



Sunday Bulletin March 26, 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. 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 Letter to the Hebrews 6:13-20**

BRETHREN, when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore to himself, saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise. Men indeed swear by a greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he interposed with an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

### **Gospel Reading            Mark 9:17-31**

At that time, a man came to Jesus kneeling and saying: "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a dumb spirit; and wherever it seizes him it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." And he answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me." And they brought the boy to him; and when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father, "How long has he had this?" And he said, "From childhood. And it has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us." And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You dumb and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again." And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse; so that most of them said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting." They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he would not have any one know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise."

### ***Message from Fr. Michael....***

Dearly Beloved Faithful:

Today, on this fourth Sunday of Lent, we commemorate a great ascetic, St. John Climacus. Such great ascetics commanded the elements of the earth to such a degree that wild beasts obeyed them. This spiritually allowed them to endure the rigors of nature. Such individuals, through their power of prayer, could heal the sick. They had the ability to walk on water with the same ease as walking on dry land. The elements of the world were subject to them, because they lived in God. They had the power of grace to overcome the mystery of mother nature. One such ascetic was St. John of the Ladder. He was surnamed "of the Ladder" (Climacus) because he wrote an immortal work, the "Ladder of Divine Ascent." In this book, we read that by means of thirty steps, the Christian gradually ascends from earth to the pinnacle of supreme spiritual perfection. In his work, one virtue leads to another. As we ascend to a higher spiritual level, we may finally ascend to a height where there abides the crown of the virtues. Such a crown of virtues is called "Christian love."

During Great Lent, many monastics read Saint John's book. When reading this book, we learn how one passes from one step to the next. Anyone who wishes to save his soul for eternity should read this book and allow it to serve as a guide for divine ascent. As a Christian gradually ascends, the force of spiritual and asceticism boost him to a higher spiritual level. Our Lord Jesus Christ said: "Strive to enter in through the narrow gate." That is, the Christian ought to be an ascetic. You do not have to be a monk or nun to be an ascetic. The Christian must be willing to deny worldly things and the pleasures of earthly life. He must take pains for his soul and his life. He must direct his life on the Christian path, and purge his soul of all filth and impurity.

The struggling Christian must strive for such ascent. Failure to do so would cast him down into the abyss of Hell. Last Sunday, in the Gospel reading from St. Mark, we heard the Lord say: "He that would come after Me, let him take up his cross, deny himself, and follow Me." Brothers and sister, we must be willing to take up our cross and follow Him. Fasting is not only meant to be observed by ascetics, monks, and priests. Fasting is to be observed by everyone who is in good health. The Church does not require of everyone, because it is not in accordance with everyone's strength. However, the Church DOES require of every Orthodox the keeping of those fasts which She has established.

Saint John Climacus has described the ladder of spiritual ascent. We must recognize that each Christian must ascend in accordance with the virtues attained from climbing this ladder. The ladder has been prepared for us by adhering to and following the teachings of the Fathers of the church. Holding onto the ladder with both hands, I remain

Prayerfully, your humble servant in Christ,

+Fr. Michael

## **Saints and Feasts Commemorated**

### **Irenaeus the Hieromartyr of Hungary**

### **26 Martyrs in Crimea**

### **Sunday of St. John Climacus**



The memory of this Saint is celebrated on March 30, where his biography may be found. He is celebrated today because his book, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, is a sure guide to the ascetic life, written by a great man of prayer experienced in all forms of the monastic polity; it teaches the seeker after salvation how to lay a sound foundation for his struggles, how to detect and war against each of the passions, how to avoid the snares laid by the demons, and how to rise from the rudimental virtues to the heights of Godlike love and humility. It is held in such high esteem that it is universally read in its entirety in monasteries during the Great Fast.

### **Salutation Services/Akathysts to the Theotokos:**

- Friday, March 31, 2023 at 6:30 pm 5th Friday of Lent Service of The Akathyst Hymn

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

- Today, Sunday, March 26th: Orthros at 9 am Divine Liturgy at 10 am. We will have the raising of the flag at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy

**March 25th Poems and Speeches will be conducted by our children during the Coffee Hour. Please join us.**

### **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.

### **2023 Church Schedule of Special Services and Holy Week Schedule for the Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation**

- Saturday of Lazarus, April 8, 2023: (Holy Trinity Church Binghamton) Divine Liturgy 10 am
- The making of Palm crosses will be at the Annunciation Church at 12 noon in Vestal
- Palm Sunday, April 9, 2023: Orthros 9 am and Divine Liturgy 10 am
- Palm Sunday evening, April 9, 2023: Service of the Nymphios/Bridegroom matins 6:00 pm
- Holy Monday, April 10, 2023: Service of the Bridegroom matins 7:00 pm
- Holy Tuesday, April 11, 2023: Service of the Nymphios/Bridegroom matins 6:30 pm
- Holy Wednesday, April 12, 2023: Service of the Sacrament of Holy Unction 6:30 pm
- Holy Thursday morning, April 13, 2023: Vespereal Liturgy of St. Basil the Great 9:30 am
- Holy Thursday evening, April 13, 2023: Service of the Holy Passions of our Lord and the 12 Gospels 6:00 pm
- Holy Friday morning, April 14, 2023: Service of the Royal Hours 9:00 am  
All are invited to assist in the flower decoration of the Epitaphios at the conclusion of this service. Fr. Michael will provide written excuses for school absences for those children who spend the day at the church.
- Holy Friday afternoon, April 14, 2023: Service of Great Vespers of the Apokathelosis (The un-nailing of our Lord from the cross) 3 pm
- Holy Friday evening, April 14, 2023: Service of the Lamentations matins 6:30 pm
- Holy Saturday morning, April 15, 2023: Vespereal Liturgy of St. Basil the Great (The First Resurrection of our Lord raising Adam and eve from the dead) 9:30 am
- Holy Saturday night, April 15/16, 2023: Matins of the Pascha 11:00 pm  
'O Come and Receive Ye the Light...' 11:45 pm  
Reading of the Gospel of the Resurrection of our Lord 12 am midnight followed by the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom
- Easter Sunday (Pascha), April 16, 2023: Vespers service of Agape (The Gospel will be read in multiple languages. Please see Fr. Michael if you are interested in reading the Gospel in ANY other language besides Greek and English) 11 am

## Wisdom of the Fathers

Seest thou how He now proceeds to lay beforehand in them the foundation of His doctrine about fasting? ... See, at any rate, how many blessings spring from them both. For he that is praying as he ought, and fasting, hath not many wants, and he that hath not many wants, cannot be covetous; ...

### St. John Chrysostom

Homily 57 on Matthew 17,4,5. B#54, pp.355,356., 4th Century

... he that is not covetous, will be also more disposed for almsgiving. He that fasts is light, and winged, and prays with wakefulness, and quenches his wicked lusts, and propitiates God, and humbles his soul when lifted up. Therefore even the apostles were almost always fasting.

### St. John Chrysostom

Homily 57 on Matthew 17,4,5. B#54, pp.355,356., 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.*