



Sunday Bulletin December 2, 2018
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 Letter to the Ephesians 6:10-17**

Brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; besides all these, taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

## **Gospel Reading Luke 18:35-43**

At that time, as Jesus drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging; and hearing a multitude going by, he inquired what this meant. They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." And he cried, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" And Jesus stopped, and commanded him to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me receive my sight." And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

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

Dearly Beloved Faithful:

In today's Gospel reading of St. Luke, we heard the story of a blind man, in Jericho, who was sitting by the roadside begging; and hearing a multitude going by, and he inquired about the commotion. They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." And he cried, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" The Lord had mercy upon him and healed the man of his infirmity.

Brothers and sisters, at times, we are like the blind man sitting in darkness. Due to our secular commitments and busy lives away from church, we may perhaps find ourselves, as the blindman in today's gospel lesson, sitting on the side of the road to salvation rather than journeying on this road. Our lack of sight, so to speak, prevents us from going forward. Then, unexpectedly *'the Bride groom comes in the middle of the night,'* whether we are ready or not!

In the news, some number of years ago, we heard the story of one of New York City's finest, a police officer who had compassion on his fellow man. He had pity and empathy for a homeless man who was sitting shoeless out on the side walk in the bitter cold weather. Yet the officer stopped and purchased boots for the stranger. His loving act of kindness was in the same spirit and mercy that the Samaritan displayed in the story of the Good Samaritan in the Holy Bible which we read several weeks ago.

When we hear of that story, we are *awe inspired*. Our God-given inspiration is the first step toward opening our eyes after walking about spiritually blind. The blind poor man in today's Gospel lesson knew that Jesus was the Son of the Most High, for He said "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" These words were similar to the Jesus Prayer that we recite: "Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God have mercy on me the unworthy sinner. In His infinite love for us and mercy, the Lord scoops us up, opens our eyes, and places us on the righteous path...the road to salvation. This occurs after we utter the sacred and humble Jesus Prayer. The secret is to this with utmost love, humility, and contrition of heart. We must totally mean the words which we cry out. The blind poor man, of the gospel story, meaningfully uttered his words and was healed. We are to be as that blind man and beg the Lord for His mercy, open up our prayerful hearts to the King of Glory, and then allow our eyes to be opened to His Divine Light.

Brothers and sisters, only then will we truly experience spiritual ecstasy and true unyielding Joy! Only then will be saved!

Prayerfully one who begs for God's mercy, I remain

In the blessed service of the Prince of Peace,

+Fr. Michael

# Habakkuk the Prophet



This Prophet, whose name means "loving embrace," is eighth in order of the minor Prophets. His homeland and tribe are not recorded in the Divine Scriptures; according to some, he was of the tribe of Symeon. He prophesied in the years of Joachim, who is also called Jechonias, before the Babylonian captivity of the Jewish People, which took place 599 years before Christ. When Nabuchodonosor came to take the Israelites captive, Habakkuk fled to Ostrakine, and after Jerusalem was destroyed and the Chaldeans departed, Habakkuk returned and cultivated his field. Once he made some pottage and was about to take it to the reapers in the field. An Angel of the

Lord appeared to him, and carried him with the pottage to Babylon to feed Daniel in the lions' den, then brought him back to Judea (Bel and the Dragon, 33-39): His book of prophecy is divided into three chapters; the third chapter is also used as the Fourth Ode of the Psalter. His holy relics were found in Palestine during the reign of Emperor Theodosius the Great, through a revelation to Zebennus, Bishop of Eleutheropolis (Sozomen, *Eccl. Hist.*, Book VII, 29).

## **Kontakion of Prophet Habakkuk**

Thou plainly beheldest the sacred disciples of Christ as horses that troubled the deep sea of ignorance, plunging error into the depths with their godly teachings, Habakkuk, God-proclaimer; hence, as a true Prophet, we acclaim thee, while asking that thou shouldst intercede that we find mercy with God the Lord.



## Porphyrios of Kavsovolia

Saint Porphyrios (Bairaktaris) was born in 1907 with the name Evangelos in Evoia, Greece, in the small village of *Agios Ioannis* (Saint John). As a child he tended to the sheep in the hills, and it is there that he first read the life of Saint John the Hut-Dweller (Commemorated January 15th) which planted the desire of monasticism in his heart. The spark lit by Saint John was fanned when at the age of seven he overheard a conversation about the divine beauty of the Holy Mountain. Eventually he stowed away on a boat to Thessalonica, hoping from there to reach Mount Athos. On the evening after his arrival, a group of monks gathered at the harbour to take the boat to Mount Athos. One of them noticed the young Porphyrios and asked him where he was going. Porphyrios told the monk that he was going to the Holy Mountain, but lied about the reason as to why. The monk, seeing through this, told Porphyrios to tell any inquirers that he was his nephew and that his mother had passed away, for otherwise he would not be allowed on the mountain since he was still a child.

The monk, whose name was Panteleimon, became his spiritual father and brought him to Kavsovolia, a small skete where Panteleimon lived with his brother, the Priest Ioannikos, as fellow monastics. The young Porphyrios loved to carry out the virtue of obedience to his elders, at times being tested by them without even knowing it. When he was fourteen, his elder asked Porphyrios what he was planning to do with his life. The young man told him that he wished to stay on the Mountain. Two or three years later, Porphyrios was tonsured with the name Nikitas.

Once, being obedient to one of his elders against the wishes of the other, Porphyrios went out on a rainy day to collect snails. After hours of filling his sack, and burdened by the wind and cold, Porphyrios found himself suddenly caught in a rockslide and was buried up to his knees. Crying out to the Theotokos he was miraculously delivered, but having suffered badly he developed pleurisy and had to leave Mount Athos to seek medical treatment. The elder who told him to collect the snails profusely apologized, and personally saw Porphyrios off of Mount Athos, kissing him on the forehead in tears. Porphyrios returned to the village of *Agios Ioannis* in Evoia where he reunited with his family. He stayed at the monastery of Saint Haralambos, which was near the village Avlonari, until he recovered. His good reputation as a faithful and obedient monk quickly spread and thus caught the attention of the Bishop Fostinis of Kymi. He began to visit Porphyrios frequently, and with the aid of Archbishop Porphyrios III of Sinai (from whom Porphyrios was given his final name), ordained the young monk a deacon and then a priest. Two years later he was made a confessor and would at times hear confessions for multiple days at a time without sleep or food.

His next major ministry was serving as the Chaplain at the Polyclinic Hospital in Athens for roughly 33 years (1940-1973). It was through the well-known Professor of Canon Law, Amilkas Alivizatos, that Porphyrios was assigned to the Church of Saint Gerasimos which was associated with the hospital. During this time he helped many patients spiritually by acting as their father confessor. In addition to his hospital duties, he helped to renew the Church of Saint Nicholas in Kallisia, often having recourse to it during the night to pray by himself or with family. However, Porphyrios had still been unable to fulfill another dream he shared with his family: founding a monastery. After years of searching, he bought some land upon the top of a hill in Milesi where he later founded The Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration. He remained there for many years before returning to his old cell on Mount Athos where he spent his last years. He departed this life on December 2nd, 1991. Porphyrios was declared a saint by the Ecumenical Patriarchate on November 27th, 2013.

**FATHER MICHAEL REQUESTS**...that we, as a faithful community keep the following individuals in our prayers: Lilly Kashou, Issam Kashou, Suzanne Vaishnani, daughter of Ted Simon, and Presbytera Magdalena Michalopoulos. 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 40 day Memorial Service for Issa Issa, father of George Issa. May his memory be eternal! Our prayers and best wishes go out to the Issa and Kassis families. The Issa family has graciously donated food for our coffee hour fellowship.

The **December meeting for JOY/HOPE** will be on Sunday, December 9 during the coffee/fellowship hour.

A blessed formal public THANK YOU goes out to Cholly Kashou, her family, and her helpers for setting up and decorating our wonderful Christmas tree in the edifice of our church. This tree stands in our church annually as a symbol of love reminding us of the celebration of God's gift to man...His beloved son....Jesus Christ!

A SPECIAL THANKS goes out to Sophia Papastratis, her sisters (Dina and Mary), and their mother, Alexandra, for their very generous gift of 4 bottles of sacrament wine for our church which were greatly appreciated. Our heartfelt gratitude goes out to them!

On behalf of the Parish Council and the co-chairs of the dance we would like to thank all the parishioners, the sponsors, the guests, the music band, the university students, His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas and Fr. Michael for leading the dance, and those that they helped in making this year's church dance another successful one. Special thanks to the kids for their excellent performance in singing the national anthems and displaying their Hellenic "levendia" and our Greek Heritage by dancing the traditional

dances, the “zeimbekiko” and “tsamiko”, that was a beautiful job. We welcome either positive or constructive comments so that we make improvements next year. Please address them to Kostas Papathomas either by e-mail at papatho@gmail.com or by simple comment. We have 4 boxes of blossoms for sale - anyone interested in purchasing please see Kostas.

**ANNUAL CHURCH COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS CARD** - Sign up will be in the Narthex starting today. We would like to have everyone included in this project. Donation of \$10 is requested to be included in the Community Christmas Card as a fundraiser for the church to offset the costs of printing and mailing the cards. Please PRINT names clearly and legibly.

**Our annual Christmas pageant** will be performed by our beloved Sunday School children on Sunday, December 16, 2018 at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. Children will be visited by Mr. Chris Kringle after the pageant. Children, who are enrolled in Sunday School from ages 4 and above will be receiving a small gift which will be distributed by Santa Claus. If your child is younger than 4 years of age and/or not enrolled in Sunday School and if you would like your child to receive a gift from Santa, PLEASE BRING A GIFT FOR YOUR CHILD so that it may be distributed by Santa. The Sunday School will only be purchasing gifts for children 4 years and older who ARE ENROLLED IN SUNDAY SCHOOL. Please note that we have always had this policy and this is not new.

There will be NO Sunday School classes on the following dates:

Sunday, December 16, 2018 (*DUE TO THE CHRISTMAS PAGEANT*)  
Sunday, December 23 & Sunday, December 30

### **Christmas Season Services**

Saturday, December 22, 2018  
Divine Liturgy 10:15 am (Holy Trinity Church)

Sunday, December 23, 2018  
Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 10:00 am (Annunciation Church)

Monday, December 24, 2018 - Christmas Eve  
Orthros 8 pm Divine Liturgy for Christmas 9:15 pm (Annunciation Church)

Tuesday, December 25, 2018 - Christmas Day  
No services (Christmas services will be celebrated on Christmas Eve)

Tuesday, January 1, 2019 - New Year's Day  
Feast of St. Basil the Great and the Circumcision of the Lord  
Orthros 9 am Divine Liturgy 10 am (Annunciation Church)

Saturday, January 5, 2019 - Eve of Theophany of our Lord  
Vespertal Liturgy of St. Basil 9 am (Annunciation Church)

Sunday, January 6, 2019 - Theophany of our Lord  
Orthros 9 am Divine Liturgy 10 am (Annunciation Church)  
Great Blessing of the Waters at the conclusion of the Liturgy  
Cutting and raffling off of the Vasilopita during the coffee hour fellowship

## **Wisdom of the Fathers**

***We may learn from this that when we ask with faith, God does not give something other than what we ask for, but the very same thing. However, when we ask for one thing and receive something else, it is clear that either we did not make a good request or we did not ask with faith.***

**Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria**  
The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Luke, 11th Century