



Sunday Bulletin March 15, 2020
Greek Orthodox Church of the
Annunciation

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

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**Epistle Reading Hebrews 1:10-14; 2:1-3**

IN THE BEGINNING, Thou, Lord, didst found the earth in the beginning, 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. Every day, 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 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

## Saints and Feasts Commemorated

### 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.

### Holy Apostle Aristobulos of the Seventy, Bishop of Britain

Saint Aristobulos, the brother of Saint Barnabas, was ordained to be bishop in Britain by the Apostle Paul, who mentions him in his epistle to the Romans (16:10). He suffered many afflictions at the hands of the pagans, but also brought many to Christ. Having established the Church there, he finally reposed in peace.

**FATHER MICHAEL REQUESTS...**that we, as a faithful community keep the following individuals in our prayers: John Gianakos, Maria Lambrinos, Steve Anastos, Lilly Kashou, Angelo Romas, and Suzanne Vaishnani, daughter of Ted Simon. 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.

### **CANCELLED: Year 2020 Festival kickoff meeting**

There will be a festival organizational meeting at the church social hall. All sector leaders must attend so we get an early start with scheduling and addressing items needed to have a better outcome this year. Please call Kostas at (607) 205-0304 or Nick at (607) 772-9169 if you have any questions. Your cooperation, as always, will be appreciated.

The JOY/HOPE meeting which was to be for today March 15, 2020, during the Coffee Fellowship Hour is CANCELLED due to the pandemic.

Message I received from our bishop:

Beloved Priests of the Metropolis of Detroit,

In light of the rapidly changing situations throughout the Archdiocese regarding the COVID-19 virus, please review and follow this directive as reason-endowed sheep in the flock of Christ:

- All children's programs (GOYA, JOY, HOPE, Young Adults, Church School, Greek School, etc.) scheduled through April 5<sup>th</sup> should be cancelled (including everything associated with Oratorical Festivals and Greek Independence Day)
- Fellowship Hour/Coffee Hour should be cancelled through April 5<sup>th</sup>
- All non-essential gatherings at the church (including all activities scheduled for seniors) should be cancelled through April 5<sup>th</sup>
- Any churches that host other groups for gatherings of any sort should cancel those activities through April 5<sup>th</sup>
- You should follow all directives from the local authorities that impact any church activities or services

I do not need to tell you the importance of our Divine Services for our people and, indeed, for the whole world. Nevertheless, rather than mandate any set of services in the parishes, I entrust each priest is to use his discretion, based on the situation in his particular locality, to determine that schedule.

Continue to guide people away from fear and, instead, to an increased knowledge and faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Continue to pray fervently for a quick mitigation and end to this situation.

With Paternal Prayers and Love,

+NICHOLAS  
METROPOLITAN OF DETROIT

Eve of the Annunciation of the Theotokos (on the eve preceding our beloved church's patron feast), Tuesday evening, March 24, 2020 at 7:00 pm. Great Vespers will be celebrated. Please join us. However, there will NOT be a Fellowship hour in our Fellowship Hall due to the COVID-19 pandemic concerns. God bless.

### **SERVICES OF THE SALUTATIONS TO THE THEOTOKOS**

**3rd Stanza: Friday, March 20, 2020 at 6:00 pm**

**4th Stanza: Friday, March 27, 2020 at 7:00 pm**

**Akathist Hymn: Friday, April 3, 2020 at 6:00 pm**

### **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

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 (607) 795-1474. For all other matters, please notify Fr. Michael or a member of the parish council. Deadline for suggestions for the bulletin is 12:00 noon on **Thursday**.*