



## *Sunday Bulletin March 8, 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 11:24-26, 32-40**

Brethren, by faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. 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 enemies 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 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 shall not be made perfect.

#### **Gospel Reading      John 1:43-51**

At that time, Jesus decided to go to Galilee. And he found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael, and he said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

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

Dearly Beloved Faithful:

Welcome to the Sunday of Orthodoxy! On this auspicious occasion, we take pride knowing that Orthodoxy triumphed over the iconoclastic heresy of the early centuries. It was the faithful then that prevailed over those who sought to destroy the Church. It is also the faithful now who are charged not only with preserving the Church but are charged with fostering and expanding the reaches and boundaries of our Orthodox Church. Through the prayers of our faithful and following the writings and teachings of the fathers, our Holy Orthodox Faith continues to blossom. As pious Orthodox Christians, we must stand firmly by our faith. It is the faith of our Fathers. Christ the Savior has said that "neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candle stick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house." (Matthew 5, 15) The light of Orthodoxy was not lit to shine only on a small number of faithful. Our Orthodox Church is the universal church! May the light of Orthodoxy reach the far corners of the earth and enlighten all of God's people. The spread of our faith should be near and precious to the heart of every Christian during the early years of our faith, the church leaders suffered for the faith of our Lord. The laity also suffered for this cause as well. This interest may show itself in personal preaching of the Gospel of Christ.

The Orthodox faith is also dear to us because it is the Faith of our Fathers. For the Gospel's sake and our Lord the Apostles endured much difficulty and strife. They experienced much pain and labored; martyrs, preachers, ascetics, and confessors suffered for it. Pastors and teachers fought for the faith. As we are charged with preserving the Orthodox faith, we are charged with preserving and adhering to the teachings of the Gospels. In ancient times, the prophet Elijah was a great worker for the glory of God. He complained that the Sons of Israel had abandoned the Testament of the Lord, leaning away from it towards the gods of the heathen. However, the Lord revealed to His prophet, that amongst the Israelites there were seven thousand people who have not knelt before Baal (3 Kings 19). In the contemporary era we live in, there are some true followers of Christ. "The Lord knoweth them that are His." (2 Timothy 2.19)

We do occasionally meet sons of the Church, who are obedient to Her directives, who honor and respect their pastors, love the Church of God, and the beauty of the exterior of the Church, who are eager to attend to its Divine Service and to lead a good and faithful life. Such faithful recognize their human failings and sincerely repent their sins. St. Paul compared the Church of Christ to a body, and the life of a body is shared by all the members. So it should be in the life of the Church also. "The whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Ephesians 4.16)

Brothers and sisters, we all must endeavor to spread the message of Orthodoxy. Historically, it was not only the clergy who have helped to spread Orthodoxy for it to be successful in its triumph over heresy. It has been the lay people who also played a vital

role in this victory. The Apostolic Epistles often disclose the fact, that when the Apostles went to distant places to preach, the faithful often helped them with their prayers and their offerings. Saint Paul sought this help of the Christians especially. Today, marks a victory for all people of God. Sunday of Orthodoxy, although a celebration of a historic event, it reminds us that we would not be able to begin our Lenten journey if our faith had not overcome the oppressive heresies that attempted to destroy us during those early centuries. The faith of our Fathers has prevailed. It has survived tyranny. Let us raise our icons proudly on this day and give God the glory!

Wishing you a blessed Lenten journey and one that leads you to the light of His Paschal resurrection, I remain

Prayerfully in His service,

+Fr. Michael

**Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the following directives were outlined in Archbishop Elpidophoros' recent letter:**

**We are to refrain from traditional Orthodox practices for TWO WEEKS: no kissing of icons (instead please bow before the icons), no kissing each other, no kissing of the priest's hand or the Cross (we are told to place the antidoron in the parishioner's open hand at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, to tell anyone who has traveled out of the country for the past two weeks to stay out of church for two weeks, etc. God bless.**

**Fr. Michael**

## Wisdom of the Fathers

Peter, when after so many miracles and such high doctrine he confessed that, "Thou art the Son of God" (Matt. xvi. 16), is called "blessed," as having received the revelation from the Father;

**St. John Chrysostom**

**Homily 21 on John 1, 1. B#58, pp. 72, 73, 4th Century**

... while Nathanael, though he said the very same thing before seeing or hearing either miracles or doctrine, had no such word addressed to him, but as though he had not said so much as he ought to have said, is brought to things greater still.

**St. John Chrysostom**

**Homily 21 on John 1, 1. B#58, pp. 72, 73, 4th Century**



## Sunday of Orthodoxy

For more than one hundred years the Church of Christ was troubled by the persecution of the Iconoclasts of evil belief, beginning in the reign of Leo the Isaurian (717-741) and ending in the reign of Theophilus (829-842). After Theophilus's death, his widow the Empress Theodora (celebrated Feb. 11), together with the Patriarch Methodius (June 14), established Orthodoxy anew. This ever-memorable Queen venerated the icon of the Mother of God in the presence of the Patriarch Methodius and the other confessors and righteous men, and openly cried out these holy words: "If anyone does not offer relative worship to the holy icons, not adoring them as though they were gods, but

venerating them out of love as images of the archetype, let him be anathema." Then with common prayer and fasting during the whole first week of the Forty-day Fast, she asked God's forgiveness for her husband. After this, on the first Sunday of the Fast, she and her son, Michael the Emperor, made a procession with all the clergy and people and restored the holy icons, and again adorned the Church of Christ with them. This is the holy deed that all we the Orthodox commemorate today, and we call this radiant and venerable day the Sunday of Orthodoxy, that is, the triumph of true doctrine over heresy.

## Theophylact the Confessor, Bishop of Nicomedia

Theophylact was from the East; his native city is unknown. In Constantinople he became a close friend of Tarsius, who afterwards became Patriarch of Constantinople (see Feb. 25). Theophylact was made Bishop of Nicomedia. After the death of Saint Tarsius, his successor Nicephorus (see June 2) called together a number of Bishops to help him in fighting the iconoclasm of Emperor Leo the Armenian, who reigned from 813-820. Among them was Euthymius, Bishop of Sardis (celebrated Dec. 26), who had attended the holy Seventh Ecumenical Council in 787 - he was exiled three times for the sake of the holy icons, and for defying the Emperor Theophilus' command to renounce the veneration of the icons, was scourged from head to foot until his whole body was one great wound, from which he died eight days later, about the year 830; Joseph of Thessalonica (see July 14); Michael of Synnada (see May 23); Emilian, Bishop of Cyzicus (see Aug. 8); and Saint Theophylact, who boldly rebuked Leo to his face, telling him that because he despised the long-suffering of God, utter destruction was about to overtake him, and there would be none to deliver him. For this, Theophylact was exiled to the fortress of Strobilus in Karia of Asia Minor, where, after 30 years of imprisonment

and hardship, he gave up his holy soul about the year 845. Leo the Armenian, according to the Saint's prophecy, was slain in church on the eve of our Lord's Nativity, in 820.

## Ever wonder How old is the Orthodox Church?

If you are a **Roman Catholic**, your Church shared the same rich apostolic and doctrinal heritage as the Orthodox Church for the first thousand years of its history; since during the first millennium they were one in the same Church. Lamentably, in **1054, the Pope of Rome** broke away from the other four Apostolic Patriarchates (Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem), changing parts of the original Creed of the Church and considering himself to be the universal head of the Church. Many steps have been taken since then including on-going dialogues to rectify this situation.

If you are **Lutheran**, your religion was founded by **Martin Luther**, an ex-monk of the Catholic Church, in the year **1517**.

If you belong to the **Church of England**, your religion was founded by **King Henry VIII in the year 1534** because the Pope would not grant him a divorce with the right to remarry.

If you are a **Presbyterian**, your religion was founded by **John Knox** in Scotland in the year **1560**.

If you are a **Baptist**, you owe the tenets of your religion to **John Smyth**, who launched it in Amsterdam in **1606**.

If you are a **Protestant Episcopalian**, your religion is an offshoot of the Church of England, founded by **Samuel Seabury** in the American colonies in **the 17th century**.

If you are a **Methodist**, your religion was founded by John and **Charles Wesley** in England in **1774**.

If you are **Unitarian**, **Theopolis Lendley** founded your church in London in **1774**.

If you are **Mormon** (Church of the Later Day Saints), **Joseph Smith** started your religion in Palmyra, New York in **1829**.

If you are of the **Dutch Reformed Church**, you recognize **Michelis Jones** as founder, because he originated your religion in New York in **1628**.

If you worship with the **Salvation Army**, you began with **William Booth** in London in **1865**.

If you are **Christian Scientist**, you look to **1879** as the year your religion was born and to **Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy** as its founder.

If you belong to one of the religious organizations known as “**Church of the Nazarene**”, “**Pentecostal Church**”, “**Holiness Church**”, or “**Jehovah’s Witness**”, your religion is one of the hundreds of sects founded by men within the past 100 years.

**If you are an ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN**, your religion was founded in the year **33** by **Jesus Christ, the Son of God**. **It has not changed since that time.**

**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.

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy today, we will have a **General Assembly meeting** in our Fellowship Hall. Members in good standing may ask questions and participate in the discussions.

**The next JOY/HOPE meeting will be on March 15, 2020, during the Coffee Fellowship Hour. Please join us. See you there!**

Eve of the Annunciation of the Theotokos (on the eve preceding our beloved church's patron feast), **Tuesday evening at 7:30 pm**, Great Vespers will be celebrated. Please join us. We are requesting that everyone contribute a fasting dish to pass for the Fellowship hour which will follow in our Fellowship Hall.

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

**2nd Stanza: Friday, March 13, 2020 at 7:00 pm**

**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**

*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**.*