



Sunday Bulletin February 19, 2023

Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation

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



Epistle Reading

Prokeimenon. Fourth Mode. Psalm 146.5;134.3.

Great is our Lord, and great is his power.

Verse: Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good.

The reading is from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 8:8-13; 9:1-2

Brethren, food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if any one sees you, a man of knowledge, at table in an idol's temple, might he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall. Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

Gospel Reading Matthew 25:31-46

The Lord said, "When the Son of man comes in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.' And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Message from Fr. Michael...

Dearly Beloved Faithful in the Lord:

Welcome to Judgement Sunday. On this day, focus is placed on the future judgment of all persons who will stand before the throne of God when Christ returns in His glory. The commemoration for this Sunday is taken from the parable of our Lord Jesus Christ concerning his Second Coming and the Last Judgment of all, both the living and the dead. In Matthew 25:31-46, Christ speaks about what will happen at this specific point in time when He will "come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him." At His coming, "He will sit on the throne of His glory," and all of the nations will be gathered before Him. He will separate them "as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats." The sheep will be placed on His right hand, and the goats on the left. To the sheep, He will say "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." This kingdom is offered to the sheep because of their compassion and service to those in need. Jesus says, "...for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me."

The sheep, who are the righteous chosen for the kingdom, will ask how this could be so. They will ask Jesus when was He hungry or thirsty, a stranger, naked, and in prison. He will answer them by saying, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to the least of these My brethren, you did it to me."

Christ the King, seated on His throne of judgment, will then turn to the goats on His left and say, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." He will condemn them because they did not feed Him when He was hungry, give Him drink when He was thirsty, take Him in when He was a stranger, clothe Him when He was naked, visit Him when He was sick or in prison.

The goats will ask the Lord, "When did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?" Then He will answer them saying, "Assuredly, I say to you, in as much as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me."

Jesus concludes His words on the Last Judgment by stating that those on the left "will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." On the past two Sundays of this pre-Lenten period, the focus was placed on God's patience and limitless compassion, of His readiness to accept every sinner who returns to Him. On this third Sunday, we are powerfully reminded of a complementary truth: no one is so patient and so merciful as God, but even He does not forgive those who do not repent. The God of love is also a God of righteousness, and when Christ comes again in glory, He will come as our Judge. Such is the message of Lent to each of us: turn back while there is still time, repent before the End comes. This Sunday sets before us the preparatory dimension of Lent: the Great Fast is a preparation for the Second Coming of the Savior, for the eternal Passover in the Age to Come, a theme that is also the focus of the first three days of Holy Week. But the judgment is not only in the future. Here and now, each day what is in our hearts and how we relate toward others and in failing to respond to the opportunities we are given of helping them, we are already passing judgment on ourselves. Another theme of this Sunday is that of love. When Christ comes to judge us, what criteria will He use? The parable of the Last Judgment answers: love—not a mere humanitarian concern for the obscure and the anonymous "poor," but concrete and personal love for our brethren—the people that we deal with daily in our lives.

The parable of the Last Judgment is all about Christian love. Not all of us are called to work for "humanity," yet each one of us has received the gift and the grace of Christ's love. We know that all persons ultimately need this personal love—the recognition in them of their unique soul in which the beauty of the whole creation is reflected in a unique way. We also know that people are in prison and are sick and thirsty and hungry because that personal love has been denied to them. We know that each one of us has been made responsible for a tiny part of the Kingdom of God, made responsible by that very gift of Christ's love. Thus, on whether or not we have accepted this responsibility, on whether we have loved or refused to love, shall we be judged.

We are called upon to be watchful. As judgement is imminent, as we work for humanity, we are watchful in all that we do or say as we approach the Great Fast. We will find the Kingdom of God through our watchfulness, through our prayers, and through our adherence to the fast. When Judgement Day arrives, we will be prepared to go before the Throne of our Lord through our watchful adherence and obedience to His Holy Commandments.

Not a judge or a juror, but only simple shepherd, I remain with love in Christ
Your humble servant,

+Fr. Michael

Saints and Feasts Commemorated

Judgment Sunday (Meatfare Sunday)

The foregoing two parables -- especially that of the Prodigal Son -- have presented to us God's extreme goodness and love for man. But lest certain persons, putting their confidence in this alone, live carelessly, squandering upon sin the time given them to work out their salvation, and death suddenly snatch them away, the most divine Fathers have appointed this day's feast commemorating Christ's impartial Second Coming, through which we bring to mind that God is not only the Friend of man, but also the most righteous Judge, Who recompenses to each according to his deeds. It is the aim of the holy Fathers, through bringing to mind that fearful day, to rouse us from the slumber of carelessness unto the work of virtue, and to move us to love and



compassion for our brethren. Besides this, even as on the coming Sunday of Cheese-fare we commemorate Adam's exile from the Paradise of delight -- which exile is the beginning of life as we know it now -- it is clear that today's is reckoned the last of all feasts, because on the last day of judgment, truly, everything of this world will come to an end. All foods, except meat and meat products, are allowed during the week that follows this Sunday.

The Holy Apostles of the Seventy Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, and Onesimus

Concerning Saint Archippus, see November 22.

Philothei the Righteous Martyr of Athens

Saint Philothei was born in Athens in 1522 to an illustrious family. Against her will, she was married to a man who proved to be most cruel. When he died three years later, the Saint took up the monastic life and established a convent, in which she became a true mother to her disciples. Many women enslaved and abused by the Moslem Turks also ran to her for refuge. Because of this, the Turkish rulers became enraged and came to her convent, dragged her by force out of the church, and beat her cruelly. After a few days, she reposed, giving thanks to God for all things. This came to pass in the year 1589. She was renowned for her almsgiving, and with Saints Hierotheus and Dionysius the Areopagite is considered a patron of the city of Athens.

Special Services:

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.

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](https://youthsafetyplatform.goarch.org) website and register.

Wisdom of the Fathers

"Christian love is the 'possible impossibility' to see Christ in another man, whoever he is..."

Alexander Schmemmann Great Lent, 20th Century

So great was the honour and providential care which God bestowed upon man that He brought the entire sensible world into being before him and for his sake. The kingdom of heaven was prepared for him from the foundation of the world (cf. Matt. 25:34); God first took counsel concerning him, and then he was fashioned by God's hand and according to the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). God did not form the whole man from matter and from the elements of this sensible world, as He did the other animals. He formed only man's body from these materials; but man's soul He took from things supercelestial or, rather, it came from God Himself when mysteriously He breathed life into man (cf. Gen. 2:7).

St. Gregory Palamas

Topics of Natural and Theological Science no. 24, The Philokalia Vol. 4 edited by Palmer, Sherrard and Ware; Faber and Faber pg. 356, 14th 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.