



Sunday Bulletin February 12, 2023
Greek Orthodox Church of the
Annunciation

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



Epistle Reading

Prokeimenon. Second Mode. Psalm 117.14,18.
The Lord is my strength and my song.
Verse: The Lord has chastened me sorely.

The reading is from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 6:12-20

Brethren, "all things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be enslaved by anything. "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food" -- and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two shall become one flesh." But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body and in your spirit which belong to God.

Gospel Reading Luke 15:11-32

The Lord said this parable: "There was a man who had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that falls to me.' And he divided his living between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his belly with the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants.' And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf, kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to make merry. Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. And he

said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.' But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, 'These many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

Message from Fr. Michael....

Dearly Beloved Faithful:

Today is the Sunday of the Prodigal Son is the second Sunday of a three-week period (Triodion period) prior to the beginning of Great Lent. Last Sunday, the services of the Church began to include hymns from the Triodion, a liturgical book that contains the services from the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee. Much like the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, the theme of this Sunday is repentance, and the focus on the parable of the Prodigal Son leads Orthodox Christians to think about the need for repentance to help strengthen our relationship with the Lord. The name for this Sunday is taken from the parable of our Lord Jesus Christ found in today's Gospel reading.

The parable is the story of a man and his two sons. The youngest of the sons asks his father to give him his inheritance. The father does this, and soon after the son leaves and journeys to a distant country. After the younger son arrives, he foolishly sells all of his possessions in exchange for loose living. Within a short period of time, he uses up his inheritance. An unexpected famine occurs, but he has nothing left and falls into greater need. He is able to find work feeding pigs, but this does not improve his situation. The Scriptures say, "He would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, but no one gave him anything". The parable says that in the middle of these terrible times, he realized that his father's hired servants have enough to eat and food to spare, while he agonizes with hunger. He says, "I will arise and go to my father and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants'"). He returned to his father. As he approached his father who saw him from a great distance. The father had compassion on his son, ran to meet him, hugged him, and kissed him. The son admitted his sinfulness and his unworthiness to be called a son, but in his joy at the return of his son, the father called his servants to bring the best robe, a ring for his son's finger, and sandals for his feet. He also called for the fatted calf to be killed for a feast. He exclaimed, "For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found". While they were feasting and celebrating the return of the prodigal son, the older son comes and inquires about what is happening. He is told that his brother had returned and that his father has received him with a feast. The older brother becomes angry and will not go in to the feast.

The father comes out and pleads with him, but the older son answers by saying he has been faithful to his father for many years and yet the father never gave him the opportunity for such feasting. He expresses his anger and jealousy over his brother who was received in such a manner after he foolishly spent his inheritance. The father responds by telling his oldest son, "You are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found". The parable of the Prodigal Son forms an icon of repentance at its different stages. Sin is the equivalent of the exile we heard in this parable, Repentance is the return from exile to our true home; it is to receive back our inheritance and freedom in the Father's house. But repentance implies action: "I will rise up and go..." (verse. 18). To repent is not just to feel dissatisfied, but to make a decision and to act upon it. In the words of our Lord, we also learn of three things through this parable: the condition of the sinner, the rule of repentance, and the greatness of God's compassion. The reading of this parable follows the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee so that, seeing in the person of the Prodigal Son our own sinful condition, we might come to our senses and return to God through repentance. For those who have fallen into great despair over their sins thinking that there is no forgiveness, this parable offers hope. Our Heavenly Father is patiently and lovingly waiting for our return. There is no sin that can overcome His love for us.

This parable gives us a clear spiritual focused view into the world in which we live. We live in a world where the activities of people pull us away from God. It is a world of chasing after materialism, a world of craving for foods and drinks that do not satisfy, a world of chaos and a world consumed with deceit and sin. It is the exact opposite of the world as created by God and potentially recreated by his Son and Holy Spirit. There is no cure for the evils of our age unless we return to God. The world in which we live is not a normal world, but a wasteland. The struggles of this life become readily apparent as we see that in this world and with alienation from God that can happen when sin reigns in our lives. When we encounter sin in our lives, we lose the joy of communion with God, we sinfully stain ourselves and lose our spiritual

beauty, and we find ourselves very far from our real home, our real life. When we faithfully repent, we realize this, and we express a deep desire to return, to recover what has been lost from our lives. On this day the Church reminds us of what we have abandoned and lost, and calls us to find the desire and power to return. Our Heavenly Father is waiting for our return and ready to receive us with His loving forgiveness and His eternally saving mercy. We are Prodigal children who run back into the open arms of our Heavenly Father.

Prayerfully repenting before the Lord, I remain
Your faithful servant in Christ,

+Fr. Michael

Saints and Feasts Commemorated



Sunday of the Prodigal Son

Through the parable of today's Gospel, our Saviour has set forth three things for us: the condition of the sinner, the rule of repentance, and the greatness of God's compassion. The divine Fathers have put this reading the week after the parable of the Publican and Pharisee so that, seeing in the person of the Prodigal Son our own wretched condition -- inasmuch as we are sunken in sin, far from God and His Mysteries -- we might at last come to our senses and make haste to return to Him by repentance during these holy days of the Fast.

Furthermore, those who have wrought many great iniquities, and have persisted in them for a long time, oftentimes fall into despair, thinking that there can no longer be any forgiveness for them; and so being without hope, they fall every day into the same and even worse iniquities. Therefore, the divine Fathers, that they might root out the passion of despair from the hearts of such people, and rouse them to the deeds of virtue, have set the present parable at the forecourts of the Fast, to show them the surpassing goodness of God's compassion, and to teach them that there is no sin -- no matter how great it may be -- that can overcome at any time His love for man.

Christos the New Martyr

Meletios of Ypseni

TRISAGION SERVICE

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy today, there will be a Trisagion Service on the 3 year anniversary of the falling asleep of Constantine (Dino) Alikakos. May his memory be eternal! Our prayers and best wishes go out to the entire Alikakos family!

Special February Services:

**First Saturday of Souls - Saturday, February 18, 2023 at Annunciation Church
Orthros 9 am Divine Liturgy 10 am**

Memorial Service will be held the end of the liturgy. PLEASE PROVIDE A LIST OF ALL YOUR NAMES OF YOUR RELATIVES AND FRIENDS WHO HAVE PASSED FROM THIS LIFE AND HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP IN THE LORD. WE ARE NOT SAVING PREVIOUS YEARS' LISTS AS THERE ARE TOO MANY LISTS PROVIDED BY THE SAME PEOPLE AND TO AVOID REDUNDANCY, ALL PREVIOUS LISTS WILL BE DISCARDED. PLEASE DO NOT ASSUME THAT WE HAVE YOUR NAMES.

WHEN WRITING THE NAMES PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY. DO NOT USE NICKNAMES. FOR EXAMPLE, DO NOT WRITE 'POTA' BUT INSTEAD WRITE 'PANAGIOTA'. DO NOT WRITE 'NIKO' BUT INSTEAD WRITE 'NIKOLAOS' or 'NICHOLAS'. Please use formal Orthodox Christian names (names that were used at the time of their baptism).

Second Saturday of Souls - Saturday, February 25, 2023 at Holy Trinity Church in Binghamton

Divine Liturgy 10:15 am

Memorial Service will be held the end of the liturgy.

There will be NO Third Saturday of Souls. The next Saturday of Souls will be on the day before Pentecost.

Point of interest: Did you know that Trisagion Services may be recited for anyone in the world. However, Memorial Services may only be recited for Orthodox Christians. What is the difference between a Trisagion Service and a Memorial Service? There are several differences. However, the two major differences is that The Evlogitaria are special troparia of blessings and praise that are ONLY recited for baptized or Chrismated (Confirmed) Orthodox Christians and include a Kolyva (wheat prepared in their memory). Whereas a Trisagion service does not include either of these.

Vespers for Sunday of Orthodoxy on March 5, 2023 at 4 pm will be at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Binghamton. Holy Trinity will be hosting refreshments and food in their fellowship hall following this service. All are encouraged (but not mandatory) to bring a Lenten dish to pass. All our sister Orthodox Churches in this Tri-city area will be attending. Please join us and show your support for your Orthodox faith.

March 25th Celebration Weekend (patronal feast weekend of our Church):

Friday, March 24th: Great Vespers on the Eve of the feast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos at 7 pm

Saturday, March 25th: Feast of the Annunciation: Orthros at 9 am
Divine Liturgy at 10 am

Sunday, March 26th: Orthros at 9 am Divine Liturgy at 10 am

March 25th Poems and Speeches will be conducted by our children on Sunday March 26th during the Coffee Hour

ATTENTION ALL YOUTH WORKERS

Whether it be teaching our youth to Greek dance or conducting Sunday School or Greek lessons or working with our Youth of our Parish IN ANY CAPACITY, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Detroit have mandated that everyone working with the Youth must complete a background check and online Youth Safety training through Sterling. Please contact the Metropolis of Detroit and speak with the Metropolis Youth Director about details at (248) 823-2411. Please go on the YouthSafetyPlatform.goarch.org website and register.

Wisdom of the Fathers

Thank God every day with your whole heart for having given to you life according to His image and likeness - an intelligently free and immortal life...Thank Him also for again daily bestowing life upon you, who have fallen an innumerable multitude of times, by your own free will, through sins, from life unto death, and that He does so as soon as you only say from your whole heart: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee!' (Luke 15:18).

St. John of Kronstadt

My Life in Christ: Part 1; Holy Trinity Monastery pgs. 104-105, 19th century

But if he had despaired of his life, and, ... had remained in the foreign land, he would not have obtained what he did obtain, but would have been consumed with hunger, and so have undergone the most pitiable death: ...

St. John Chrysostom

AN EXHORTATION TO THEODORE AFTER HIS FALL, 4th Century

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.