



ANNUNCIATION GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

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My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I pray this message finds you all well and healthy.

Today, December 12th, we celebrate the feast day of St. Spyridon the Wonderworker of Trymithous. He was born in 280 A.D. in the village of Assia in Cyprus and departed from this life on December 12th, 350 A.D. He was married and had one daughter, named Irene, but when his wife died he dedicated himself to the service of God and was unanimously chosen to be bishop of Trymithous. He prayed often in silence and with undistracted peace and concentration. He was a very simple, mild-mannered, humble, good-hearted and holy man. He was a true shepherd of Christ's flock. His love and dedication to our Trinitarian God gave him the holy ability to perform miracles for the Glory of God and for the benefit of all the souls that sought his help in tragic circumstances.

He is very well known for the miracle that he performed at the First Ecumenical Council in the city of Nicea of Bethany, Asia Minor, by which he revealed the Triune nature of our God at a time when the divinity of Christ was being disputed. In front of those at the Council, he raised a brick and said, "In the name of the Father," at which point the element of fire proceeded upwards out of the brick. Continuing on, he said, "and of the Son," and the element of water poured to the ground, and in completion he said, "and of the Holy Spirit," and clay remained in his hand. In this miraculous revelation, St. Spyridon demonstrated to everyone in a simple way with love and humbleness that Christ is God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, and that the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity can coexist and remain one Triune God.

On December 12th we, also, celebrate the Holy New Martyr Peter the Aleut. St. Peter lived in the late 18th century and early 19th century. He was a native resident of the Aleut Islands, which are located between the Bering Sea and the North Pacific Ocean. The Russian Orthodox missionaries catechized and baptized many native residents of the Aleut Islands. But when the Spanish Jesuits conquered California they also sailed to the Aleut islands in order to convert the locals to their Catholic faith. Many Aleuts were arrested and tortured in an effort to convert them. One of these Aleuts was St. Peter from the island of Kodiak. Whenever the Jesuits forcefully asked St. Peter to embrace their faith, he answered that he was Christian and would not change his faith. For his refusal, St. Peter was tortured by cutting off his toes and his fingers, and, then, his hands, subsequently bleeding to death. St. Herman the Wonderworker of Alaska heard the confession of St. Peter's martyrdom from one of St. Peter's fellow Aleutian cellmates who witnessed his martyrdom prior to being released himself from imprisonment. St. Peter martyred in the year 1815 A.D.

On December 13th we celebrate the feast day of St. Herman the Wonderworker of Alaska who was born in 1756 in a village near Moscow. From his early youth he lived the monastic life at St. Sergius Hermitage, and, then, at Valaam Monastery. He, then, went to Alaska as a Russian Orthodox missionary and lived on Spruce Island, calling it 'New Valaam.' He dedicated himself to prayer, fasting and living an ascetic life, and he mainly concentrated on preaching the Gospel of Christ to the native residents of the Aluet Islands. During his lifetime, his holiness was revealed through his God-given ability to perform miracles, as witnessed by the locals of the Orthodox Christian communities there. St. Herman reposed peacefully in the Lord at the age of 81 in 1837.

On December 15th we celebrate St. Eleutherios the Holy Martyr, Bishop of Illyria, who was born in the latter years of the 1st century and martyred at a young age in 120 A.D. He became fatherless from his early youth, and his mother raised him in the Christian faith. At 15 years old, St. Eleutherios was ordained deacon, and at the age of 18 years he was ordained a priest. At the age of 20 years, he was made Bishop of Illyria (Albania) with his main metropolis being in the city of Avlona, Albania. He was a very delicate, sweet spoken preacher and a simple, authentic Christian shepherd, and he led hundreds of thousands of pagans to the Christian faith. When the Roman authorities found out about St. Eleutherios's work catechizing and baptizing Christians, they arrested him and sentenced him to death in the Roman arena. Along with his mother, Saint Anthia, he was beheaded for unwaveringly confessing the Christian faith to our Trinitarian God.

Let us all venerate St. Spyridon the Wonderworker, the patron Saint of Kerkyra (Corfu), and ask for his intercessory prayers towards our Triune God. Let us respect and admire the strong faith and dedication that St. Peter the Aleut had for Christ our God, even until martyrdom. Let us imitate St. Herman the Wonderworker of Alaska in his spiritual strength and wakefulness as he spread the seeds of Christianity among the native residents of Alaska and the Aleut Islands. Let us all honor and venerate the martyric sacrifices of St. Eleutherios and his mother in the city of Rome—the very same city where St. Peter and St. Paul martyred for the faith and helped to spread the Christian faith to the whole of the Western world.

