



Sunday Bulletin December 23, 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. Fourth Mode. Daniel 3.26,27.**  
**Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our fathers.**  
**Verse: For you are just in all you have done.**

**The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 11:9-10; 32-40**

BRETHREN, by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundation, whose builder and maker is God. And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets - who 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.

## Gospel Reading

### Matthew 1:1-25

The book of the Genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, and Aram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa, and Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel, and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

*Message from Fr. Michael:*

Dearly Beloved Faithful:

I greet you in the name of the Prince of Peace Whose name these days is so purposefully overlooked that the celebration of His Holy Nativity, the Christmas Advent, began in mid-November and has been obscured by the sterile and uncaring empty salutations of *Happy Holidays* and *Season's Greetings*. We have been so caught up with being self-indulgent in our shopping and consumerism that we have allowed the true meaning of Christmas to become hidden from us. We may even go so far as to possibly judge others and ourselves by the number and quality of gifts we give and receive during this misunderstood blessed season. Rather than follow the star to adore the "King of Angels" which the wise men followed, instead we choose to follow the blinking neon lights and artificial glitter. In doing so, we have irresponsibly become lost, as we shy away any reference made to the Lord's birth as Lord, Savior, and Messiah. We must be like the Magi and follow the Star...The Star of light that appeared originally on the occasion of our Lord's Holy Nativity. This was the Star that led all eyes and hearts to the manger where the blessed Savior was born. This was the Star that illuminated the heavens above and the earth below. It was the Star that showed that salvation had entered the world in the form of a babe lying in a manger. As we look for this Star, during this blessed Christmas season, we are guided by God's love to lead us on the path of salvation. This Star of wonder and this Star of light is God's flashlight shining His heavenly glory on us to bring us out of the darkness of despair and leads us to Him.... Emmanuel. For His name means "God is with us" and the Star reminds us of this. We give our children everything our parents could not afford and we veer away from giving them the important things that our parents gave us: faith, legacy, and culture. We adorn them with toys but neglect to give them life's important tools. We may even give them cars but fail to give them the best road to travel through life. We had reverted, with our profound unconditional love of our children, to giving our young generation a mentality centered around entitlement rather than a mentality of genuine gratitude.

Brothers and sisters, we must take this opportunity, during the remainder of this Christmas season, to take the time to look up and see the Star and tell the people we love how much we really love and care for them. We are to remind them that the Lord's blessing of health and faith are the greatest possessions of wealth we could have. We are to remind our loved ones the story of our Lord's Holy Nativity and how God came into the world as a man to save us! We are to take our loved ones to Church tomorrow evening so that we may hear the true message of Christmas. May He who was born in a cave and lay in a manger, for our salvation, and through our prayers by the intercession of our blessed Theotokos, and through the prayers of our Holy Fathers have mercy upon us and save us! Merry Christmas! Christ is born! Glorify Him!

In His Blessed service,  
+Fr. Michael

## Saints and Feasts Commemorated

December 23

### Nicholas & John the New Martyrs

### Sunday before Nativity

On the Sunday that occurs on or immediately after the eighteenth of this month, we celebrate all those who from ages past have been well-pleasing to God, beginning from Adam even unto Joseph the Betrothed of the Most Holy Theotokos, according to genealogy, as the Evangelist Luke hath recorded historically (Luke 3:23-38); we also commemorate the Prophets and Prophetesses, and especially the Prophet Daniel and the Holy Three Children.

### Forefeast of the Nativity of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ

#### Apolytikion for Forefeast of the Nativity in the Fourth Mode

Be thou ready, Bethlehem, Eden hath opened unto all. Ephratha, prepare thyself, for now, behold, the Tree of life hath blossomed forth in the cave from the Holy Virgin. Her womb hath proved a true spiritual Paradise, wherein the divine and saving Tree is found, and as we eat thereof we shall all live, and shall not die as did Adam. For Christ is born now to raise the image that had fallen aforetime.

### Ten Martyrs of Crete



These Saints, who were all from Crete, contested for piety's sake during the reign of Decius, in the year 250. Theodulus, Saturninus, Euporus, Gelasius, and Eunician were from Gortynia, the capital; Zoticus was from Knossos; Agathopus, from the port city of Panormus; Basilides, from Cydonia; Evarestus and Pompey, from Heraklion. Haled before the Governor as Christians, they were subjected to torments for thirty days, being scourged, racked, dragged upon the ground through dung heaps, stoned, spit upon. They were questioned again, but their costancy roused the Governor to greater fury. After subjecting them to torments more bitter still, he had them beheaded.

**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 Presbyteria 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.

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

Sunday, December 23<sup>rd</sup> and Sunday, December 30<sup>th</sup>

## **Remaining Christmas Season Services**

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  
Vesperal 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**

Great indeed was the faith of Abraham. . . It was necessary to go beyond human reasoning. . . to manifest also something more.

### **St. John Chrysostom**

Homily XXV on Hebrews XI, 1,2. translation found in *The Bible and the Holy Fathers for Orthodox*, Monastery Books, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY 2003, p. 955., 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, 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 the Parish Council President or a member of the council. ***Deadline for suggestions for the bulletin is 12:00 noon on Thursday.***