



Sunday Bulletin February 4, 2024 *Greek Orthodox Church of the* *Annunciation*

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

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### **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 Second Letter to the Corinthians 4:6-15**

Brethren, it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. Since we have the same spirit of faith as he had who wrote, "I believed, and so I spoke," we too believe, and so we speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

### **Gospel Reading      Matthew 22:35-46**

At that time, a lawyer came up to Jesus and asked him a question, to test him. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets." Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, "What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." He said to them, "How is it then that David, inspired by the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, till I put your enemies under your feet'? If David thus calls him Lord, how is he his son?" And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

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

Dearly Beloved Faithful:

This past Friday, February 2nd, was the feast day of the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple. To many, this Presentation of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Temple is viewed as a family ceremony. Probably some viewed this ceremony as a rite of passage, perhaps, or an event for the proud new parents. For Orthodox Christians, who read the Gospel with eyes of faith, the Fortieth-Day Blessing of Our Lord is regarded as a great Feast. This feast marks an important event in the course of our salvation. Judaic Law of that time had decreed that the firstborn son who opened His mother's womb was to be brought to the Lord on the fortieth day in a solemn act of worship, to be sanctified unto God as His special possession (Exodus 13:2, Leviticus 12).

Therefore, in adhering to this ancient commandment, the Virgin Mary and Joseph brought their child Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem. They sought to comply with this law. However, to the surprise of those in attendance, had the opportunity to view a transformation of the very nature of worship itself. Through the Lord's Incarnation, Christ transformed the very essence of our humanity. At the blessed Theophany of our Lord, when the Lord entered into the Jordan, a tributary of the Dead Sea, He transformed the nature of the waters, into a medium of blessing and new life by His Baptism. Simultaneously, He transformed all the waters of earth. At this great Feast, our Lord changed our manner of worship from the Old Testament practices of worship the nature of worship who focused on revealing grace upon grace. Through this He came to the worship of the New Covenant in His blood. The aged eyes of Simeon could foresee the transformation as the Christ-child. Through the Lord's presentation in the Temple, He blessed and established the basics of Christian eucharistic worship. Simeon declared, "Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word, for mine eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples" (Luke 2:29-31).

During that time, the faithful worshipped through the offering of sacrifices as an expression of fear. These offerings were but a small portion of one's possessions. These offerings were considered substitutes for their souls. Through the fires of sacrifice, the faithful sought forgiveness of their sins. In the same manner, on this day the humble new parents from Bethlehem brought an offering of two turtle doves (Luke 2:24) to the God of Israel. But something happens today that marks the end of the era of animal sacrifice and the advent of New Covenant worship. So from that point on, we say in our celebration of the Eucharist "Thine Own of Thine Own we offer to Thee." For the offering unto God will be God Himself in the flesh, and the broken body and spilt blood will belong to the Lord alone, who in His own person establishes the reconciliation of God and man.

Therefore, one can see that the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple was the Lord being brought to eventual serve as the sacrificial Lamb for the many. Like Simeon, every Orthodox priest receives Christ into his hands in the form of the amnos which represents the Lamb of God. He receives this Gift at the hour of his ordination, when the Church, who is the Mother of us all, by the hand of her hierarchs. Thus the bishop places into the newly ordained priest's hands the bread that is consecrated to be the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ. Like Simeon, therefore, every priest bears up Christ within the holy place, with voice lifted up to bless the Most High God (see Luke 2:28). And like Simeon, the priest comes forth again from the holy place to give Christ back to the Church, to distribute His all-pure Body and Blood to the faithful, for the forgiveness of sins and for life everlasting. At the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple, the righteous Simeon saw the revelation of God's plan of salvation in the face of the forty-day old baby Jesus in his arms. He foresaw the end of blood sacrifices on altars. Like Simeon, at the end of our life's calling, may we be inspired to say, "My eyes, Lord, have seen your salvation. I have seen your light to the nations. I have seen the glory of your people . . . their consolation, and their redemption."

May Christ our True God, who condescended to be carried in the arms of the righteous Simeon for our salvation, bless and strengthen you, and may He always remember you in His kingdom, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

May our eyes be so amazed like those of the righteous Simeon to see the countenance of our Lord and may we be truly inspired by His awesome presence!

Prayerfully, in His service,

+Fr. Michael

## Saints and Feasts Commemorated



**Joseph the New Martyr of Aleppo**

**15th Sunday of Matthew**

**Isidore of Pelusium**

This Saint was from Alexandria and was a disciple of Saint John Chrysostom. He struggled in asceticism in a monastery at Mount Pelusium, and became abbot of the monks struggling in that monastery. He wrote a great many epistles replete with divine grace, wisdom, and much profit. Over 2,000 of them are preserved in Volume 78 of Migne's (PG

78:177-1646); according to some, he wrote over 3,000 epistles, according to others, 10,000. He reposed on February 4, 440.

**FATHER MICHAEL REQUESTS**...that we, as a faithful community keep the following individuals in our prayers: Demetrios Pappastratis (father of George Pappastratis), Angelo Romas Persa Nizamis, Mitry Ganim, Ted Simon, 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.

### **Special Services for March 2024**

Saturday of Souls: Saturday, March 16, 2024 - Orthros 9 am, Divine Liturgy 10 am

Sunday of Forgiveness Vespers at conclusion of Divine Liturgy: Sunday, March 17, 2024 at 11:30 am

First Salutations to the Theotokos Service: Friday, March 22, 2024 at 6:30 pm

Great Vespers on the Eve of the Annunciation and Sunday of Orthodoxy:  
Sunday, March 24, 2024 at 4 pm

Feast of the Annunciation and Greek Independence Day: Monday, March 25, 2024  
Orthros 9 am, Divine Liturgy 10 am

Second Salutations to the Theotokos Service: Friday, March 29, 2024 at 4 pm

Third Saturday of Souls (2nd Saturday of Lent) at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church (Binghamton) Saturday, March 30, 2024: Divine Liturgy 10 am

### **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**

The perfect peace of the holy angels lies in their love for God and their love for one another. This is also the case with all the saints from the beginning of time. Most truly therefore is it said that 'on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets' (Matt. 22:40).

### **St. Maximos the Confessor**

Fourth Century on Love no. 36, Philokalia Vol. 2 edited by Palmer, Sherrard and Ware; Faber and Faber pg. 104, 7th century

When a man reveres God with all his heart and with faith, he receives through God's providence the power to control anger and desire; for it is desire and anger which are the cause of all evils.

### **St. Anthony the Great**

On the Character of Men no. 12, Philokalia Vol. 1 edited by Palmer, Sherrard and Ware; Faber and Faber pg. 331, 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.*