



ANNUNCIATION GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

707 East Lafayette Boulevard • Detroit, Michigan 48226
Church: (313) 965-2988 • Fax: (313) 965-2988
Email: Annunciation@prodigy.net



December 19, 2021

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I pray this message finds you all well and healthy.

On December 20th we celebrate the feast day of St. Ignatius the God-Bearer and Bishop of Antioch. He was a student of St. John the Theologian, and he lived during the 1st century A.D. His sermons were very strong in faith, which served as constant spiritual food for the Christians of his era. In 106 A.D. emperor Trajan ordered an edict that everyone should give a sacrifice to the pagan gods for his victory over the Scythians or be put to death. Despite this edict, St. Ignatius was not ashamed to confess his faith to the king himself. His confession, which was witnessed by the local Christians, led to his instant arrest and sentencing to death in the Roman arena. St. Ignatius gave up his soul to the Lord while being eaten alive by the wild lions. Until death, he trusted God's Will and kept his faith strong, unaltered and undefiled for the Glory of God.

On December 22nd we celebrate the feast day of St. Anastasia the Great Martyr who lived during the 3rd century. She was from a pagan, wealthy and powerful Roman family. She was secretly catechized and baptized in the Orthodox Christian faith and offered her philanthropy to the poor, needy, ill and imprisoned. Because of her intercessions that helped heal many from things like spells, potions and poisons, she is named 'Pharmacolitia' (Φαρμακούτριά), which means 'deliverer from potions.' When the authorities found out that she was a Christian she was arrested and imprisoned, tortured and put to death by fire. Despite the fact that she was very beautiful, well-educated, and very wise for her age, St. Anastasia was not afraid to sacrifice her life for the Glory of God.

On December 24th we celebrate the feast day of St. Eugenia the Righteous, who lived in the 2nd century and was the daughter of the Roman prefect of Alexandria at that time. St. Eugenia was secretly catechized and baptized in the Christian faith. Her thirst to live and worship the Word of God led her to leave (along with two of her servants) the wealthy life that she led with her parents. She disguised herself as a man and departed Alexandria to join a male monastery. She led a pious life that was strong in faith and Christian virtue. One day, a woman being attracted to St. Eugenia (thinking her to be a male monk) made advances and, having been rejected, the woman accused the Saint of bodily dishonor and reported her to the prefect of Alexandria (St. Eugenia's father). St. Eugenia revealed her innocence against these false charges by revealing her true identity, which led to the conversion to Christianity of her father (who ended up himself martyring for his faith). Eventually St. Eugenia made her way to Rome, along with her two servants, where she continued the monastic life. Her servants martyred for the faith for not sacrificing to the idols and, later, St. Eugenia was put to death for refusing to do the same. First, they tried throwing her in the Tiber River with a stone around her neck, but the stone became untied. Then they tried burning her alive, but she remained unscathed. Finally, they threw her in

a pit for ten days, during which Christ appeared to her to inform her that she would depart for the Heavenly Kingdom on His birthday, and so it happened.

On December 25th we celebrate, as we do every ecclesiastical year, the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. On behalf of all of humanity, the Virgin Mary gave her pure flesh and virgin womb to become the throne of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. By giving herself in this way, Christ honored all of humanity by sharing His Divinity with us. The birth of the Incarnated Word of God provides us a timeless, Divine hope that unceasingly gives us the opportunity to ascend to the heavenly realm of God.

Although born in a humble manger, Christ's birth into the world was glorified by hundreds of thousands of angels singing, praising and worshiping Him, His Father and the Holy Spirit. Several shepherds witnessed this historical and joyful event under the bright star that shone revealingly above Christ our God's birthplace. And it was this same star that the three wise men, or magi, followed from the East in order to confirm the birth of the Messiah. The birth of Christ, the Incarnated Word of God, is the fulfillment of the prophecies of the holy prophets of God. As His gift to us, the humble and pure of heart who seek Christ can, through Christ's birth and example, reach holiness (or Theosis) for the Glory of God.

Let us all imitate the thirst that St. Ignatius the God-Bearer and Bishop of Antioch had when he gave his life here on earth for life eternal in God's Heavenly Kingdom. Let us all love Christ and spread His love to others, as St. Anastasia did, and especially to the poor, needy, and imprisoned. Let us all imitate the pure devotion to God and holy asceticism in the sacramental life that St. Eugenia lived. And this Christmas, let us all rejoice and praise God for the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and celebrate wholeheartedly and with love and forgiveness this Great and Holy Feast, which reveals God's love for us: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

Yours in Christ,

+Rev. Economos Fr. Georgios Manias

