



*Sunday Bulletin February 5, 2023*  
*Greek Orthodox Church of the*  
*Annunciation*

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

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## **Epistle Reading**

**Prokeimenon. First Mode. Psalm 32.22,1.**

**Let your mercy, O Lord, be upon us.**

**Verse: Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous.**

**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 in the Lord:

Welcome to the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee. Today, begins the Triodion period which is the preparatory period before the beginning of Great Lent. In today's gospel reading, 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." In the past, we celebrated the Sunday of the Blindman and we made reference to the Jesus Prayer then when the Blindman said, "Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me." The Jesus Prayer 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 and tithing. The Publican did not boast not because of the sin of not fasting, but instead the Publican displayed humility. This is what the publican did. He knew who God is, and he knew himself. Ever notice, in life, how insecure people tend to boast of their accomplishments which seems to flow from inadequacy. One who is filled with the Holy Spirit is certainly adequate and has no need to boast. 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.

To truly know ourselves is to know that we are a sinner and know that we wish to repent. We desire to be one with God, to be under His grace, and we know that it is our humility that will allow us to walk with our Lord. 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

## Saints and Feasts Commemorated

### 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.

## Polyeuktos, Patriarch Of Constantinople

### 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: Theodore Kermidas (son of John and Cassie), Ted Simon, Maria Lambrinos, Angelo Romas, Dino and Diamando Maniates, Mitry Ganim, and Suzanne Vaishnani, daughter of Ted Simon. 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, there will be a Trisagion Service on the 10-year anniversary of the falling asleep of George Stephan, brother of our beloved Choir Director, Jeanet Hazar, and the Trisagion will include Jeanet's Godmother, Hyat, on her recent falling asleep in the Lord. May their memory be eternal! Our prayers and best wishes go out to Jeanet. Our coffee hour fellowship today is being sponsored by Jeanet in honor of the memory of George and Hyat.

### **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.**

### **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](http://YouthSafetyPlatform.goarch.org) website and register.

### **Wisdom of the Fathers**

If there is a moral quality almost completely disregarded and even denied today, it is indeed humility. The culture in which we live constantly instills in us the sense of pride, of self-glorification, and of self-righteousness ... Even our churches - are they not imbued with that same spirit of the Pharisee? Do we not want our every contribution, every 'good deed,' all the we do 'for the Church' to be acknowledged, praised, publicized? ... How does one become humble? The answer, for a Christian, is simple: by contemplating Christ..."

#### **Fr. Alexander Schmemmann**

Great Lent, pp. 19-20., 20th Century

It is possible for those who have come back again after repentance to shine with much lustre, and oftentimes more than those who have never fallen at all, I have demonstrated from the divine writings. Thus at least both the publicans and the harlots inherit the kingdom of Heaven, thus many of the last are placed before the first.

#### **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.*