



Sunday Bulletin March 24, 2019
Greek Orthodox Church of the
Annunciation

4121 O'Hara Drive Vestal, NY 13850
Phone: (607) 797-0824 Fax: (607) 797-0824
<http://www.annunciationvestal.ny.goarch.org>
**Rev. Dr. Michael Bahlatzis, Presiding Priest-
Proistamenos**

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## **Epistle Reading**

**The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 1:10-14; 2:1-3**

In the beginning, Thou, Lord didst found the Earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands, they will perish, but thou remainest; they will all grow old like a garment, like a mantle thou wilt roll them up, and they will be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years will never end." But to what angel has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand, till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet?" Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation? Therefore we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the message declared by angels was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him.

## **Gospel Reading Mark 2:1-12**

At that time, Jesus entered Capernaum and it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, not even about the door; and he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak thus? It is a blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question thus in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"-he said to the paralytic-"I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home." And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet and went out before them all; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

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

Dearly Beloved in the Lord:

Today we celebrate the Second Sunday of Great Lent. On this day, we commemorate St Gregory Palamas. It was St. Gregory (359 AD) who bore living witness that the faithful may become divine through the grace of God in the Holy Spirit and that even in this life, by prayer and fasting, human beings can become participants of the uncreated light of the divine glory. "Come let us receive the Unwaning Light of glory!" Each day that goes by brings us closer to receiving this Paschal Divine Light. We are inspired by the life of St. Gregory Palamas which he dedicated to prayer and fasting. May we derive motivation and spiritual strength through such inspiration. The Lord told His apostles that they could not cast out demons from the possessed, as "this kind cannot be driven out except by prayer and fasting." These are our basic tools which we will use to heal the sick and/or possessed. May our prayers, through the intercession of St. Gregory Palamas. As today is the second Sunday of Lent and we remember the wisdom of St. Gregory Palamas and the Lenten prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian, I would like to share with you an interesting > story I heard that, in a way, reminds me of the wisdom of these two fathers of the Church:

A successful business man was growing old and knew it was time to choose a successor to take over the business. Instead of choosing one of his Directors or his children, he decided to do something different. He called all the young executives in his company together. He said, "It is time for me to step down and choose the next CEO. I have decided to choose one of you. "The young executives were shocked, but the boss continued. "I am going to give each one of you a SEED today - one very special SEED. I want you to plant the seed, water it, and come back here one year from today with what you have grown from the seed I have given you. I will then judge the plants that you bring, and the one I choose will be the next CEO."

One man, named Jim, was there that day and he, like the others, received a seed. He went home and excitedly told his wife the story. She helped him get a pot, soil and compost and he planted the seed. Everyday, he would water it and watch to see if it had grown. After about three weeks, some of the other executives began to talk about their seeds and the plants that were beginning to grow. Jim kept checking his seed, but nothing ever grew. Three weeks, four weeks, five weeks went by, still nothing. By now, others were talking about > their plants, but Jim didn't have a plant and he felt like a failure. Six months went by -- still nothing in Jim's pot. He just knew he had killed his seed. Everyone else had trees and tall plants, but he had nothing. Jim didn't say > anything to his colleagues, however, he just kept watering and fertilizing the soil - He wanted the seed to grow.

A year finally went by and all the young executives of the company brought their plants to the CEO for inspection. Jim told his wife that he wasn't going to take an empty pot. But she asked him to be honest about what happened. Jim felt sick to his stomach, it was going to be the most embarrassing moment of his life, but he knew his wife was right. He took his empty pot to the board room. When Jim arrived, he was amazed at the variety of plants grown by >

the other executives. They were beautiful -- in all shapes and sizes. Jim put his empty pot on the floor and many of his colleagues laughed, a few felt sorry for him! When the CEO arrived, he surveyed the room and greeted his young executives. Jim just tried to hide in the back.

"My, what great plants, trees and flowers you have grown," said the CEO. "Today one of you will be appointed the next CEO!" All of a sudden, the CEO spotted Jim at the back of the room with his empty pot. He ordered the Financial Director to bring him to the front. Jim was terrified. He thought, "The CEO knows I'm a failure! Maybe he will have me fired!" When Jim got to the front, the CEO asked him what had happened to his seed - Jim told him the story. The CEO asked everyone to sit down except Jim. He looked at Jim, and then announced to the young executives, "Behold your next Chief Executive > Officer! His name is Jim!" Jim couldn't believe it. Jim couldn't even grow his seed. "How could he be the new CEO?" the others said. Then the CEO said, "One year ago today, I gave everyone in this room a seed. I told you to take the seed, plant it, water it, and bring it back to me today. But I gave you all > boiled seeds; they were dead - it was not possible for them to grow. All of you, except Jim, have brought me trees and plants and flowers. When you found that the seed would not grow, you substituted another seed for the one I gave you. Jim was the only one with the courage and honesty to bring me a pot with my seed in it. Therefore, he is the one who will be the new Chief Executive Officer!"

- \* If we plant honesty, we will reap trust
- \* If we plant goodness, we will reap friends
- \* If we plant humility, we will reap greatness
- \* If we plant perseverance, we will reap contentment
- \* If we plant consideration, we will reap perspective
- \* If we plant hard work, we will reap success
- \* If we plant forgiveness, we will reap reconciliation.

So, we must be careful what we plant now; it will determine what we will reap later. As we prepare for the arrival of Great Lent we must reflect upon what seeds we have planted for our spiritual nourishment. Prayerfully tilling the Lord's Vineyard, in the hope of a successful spiritual harvest, I remain

Your humble servant,

+Fr. Michael

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

Dearly Beloved Faithful:

On this great day, the day prior to March 25th, we reflect upon the struggles that our ancestors of blessed memory endured to gain Hellenic freedom and independence in their homeland. Tomorrow is also the celebration of the Feast of the Annunciation of the Holy Theotokos. In Greece, March 25th, 1821 was received with the same breath of freedom that our American ancestors enjoyed on July 4th, 1776. The concelebration of Annunciation and Greek Independence Day remind us of the connection of our faith and our Hellenic heritage. Our Hellenic life is a witness to the world of our love of our faith and our submission to our Lord's teachings. The Annunciation reminds us of God's infinite love for us as His people. God announced through the Archangel Gabriel to the Theotokos that Jesus would come and be born of her and that He would be God and man. This blessed feast is a celebration that brings us hope. The hope that the arrival of our Lord would be our redeemer and take away the sins of the world.

The celebration of both of these glorious events is about the celebration of freedom as well as self-determination. A determination that we accept God in our lives. It is about a pact that we make with God so that we are able to have communion with Him. This celebration the struggle for independence by the people of Greece was also a beginning and a fulfillment. The Greek Orthodox Christians for several hundred years lived under oppression. They had to hide their worship or face death. Many died in martyrdom. Following the great struggle, the Hellenes rebuilt their country and they renewed their faith. The Church has continued to flourish since then. The faithful remember that during such struggle, it was their personal faith in the Lord which gave them the fortitude to endure the hardships and do the impossible: rebuild Church and Country!

With this witness of unwavering faith and continual love of our Hellenic heritage, may we continue to offer to the world the fulfillment we find in our Lord in the spirit of freedom, ineffable joy and abundant life. In celebration of tomorrow's Greek Independence Day, we say "Zito Ellas!"

Prayerfully, in His service, with pastoral love,

+Fr. Michael

## **Wisdom of the Fathers**

Now Matthew indeed saith, that "they brought him," but the others, that they also broke up the roof, and let him down. And they put the sick man before Christ, saying nothing, but committing the whole to Him.

### **St. John Chrysostom**

Homily 29 on Matthew 9, 1. B#54, pp. 195, 196, 4th Century

## Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas



This divine Father, who was from Asia Minor, was from childhood reared in the royal court of Constantinople, where he was instructed in both religious and secular wisdom. Later, while still a youth, he left the imperial court and struggled in asceticism on Mount Athos, and in the Skete at Beroea. He spent some time in Thessalonica being treated for an illness that came from his harsh manner of life. He was present in Constantinople at the Council that was convened in 1341 against Barlaam of Calabria, and at the Council of 1347 against Acindynus, who was of like mind with Barlaam; Barlaam and Acindynus claimed that the grace of God is created. At both these Councils, the

Saint contended courageously for the true dogmas of the Church of Christ, teaching in particular that divine grace is not created, but is the uncreated energies of God which are poured forth throughout creation: otherwise it would be impossible, if grace were created, for man to have genuine communion with the uncreated God. In 1347 he was appointed Metropolitan of Thessalonica. He tended his flock in an apostolic manner for some twelve years, and wrote many books and treatises on the most exalted doctrines of our Faith; and having lived for a total of sixty-three years, he reposed in the Lord in 1359. His holy relics are kept in the Cathedral of Thessalonica. A full service was composed for his feast day by the Patriarch Philotheus in 1368, when it was established that his feast be celebrated on this day. Since works without right faith avail nothing, we set Orthodoxy of faith as the foundation of all that we accomplish during the Fast, by celebrating the Triumph of Orthodoxy the Sunday before, and the great defender of the teachings of the holy Fathers today.

### Apolytikion of Sun. of St. Gregory Palamas

O Gregory the Miracle Worker, light of Orthodoxy, support and teacher of the Church, comeliness of Monastics, invincible defender of theologians, the pride of Thessalonica, and preacher of grace, intercede forever that our souls may be saved.

### Kontakion of Sun. of St. Gregory Palamas

Holy and Divine instrument of wisdom, bright and harmonious trumpet of theology, with one voice, we praise you, O Gregory, preacher of God. Since your mind now stands before the First Mind, guide our minds to Him, O Father, that we may cry to You, "Hail Herald of Grace."

**Artemon the Presbyter**  
**Zachariah the Recluse**

**FATHER MICHAEL REQUESTS**...that we, as a faithful community keep the following individuals in our prayers: Angelo Romas, Maria Lambrinos. 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.

### **Special Services for March 2019:**

TODAY we will have Great Vespers on the Eve of the Annunciation, 5 pm with Lenten good and refreshments to follow in our fellowship hall. Please bring a dish to pass that conforms with the Lenten fast (fish is allowed)

Salutations Service to the Blessed and Holy Theotokos, Friday March 29, 2019 at 6:30 pm

**There will be a JOY/HOPE meeting on Sunday, March 31, 2019 during the coffee hour fellowship. See you there.**

**On Holy Friday, April 26, 2019, we will have Camp Annunciation at 12 noon for our youth in our fellowship hall with a prayerful focus on Good Friday and the preparation for Holy Pascha.**

### **ALTAR BOY MEETING**

In two weeks, on Sunday, April 7, 2019, there will be a Mandatory meeting for ALL Altar servers, at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. If you are an altar server and expect to be part of the Holy Week services, you must attend this meeting. This announcement gives all altar servers two weeks advanced notice. If you have a valid excuse for not attending, please contact only Fr. Michael in advance. God bless!

If you are able to attend, there will be a raising of the Greek flag on Monday, March 25 at 11 am in front of Binghamton City Hall.

Greek Festival food preparations will commence next week, please join us, we need help. We are making Dolmades March 30th, starting at 10:00 AM, until we finish in the day. I ask all ladies to come and help, even men can come for support. Please contact Athena at (607) 761-3453.

On March 27th we will be making Pastichio. Loui Koutsaris will need help in the kitchen during the morning hours for early preparations. Please contact George or Kostas for details. April 3rd, we plan on preparing Mousaka. Again, we need help in the kitchen morning and afternoon hours. Check with George and Nick.

“For though in the beginning He Himself went about, and did not require so much faith of them that came unto Him; yet in this case they both approached Him, and had faith required on their part. For, "Seeing," it is said, "their faith;" that is, the faith of them that had let the man down. “

**St. John Chrysostom** - Homily 29 on Matthew 9, 1. B#54, pp. 195, 196, 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 at (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.

## **Holy Week Schedule for the Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation for 2019**

**Presiding Priest/Proistamenos: Rev. Dr. Michael Bahlatzis**

**Saturday of Lazarus, April 20, 2019: Orthros 9 AM Divine Liturgy 10 AM**  
(at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Binghamton)  
(This will be followed by the making of crosses from palms afterwards at the Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation in Vestal at 12 noon)

**Palm Sunday, April 21, 2019: Orthros 9:00 AM Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM**

**Palm Sunday evening, April 21, 2019: Service of the Nymphios/  
Bridegroom matins 6:00 PM**

**Holy Monday, April 22: Service of the Bridegroom matins 7:30 PM**

**Holy Tuesday, April 23: Service of the Bridegroom matins and Hymn of Kassiani  
6:30 PM**

**Holy Wednesday evening, April 24: Service of the Bridegroom matins 5:30 PM  
Service of the Sacrament of Holy Unction to immediately follow**

**Holy Thursday morning, April 25: Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil the Great  
9:30 AM**

**Holy Thursday evening, April 25: Service of the Holy Passions of our Lord and  
the 12 Gospels 6:00 PM**

**Holy Friday morning, April 26: Service of the Royal Hours 9:00 AM**  
(All are invited to assist in the flower decoration of the Epitaphios at the conclusion of this service. Fr. Michael will provide written excuses for school absences for those children who spend the day at the church.)

Camp Annunciation Holy Friday Program begins with decorating the Epitaphios followed by a light Lenten lunch at 12 noon. All are encouraged to bring and share a dish to pass that conforms with the fast of Holy Friday). A JOY/HOPE meeting will be at 1 PM. All adults and children are invited to attend.

**Holy Friday afternoon, April 26: Service of Great Vespers of the Apokathelosis  
(The un-nailing of our Lord from the cross) 3 PM**

**Holy Friday evening, April 26: Service of the Lamentations matins 6:30 PM**

**Holy Saturday morning, April 27: Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil the Great  
(The First Resurrection of our Lord raising Adam and Eve from the dead) 10 AM**

**Holy Saturday night, April 27: Matins of the Pascha 11:00 PM**

**'O Come and Receive Ye the Light...' 11:45 PM**

**Reading of the Gospel of the Resurrection of our Lord 12 AM midnight  
followed by the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom**

**Easter Sunday (Pascha), April 28: Vespers service of Agape (The Gospel will be  
read in multiple languages. Please see Fr. Michael if you are interested in reading the  
Gospel in ANY other language besides Greek and English) 11 AM**