



## *Sunday Bulletin June 26, 2016 Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation*

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

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### **Epistle Reading St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 11:33-40; 12:1-2**

BRETHREN, all the saints through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated - of whom the world was not worthy - wandering over deserts and mountains and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

### **Gospel Reading Matthew 10:32-33; 37-38; 19:27-30**

The Lord said to his disciples, "Every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny him before my Father who is in heaven. He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." Then Peter said in reply, "Lo, we have left everything and followed you. What then shall we have?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many that are first will be last, and the last first."

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

Dearly Beloved Faithful in the Lord:

This week has the feast of the Apostles, Sts. Peter and Paul. Just think how diverse these great individuals were in appearance, education, and mannerisms. However, diverse they seemed, the message they proclaimed was the same. They preached that the Lord Jesus came into the world to save all of humanity. They preached that the Lord gave up His life as ransom for the many. They preached that he who loses his or her life for Christ will save it! They preached that we must be willing to take up our cross and follow the Lord.

Paul, a refined, educated Jew and citizen of Rome was single and not married. He was present at the stoning of the first Christian martyr, St. Stephen, the deacon and Protomartyr. He journeyed on the Road to Damascus to persecute the Christians but was blinded by the light of presence of the Lord Jesus and was converted to Christianity. He was not only changed but actually became the main driving force for the spread of the Christian message. Despite prolonged imprisonment, scourgings, and humiliation, St. Paul persevered to continue to deliver God's sacred messages. He was the driving force that established the early Church. His letters provided direction for many groups.

Peter, who was married, previously called Simon, was given this name by the Lord to indicate that he represents the "rock" by which the Lord will build His Church upon. In Greek, the word for rock is *petra*. Thus, Simon was name *Petros*, the rock. He was the Chieftain of the Apostles and promised, by the Lord, the 'Keys to Heaven." St. Peter was rugged, uneducated fisherman who even carried a sword and cut off the ear of the servant of the High Priest in the Garden of Gethsemane when the officers and soldiers came to arrest the Lord Jesus on the eve preceding His crucifixion. St. Peter was the one who waivered in faith when he got out of the boat to walk toward the Lord on the ocean surface and nearly drowned but proclaimed, "Lord save me." He was saved by the Lord. He was also present at almost every one of the Lord's miracles, including the Transfiguration of the Lord on Mount Tabor. Yet, he was also the one who regretfully denied the Lord three times before dawn on the eve of the Lord's crucifixion. However, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, St. Peter became empowered to be one of the two pillars that held up the entire Church allowing us the privilege that we have today to celebrate our God given Christian Faith.

The phrase, "borrow from Peter to pay Paul" implies that these seemingly diverse individuals are the same and preached God's message of Love.



We pray that through the intercessions of these great Apostles that the Lord will hear our prayers today and save us!

With Love in Christ, in His service, I remain

Your spiritual father,  
+Fr. Michael

Last Sunday, we celebrated Holy Pentecost, the culmination of the three greatest feasts of our Orthodox Church (Nativity-Epiphany, Pascha, and Pentecost). Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate, came into this world, revealed as the beloved Son of God, took upon Himself the sins of humanity, suffered and was crucified, and died for us, and was Resurrected by the grace of God the Father, and with the Pentecost sent down the Holy Spirit upon His disciples, and now ordained as priests, they started their ministry. Jesus' mission is complete. Now with the help of the Holy Spirit, the apostles preached and taught the Good News to the entire world, baptizing all nations and peoples in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Jesus is present at the right hand of the God the Father, as well as beside us and in the hearts of over 2 billion people on this earth. Jesus' spirit resides in the "Body of Christ", the Church, which continues the missions of our Lord, Savior, and Redeemer. We are all called upon to be disciples of Christ and bring others to Him through the missions of the Church, and most importantly, through our example, since we wear Christ and are His servants.

This Sunday we commemorate the Sunday of All-Saints, those who professed, confessed, and suffered martyrdom in His name. We commemorate the tens of millions who have died for the Faith, martyrs known and unknown by name, and whose names are written in the Book of Life. We thought that the killing of Christians had reached its peak in the 20th century under the tyrannical regimes of Communism, Fascism, totalitarianism. Large numbers of Christians continue to face genocide and displacement on all continents, especially in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Jesus prophesied to His followers that this would happen to those who professed His name. Eternal be their memory and may they all find rest in God's Kingdom.

On the occasion of All-Saints Sunday, we commemorate all those who celebrate their nameday. We pray for mercy, life, peace, health, safekeeping, protection, pardon and remission of sins of these servants of God, as well as all Christians everywhere. Also let us pray for the Holy Spirit to continue to guide the work of the Holy Orthodox Council meeting in Crete.

May our prayers, through the intercessions of all the saints be received by our merciful Lord.

+Fr. Michael



## The Sunday of All Saints

Honouring the friends of God with much reverence, the Prophet-King David says, "But to me, exceedingly honourable are Thy friends, O Lord" (Ps. 138:16). And the divine Apostle, recounting the achievements of the Saints, and setting forth their memorial as an example that we might turn away from earthly things and from sin, and emulate their patience and courage in the struggles for virtue, says, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every burden, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1). This commemoration began as the Sunday (Synaxis) of All Martyrs; to them were added all the ranks of Saints who bore witness (the meaning of "Martyr" in Greek) to Christ in manifold ways, even if occasion did not require the shedding of their blood. Therefore, guided by the teaching of the Divine Scriptures and Apostolic Tradition, we the pious honour all the Saints, the friends of God, for they are keepers of God's commandments, shining examples of virtue, and benefactors of mankind. Of course, we honour the known Saints especially on their own day of the year, as is evident in the Menologion. But since many Saints are unknown, and their number has increased with time, and will continue to increase until the end of time, the Church has appointed that once a year a common commemoration be made of all the Saints. This is the feast that we celebrate today. It is the harvest of the coming of the Holy Spirit into the world; it is the "much fruit" brought forth by that "Grain of wheat that fell into the earth and died" (John 12:24); it is the glorification of the Saints as "the foundation of the Church, the perfection of the Gospel, they who fulfilled in deed the sayings of the Saviour" (Sunday of All Saints, Doxasticon of Vespers). In this celebration, then, we reverently honour and call blessed all the Righteous, the Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Shepherds, Teachers, and Holy Monastics, both men and women alike, known and unknown, who have been added to the choirs of the Saints and shall be added, from the time of Adam until the end of the world, who have been perfected in piety and have glorified God by their holy lives. All these, as well as the orders of the Angels, and especially our most holy Lady and Queen, the Ever-virgin Theotokos Mary, do we honour today, setting their life before us as an example of virtue, and entreating them to intercede in our behalf with God, Whose grace and boundless mercy be with us all. Amen.

**FATHER MICHAEL REQUESTS**...that we, as a faithful community keep the following individuals in our prayers: Michalena (Skiadas) Sukenik, Suzanne Vaishnani, daughter of Ted Simon, Presbytera Magdalena Michalopoulos, Helen Economides, Henry Nussbaum, and Sam Kashou. 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.

Summer is here! Please be advised that the air conditioners in our church will be on during the church services. The two units in the front ***are to remain on during the Divine Liturgy*** as per necessity in the altar area, such being the vestments worn by the priest and altar servers, candles and lights. The two units in the rear of the church may be turned on and off as necessary.

Parish Council members are reminded that your dues should have been paid by **March 31**; for all other members, dues are strongly encouraged to be paid no later than **June 30**. Please submit your payment to Sophia Papastratis or Steve Anastos. ***Single rate is \$200/year, which is for one member; family rate is \$400 which means more than one member of a family, such as husband and wife.*** Children under the age of 18 are not included in these rates. Anyone with financial concerns regarding their dues is encouraged to speak with Fr. Michael or Steve Anastos.

#### STEWARDSHIP:

As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. "I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."  
**Luke 20:45-21:4**

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, to grow in Christ and in our Orthodox Faith. For any spiritual, religious, or sacramental matters, please contact Fr. Michael (607) 795-1474. For any building, facility or church property issues, please contact Parish Council President Steve Anastos, (607) 296-9799. Deadline for suggestions for the bulletin is 12:00 noon on Thursday.