiless" to liken them to God (St. John Damascene), but because they neither multiply and increase, nor reduce and decrease. They come into being only by a specific Divine creative act. They are not omnipresent; that is a property of God alone. Therefore they must "travel" (if we may use that word in connection with angelic movements) from one place to another. Their mission is to serve and contribute toward the salvation of men. This is the teaching of Scripture.

In the Scriptures three archangels, although there are many more which exist, are named: Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. Each man, particularly every pious person, has his own "Guardian Angel." In the liturgical services of the Church we ask in our petitions "for an Angel of peace, a faithful Guide, a Guardian of our souls and bodies." Fathers, such as John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, and Origen, believe that nations and sovereign states also have their own patron angels. Finally, the ranks of angels are divided into three hierarchies, each containing three choirs. They are as follows: (1) Cherubim, Seraphim, Thrones; (2) Principalities, Powers, Authorities; and (3) Dominions, Archangels, and Angels.

May the Heavenly Hosts encircle us so that our prayers may ascend as one, I remain,

Your humble pastor in His service,

+Fr. Michael

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.

ANNUAL CHURCH COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS CARD - Sign up will be in the Narthex starting today. We would like to have everyone included in this project. Donation of \$10 is requested to be included in the Community Christmas Card as a fundraiser for the Church to offset the costs of printing and mailing the cards. Please PRINT names clearly and legibly.

Feast Day of St. Katherine the Great will be celebrated on Saturday, November 25, 2017 at St. Catherine's Greek Orthodox Church in Ithaca, New York. Our very own, Fr. Michael will be the presiding priest and celebrant. Orthros 9 am and Divine Liturgy at 10 am. Please join us!

SCHEDULE OF CHRISTMAS SERVICES FOR 2017 CHRISTMAS SEASON

Saturday, December 16

Divine Liturgy - 10:00 am (at Holy Trinity Church in Binghamton)

Sunday, December 17

Sunday Feast of St. Dionysios of Zankythos and the Prophet Daniel

Orthros 9:00 am and Divine Liturgy 10:00 am

Sunday School and Greek School X-mas Pageant to follow the Divine Liturgy (Annunciation Church)

Sunday, December 24

Morning of Christmas Eve

Orthros 9:00 am and Divine Liturgy 10:00 am

Sunday, December 24

Christmas Eve

Orthros 9:00 pm

Christmas Divine Liturgy 10:00 pm

(Since we are having Christmas Liturgy which concludes at or before midnight, there will be no services on Christmas Day in the morning)

Sunday, December 31

Sunday after the Nativity

Orthros 9:00 am and Divine Liturgy 10:00 am

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.