



Sunday Bulletin May 24, 2020
Greek Orthodox Church of the
Annunciation

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

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**Epistle Reading      Acts of the Apostles 16:16-34**

IN THOSE DAYS, as we apostles were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by soothsaying. She followed Paul and us, crying, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." And this she did for many days. But Paul was annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I charge you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour. But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the rulers; and when they had brought them to the magistrates they said, "These men are Jews and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs which it is not lawful for us Romans to accept or practice." The crowd joined in attacking them; and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and every one's fetters were unfastened. When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out and said, "Men, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and he was baptized at once, with all his family. Then he brought them up into his house, and set food before them; and he rejoiced with all his household that he had believed in God.

## Gospel Reading    John 9:1-38

At that time, as Jesus passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him. We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." As he said this, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the man's eyes with the clay, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar, said, "Is not this the man who used to sit and beg?" Some said, "It is he"; others said, "No, but he is like him." He said, "I am the man." They said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went and washed and received my sight." They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know." They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. The Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put clay on my eyes and I washed, and I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" There was a division among them. So they again said to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet." The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight, and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself." His parents said this because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess him to be Christ he was to be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, "He is of age, ask him." So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner." He answered, "Whether he is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see." They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered them, "I have told you already and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you too want to become his disciples?" And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." The man answered, "Why, this is a marvel! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you." He said, "Lord, I believe"; and he worshiped him.

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

Dearly Beloved Faithful in the Risen Lord:  
Christos Anesti! Christ is risen!

As this is the last weekend where we may shout those glorious words, as we will have to wait until Spring 2021 before we may utter those living awesome words again. We are quickly approaching Ascension Thursday which takes place on May 28, 2020. On the feast of the Ascension, our hearts will ascend with the only Sinless One, our Lord who returns to the Heavenly Father.

One of the Desert Fathers said, "If you will, you can become all flame." Why not become "all flame" for Christ? In the early Church when the priest handed the baptismal candle to the newly baptized, he repeated the words of Jesus, "Let your light so shine before people, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). Become "all light" for Him and spread that light to a deeply sin-scarred world. The Lord has left us on earth to be heavenly lanterns, to be like lighthouses, and beacons. We are charged with the task of steering all our brethren to Light of Faith, the Logos, the Word of God, etc.

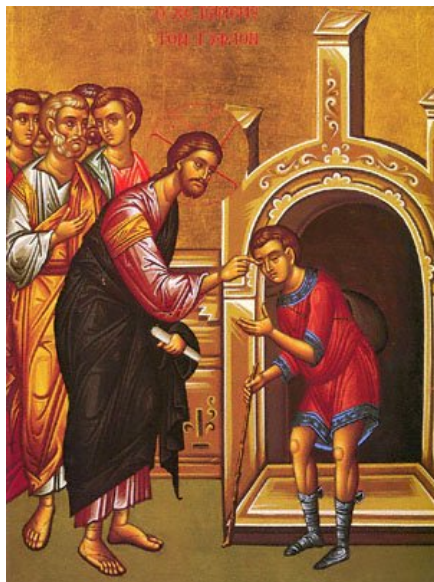
Today, we heard in today's Gospel reading the story of the blind man. And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him. We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Christ is and shall always be "the Light of the World." We are all born blind and then we are baptized and come under our Lord's saving grace through Holy Illumination. We must not allow our flame of faith to self-extinguish. Only if we have pride, lack of faithfulness, selfishness, hatred, jealousy, and lack of faithfulness will all turn into a gust of wind which will surely extinguish our inner candle of salvation. The Lord has opened our eyes through His Crucifixion, His Resurrection, and His Ascension. The clay made with spittle has been placed on our eyes by our Savior. It is now time to open our eyes, for all eternity, to the King of Glory...to the Light of the World! Glory to Jesus Christ forever! Let us open our eyes to the Lord and receive his Divine Light and never again walk in darkness!

Having washed in the pool of Siloam, prayerfully I open my eyes to the risen Lord,

Yours in His service,  
+Fr. Michael

# Saints and Feasts Commemorated

## Sunday of the Blind Man



The Lord Jesus was coming from the Temple on the Sabbath, when, while walking in the way, He saw the blind man mentioned in today's Gospel. This man had been born thus from his mother's womb, that is, he had been born without eyes (see Saint John Chrysostom, Homily LVI on Matthew; Saint Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book V:15; and the second Exorcism of Saint Basil the Great). When the disciples saw this, they asked their Teacher, "Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" They asked this because when the Lord had healed the paralytic at the Sheep's Pool, He had told him, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (John 5:14); so they wondered, if

sickness was caused by sin, what sin could have been the cause of his being born without eyes. But the Lord answered that this was for the glory of God. Then the God-man spat on the ground and made clay with the spittle. He anointed the eyes of the blind man and said to him, "Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam." Siloam (which means "sent") was a well-known spring in Jerusalem used by the inhabitants for its waters, which flowed to the eastern side of the city and collected in a large pool called "the Pool of Siloam." Therefore, the Saviour sent the blind man to this pool that he might wash his eyes, which had been anointed with the clay-not that the pool's water had such power, but that the faith and obedience of the one sent might be made manifest, and that the miracle might become more remarkable and known to all, and leave no room for doubt. Thus, the blind man believed in Jesus' words, obeyed His command, went and washed himself, and returned, no longer blind, but having eyes and seeing. This was the greatest miracle that our Lord had yet worked; as the man healed of his blindness himself testified, "Since time began, never was it heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind," although the Lord had already healed the blind eyes of many. Because he now had eyes, some even doubted that he was the same person (John 9:8-9); and it was still lively in their remembrance when Christ came to the tomb of Lazarus, for they said, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have caused that even this man should not have died?" Saint John Chrysostom gives a thorough and brilliant exposition of our Lord's meeting with the woman of Samaria, the healing of the paralytic, and the miracle of the blind man in his commentaries on the Gospel of Saint John.

## **Symeon the Stylite of the Mountain**

Saint Symeon, the "New Stylite," was born in Antioch; John his father was from Edessa, and Martha his mother was from Antioch. From his childhood he was under the special guidance of Saint John the Baptist and adopted an extremely ascetical way of life. He became a monk as a young man, and after living in the monastery for a while he ascended upon a pillar, and abode upon it for eighteen years. Then he came to Wondrous Mountain, and lived in a dry and rocky place, where after ten years he mounted another pillar, upon which he lived in great hardship for forty-five years, working many miracles and being counted worthy of divine revelations. He reposed in 595, at the age of eighty-five years, seventy-nine of which he had passed in asceticism.

## **Saint Vincent of Lerins**

Saint Vincent was born in Toul in Gaul; he was the brother of Saint Lupus, Bishop of Troyes, who was a companion of Saint Germanus of Auxerre. Saint Vincent was first a soldier, then left the world to become a monk of the renowned monastery of Lerins, where he was also ordained priest. He is known for his Commonitorium, which he wrote as an aid to distinguish the true teachings of the Church from the confusions of heretics; his most memorable saying is that Christians must follow that Faith which has been believed "everywhere, always, and by all." He wrote the Commonitorium about the year 434, three years after the Third Ecumenical Council in Ephesus, which he mentions in the Commonitorium, and defends calling the holy Virgin Theotokos, "She who gave birth to God," in opposition to the teachings of Nestorius which were condemned at the Third Council.

Without identifying by name Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, Saint Vincent condemns his doctrine of Grace and predestination, calling it heresy to teach of "a certain great and special and altogether personal grace of God [which is given to the predestined elect] without any labour, without any effort, without any industry, even though they neither ask, nor seek, nor knock" (Commonitorium, ch. XXVI). See also Saint John Cassian, February 29; Saint John Cassian wrote his refutations before, and Saint Vincent after, the condemnation of Nestorius at the Third Council in 431, and the death of Augustine in 430. Saint Vincent reposed in peace about the year 445.

**FATHER MICHAEL REQUESTS...**that we, as a faithful community keep the following individuals in our prayers: Ted Simon, John Gianakos, Maria Lambrinos, Steve Anastos, 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.

Results of Live-streaming services on YouTube for the Annunciation Church in Vestal:

4th Sunday of Lent, March 29 - 147 views  
5th Sunday of Lent - unable to broadcast due to Wi-Fi issues  
Sat. of Lazarus, April 11 - 97 views  
Palm Sunday, April 12 - 152 views  
Palm Sunday evening, April 12 - 68 views  
Holy Monday evening, April 13 - 63 views  
Holy Tuesday evening, April 14 - 76 views  
Holy Wednesday evening, April 15 - 85 views  
Holy Thurs morning, April 16 - 41 views  
Holy Thurs evening, April 16 - 100 views  
Holy Friday morning, April 17 - 112 views  
Holy Friday afternoon, April 17 - 42 views  
Holy Friday evening, April 17 - 118 views  
Holy Sat morning, April 18 - 45 views  
Holy Sat afternoon/eve, April 18 - 126 views  
Easter Sunday/Pascha, April 19 - 41 views  
Sunday of Thomas, April 26 - 63 views  
Sunday of the Myrrhbearers, May 3 - 42 views  
Sunday of the Paralytic/Mother's Day, May 10 - 66 views  
Sunday of the Samaritan Woman, May 17 - 59 views

Total views to date: 1,543 as of May 23, 2020

I want to take this time to thank everyone for their 'virtual' attendance through viewing these services through YouTube. It is truly a blessing to see the diligence of the faithful in viewing these services and not allowing the discourse of the pandemic from inhibiting our thirst for hearing the word of God. May the Lord bless you for your continued love and faith!

In the risen Christ,  
+Fr. Michael

## Wisdom of the Fathers

What could equal these souls? These men had been scourged, had received many stripes, they had been misused, were in peril of their lives, were thrust into the inner prison, and set fast in the stocks: and for all this they did not suffer themselves to sleep, but kept vigil all the night. Do you mark what a blessing tribulation is? ...That the earthquake should not seem to have come of itself, there was this concurrent circumstance, bearing witness to it: "the doors were opened, and all their bonds were loosed." And it appears in the night-time; for the Apostles did not work for display, but for men's salvation...Here, they did but show the doors standing open, and it opened the doors of his heart, it loosed two sorts of chains; that (prisoner) kindled the (true) light; for the light in his heart was shining. "And he sprang in, and fell before them;" and he does not ask, How is this? What is this? but straightway he says, "What must I do to be saved?" What then answers Paul? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thine house." (v. 31.) For this above all, wins men: that one's house also should be saved.

### **St. John Chrysostom**

Homily 36 on Acts 16, 4th Century

But I assert that he even received benefit from his blindness: since he recovered the sight of the eyes within.

### **St. John Chrysostom**

Homily 56 on John 9, 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.*