

Message from Fr. Michael...

Dearly Beloved Faithful:

In today's Holy Gospel reading, we heard the story of Zacchaeus who was a tax collector who had, in the past, defrauded people during the collection of taxes. He sat out to see our Lord as our Lord's notariety had spread throughout the land. Zacchaeus was a man of short stature and could not see the Lord as a great crowd had gathered around Him. In his zeal to see Jesus, Zacchaeus climbed a Sycamore tree. Jesus saw him gazing down from the tree and commanded him to come down. After Zacchaeus came down from the tree, our Lord went to his house. After they arrived at Zacchaeus' home, Zacchaeus stated that he would restore all of the money that had been wrongly collected and that he would restore it four fold. As a result of his contrition of heart, the Lord stated that salvation had come to Zacchaeus' house.

The message today is the same one our Lord gave us recently in the Gospel reading of two weeks ago, which we heard when our Lord began his public ministry, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17) From this reading, we learned that repentance must be worked out in order to receive the reward of salvation.

As Zacchaeus sought out the Lord, he had to be honest about the manner in which he was living his life. Without such honesty, we would not be able to assess that there is a problem with our own manner of living. Once we exhibit such honesty, we are faced with the dilemma: do we want to find a solution, or do we stay with the status quo?

Zacchaeus chose to take action to change the manner in which he lived. He was remorseful and could see that he had been living a dishonest life. He realized that left to his own, he would continue along the path leading to darkness. Brothers and sisters, we are also to follow this path to salvation by being remorseful of our sins and prayerful. This will lead us on a bright path toward eternal life. Zacchaeus sought to ask for God's help. Zacchaeus' action was to climb the tree so that could see his salvation our Lord. As it says in the Gospel of St. Matthew, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." (Matthew 7:7). We are also to seek God's help if we are to be saved! We are to climb the tree as did Zacchaeus and look for the Lord. Climbing the tree is sometimes a struggle for us as any wordly temptations block our ability to ascend the tree...the tree of life. Our Lord is the tree of life! Jesus told Zaccaeus to come down from the tree and to come to Him. Thus our Lord opened the door of repentance for him. Upon arrival to his home, Zacchaeus confessed his wrong doings. These wrongdoings were his sins. We are to follow this example and confess our sins to the Lord. Sins are a burden that weigh down the soul. They are like cement blocks tied to our feet when we are tossed into the lake. How are we to survive? We must rid ourselves of such heavy burdens so that we may live with the Lord in our lives. Having humility allows us to rid ourselves of such heavy burdens of sin. Repentance is the ultimate form of humility. In Psalms 55:22, we read, "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain you: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

Beloved brothers and sisters, we are to confess our sins and take action to remedy and make things right in our spiritual life. We can be remorseful of our actions, but it is meaningless unless we make an attempt to restore things back to the manner in which they were before our sin. Only through repentance, prayer, and fasting can we undo the wrongs of our lives. These are the tools for removing the burden of sin in our lives.

Ascending the tree to see the Lord, I remain
Yours in His service, prayerfully,

+Fr. Michael

Saints and Feasts Commemorated

15th Sunday of Luke

Ephraim the Syrian



Saint Ephraim was born in Nisibis of Mesopotamia some time about the year 306, and in his youth was the disciple of Saint James, Bishop of Nisibis, one of the 318 Fathers at the First Ecumenical Council. Ephraim lived in Nisibis, practicing a severe ascetical life and increasing in holiness, until 363, the year in which Julian the Apostate was slain in his war against the Persians, and his successor Jovian surrendered Nisibis to them. Ephraim then made his dwelling in Edessa, where he found many heresies to do battle with. He waged an especial war against Bardaisan; this gnostic had written many hymns propagating his errors, which by their sweet melodies became popular and enticed souls away from the truth. Saint Ephraim, having received from God a singular gift of eloquence, turned Bardaisan's own weapon against him, and wrote a multitude of hymns to be chanted by choirs of women, which set forth the true doctrines, refuted heretical error, and praised the contests of the Martyrs. Of the multitude of sermons, commentaries, and hymns that

Saint Ephraim wrote, many were translated into Greek in his own lifetime. Sozomen says that Ephraim "Surpassed the most approved writers of Greece," observing that the Greek writings, when translated into other tongues, lose most of their original beauty, but Ephraim's works "are no less admired when read in Greek than when read in Syriac" (Eccl. Hist., Book 111, 16). Saint Ephraim was ordained deacon, some say by Saint Basil the Great, whom Sozomen said "was a great admirer of Ephraim, and was astonished at his erudition." Saint Ephraim was the first to make the poetic expression of hymnody and song a vehicle of Orthodox theological teachings, constituting it an integral part of the Church's worship; he may rightly be called the first and greatest hymnographer of the Church, who set the pattern for these who followed him, especially Saint Romanos the Melodist. Because of this he is called the "Harp of the Holy Spirit." Jerome says that his writings were read in some churches after the reading of the Scriptures, and adds that once he read a Greek translation of one of Ephraim's works, "and recognized, even in translation, the incisive power of his lofty genius" (De vir. ill., ch. CXV).

Shortly before the end of his life, a famine broke out in Edessa, and Saint Ephraim left his cell to rebuke the rich for not sharing their goods with the poor. The rich answered that they knew no one to whom they could entrust their goods. Ephraim asked them, "What do you think of me?" When they confessed their reverence for him, he offered to distribute their alms, to which they agreed. He himself cared with his own hands for many of the sick from the famine, and so crowned his life with mercy and love for neighbor. Saint Ephraim reposed in peace, according to some in the year 373, according to others, 379.

Isaac the Syrian, Bishop of Ninevah

The great luminary of the life of stillness, Saint Isaac, was born in the early seventh century in Eastern Arabia, the present-day Qatar on the Persian Gulf. He became a monk at a young age, and at some time left Arabia to dwell with monks in Persia. He was consecrated Bishop of Nineveh (and is therefore sometimes called "Saint Isaac of Nineveh"), but after five months received permission to return to solitude; he spent many years far south of Nineveh in the mountainous regions of Beit Huzaye, and lastly at the Monastery of Rabban Shabur. He wrote his renowned and God-inspired Ascetical Homilies toward the end of his long life of monastic struggle, about the end of the seventh century. The fame of his Homilies grew quickly, and about one hundred years after their composition they were translated from Syriac into Greek by two monks of the Monastery of Mar Sabbas in Palestine, from which they spread throughout the monasteries of the Roman Empire and became a guide to the hesychasts of all generations thereafter.

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.

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy today, we will have a 1 Year Memorial Service for Nicholas Pappas, beloved son of our parish council President, Nick Pappas. May his memory be eternal. Our prayers and best wishes go to the entire Pappas family.

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy today, we will have a 40 Day Memorial Service for Maria Dimatos, beloved wife to Γεράσιμος and mother to Spiro and Dimitri. May her memory be eternal. Our prayers and best wishes go out to the entire Dimatos family.

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 website and register.

Wisdom of the Fathers

For Christ's presence is like that of some life-giving, scented balsam which restores health, enriches life and gives savor to the soul, the thoughts, the words of a man. In brief, distance from Christ means corruption and death, and closeness to Him means salvation and life.

Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic

Prolog, 4 February

Christ is the salvation that comes, and Zacchaeus is the house to which He comes.

Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic

Prolog, 4 February

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.