



## *Sunday Bulletin February 11, 2018* *Greek Orthodox Church of the* *Annunciation*

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

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### **Epistle Reading    Corinthians 8:8-13; 9:1-2**

Brethren, food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if any one sees you, a man of knowledge, at table in an idol's temple, might he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall. Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

### **Gospel Reading    Matthew 25:31-46**

The Lord said, "When the Son of man comes in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' He will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.' And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

*Message from Fr. Michael....*

Dearly Beloved Faithful in the Lord:

Welcome to Judgement Sunday. On this day, focus is placed on the future judgment of all persons who will stand before the throne of God when Christ returns in His glory. The commemoration for this Sunday is taken from the parable of our Lord Jesus Christ concerning his Second Coming and the Last Judgment of all, both the living and the dead. In Matthew 25:31-46, Christ speaks about what will happen at this specific point in time when He will "come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him." At His coming, "He will sit on the throne of His glory," and all of the nations will be gathered before Him. He will separate them "as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats." The sheep will be placed on His right hand, and the goats on the left. To the sheep, He will say "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." This kingdom is offered to the sheep because of their compassion and service to those in need. Jesus says, "...for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me." The sheep, who are the righteous chosen for the kingdom, will ask how this could be so. They will ask Jesus when was He hungry or thirsty, a stranger, naked, and in prison. He will answer them by saying, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to the least of these My brethren, you did it to me." Christ the King, seated on His throne of judgment, will then turn to the goats on His left and say, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." He will condemn them because they did not feed Him when He was hungry, give Him drink when He was thirsty, take Him in when He was a stranger, clothe Him when He was naked, visit Him when He was sick or in prison. The goats will ask the Lord, "When did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?" Then He will answer them saying, "Assuredly, I say to you, in as much as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." Jesus concludes His words on the Last Judgment by stating that those on the left "will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." On the past two Sundays of this pre-Lenten period, the focus was placed on God's patience and limitless compassion, of His readiness to accept every sinner who returns to Him. On this third Sunday, we are powerfully reminded of a complementary truth: no one is so patient and so merciful as God, but even He does not forgive those who do not repent. The God of love is also a God of righteousness, and when Christ comes again in glory, He will come as our Judge. Such is the message of Lent to each of us: turn back while there is still time, repent before the End comes. This Sunday sets before us the preparatory dimension of Lent: the Great Fast is a preparation for the Second Coming of the Savior, for the eternal Passover in the Age to Come, a theme that is also the focus of the first three days of Holy Week. But the judgment is not only in the future. Here and now, each day what is in our hearts and how we relate toward others and in failing to respond to the opportunities we are given of helping them, we are already passing judgment on ourselves. Another theme of this Sunday is that of love. When Christ comes to judge us, what criteria will He use? The parable of the Last Judgment answers: love—not a mere humanitarian concern for the obscure and the anonymous "poor," but concrete and personal love for our brethren—the people that we deal with daily in our lives. The parable of the Last Judgment is all about Christian love. Not all of us are called to work for "humanity," yet each one of us has received the gift and the grace of Christ's love. We know that all persons ultimately need this personal love—the recognition in them of their unique soul in which the beauty of the whole creation is reflected in a unique way. We also know that people are in prison and are sick and thirsty and hungry because that personal love has been denied to them. We know that each one of us has been made responsible for a tiny part of the Kingdom of God, made responsible by that very gift of Christ's love. Thus, on whether or not we have accepted this responsibility, on whether we have loved or refused to love, shall we be judged.

**We are called upon to be watchful. As judgement is imminent, as we work for humanity, we are watchful in all that we do or say as we approach the Great Fast. We will find the Kingdom of God through our watchfulness, through our prayers, and through our adherence to the fast. When Judgement Day arrives, we will be prepared to go before the Throne of our Lord through our watchful adherence and obedience to his Holy Commandments.**

**Not a judge or a juror, but only simple shepherd, I remain with love in Christ  
Your humble servant,**

**+Fr. Michael**

## **Judgment Sunday (Meatfare Sunday)**



The foregoing two parables -- especially that of the Prodigal Son -- have presented to us God's extreme goodness and love for man. But lest certain persons, putting their confidence in this alone, live carelessly, squandering upon sin the time given them to work out their salvation, and death suddenly snatch them away, the most divine Fathers have appointed this day's feast commemorating Christ's impartial Second Coming, through which we bring to mind that God is not only the Friend of man, but also the most righteous Judge, Who recompenses to each according to his deeds.

It is the aim of the holy Fathers, through bringing to mind that fearful day, to rouse us from the slumber of carelessness unto the work of virtue, and to move us to love and compassion for our brethren. Besides this, even as on the coming Sunday of Cheese-fare we commemorate Adam's exile from the Paradise of delight -- which exile is the beginning of life as we know it now -- it is clear that today's is reckoned the last of all feasts, because on the last day of judgment, truly, everything of this world will come to an end.

All foods, except meat and meat products, are allowed during the week that follows this Sunday.

## **Theodora the Empress**



As for the renowned Empress Theodora, she was from Paphlagonia and was the daughter of a certain Marinus, the commander of a military regiment. While being the wife of the Emperor Theophilus, the last of the Iconoclasts, she adorned the royal diadem with her virtue and piety; as long as her husband Theophilus lived, she privately venerated icons, despite his displeasure. After his death, she restored the holy icons to public veneration; this is commemorated on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, the First Sunday of the Great Fast. She governed the Empire wisely for fifteen years, since her son Michael was not yet of age. But in 857 she forsook her royal power and entered a certain convent in Constantinople called Gastria, where she finished the course of her life in holiness and reposed in the Lord. Her sacred incorrupt remains are found in Corfu, in the Church of the Most Holy Theotokos of the Cave, in the capital city of the island (see also Dec. 12).

**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, 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.

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy today, will have a Trisagion Service in commemoration of the 10 year anniversary of the falling asleep of Randy (Sarandos) Constance, husband of Phyllis and father of daughter Anna. May his memory be eternal! Our prayers and best wishes go out to the entire Constance family.

JOY/HOPE meeting for our youth during the Coffee Hour Fellowship TODAY Sunday, February 11th, 2018. Parents please have the children meet Presbyteria Kim at the far end of the Fellowship Hall.

Today, at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, February 11th, in our fellowship hall, Mr. Panagiotis Sousouris, will be hosting a luncheon in honor of the anniversary of the passing of his son, Anesti. Please join us on this occasion! May Anesti's memory be eternal! Our prayers and best wishes go out to the entire Panagioti, Stavroula, and the entire Sousouris family!

**Second Saturday of Souls services - February 17, 2018**

**(Holy Trinity Church, Binghamton, NY): Feast of St. Theodore the Tyro**

Divine Liturgy 10:15 AM. All are invited! If you have not already provided your names of your departed loved ones to Fr. Michael, please do so. The names will be commemorated at the memorial service at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy on that day. If you wish that the names be read, you should be in attendance at the service as we must pray together for the departed souls.

**Third Saturday of Souls services - February 24, 2018**

**(Annunciation Church): Feast of the Kollyva Miracle**

Orthros 9 AM Divine Liturgy 9:45 AM. All are invited! If you have not already provided your names of your departed loved ones to Fr. Michael, please do so. The names will be commemorated at the memorial service at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy on that day. If you wish that the names be read, you should be in attendance at the service as we must pray together for the departed souls.

Salutations to the Theotokos service: Friday, February 23, 2018

7:15 pm

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING - TUESDAY, FEB. 13, 2018

We look forward to seeing all parish council members there

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.***