



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.

On January 10th we celebrate the feast day of St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa in Cappadocia. St. Gregory was born in the 4th century and reposed around 395 A.D. St. Gregory was a silent, gentle, highly-educated and noble man. His mother was from Cappadocia and his father was from Pontus. Like his older brother St. Basil the Great, he had a strong inclination towards the sciences, arts and technologies of his era. When he was 40 years old, his brother ordained him Bishop of Nyssa. Today, the city of Nyssa is called Nevşehir, which is located in Turkey. St. Gregory was theologically educated, and, due to his theological expertise, in 381 A.D. he was called to participate in the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople. By God's Grace, St. Gregory refuted the Arian heresy by theologically explaining both natures of Christ—human and divine—as well as the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity.

On January 11th we celebrate the feast day of St. Theodosios the Great, the Cenobite. St. Theodosios was born around 426 A.D. and reposed in the Lord in 529 A.D. at the age of 103. He was born in the village of Mogarissus in Cappadocia to pious Christian parents. From his early youth St. Theodosios was inspired by the monastic life and wished to dedicate his life to Christ. He was taught the monastic life by St. Symeon the Stylite and St. Longinus. He settled in Palestine, and he lived for thirty years in a desolate cave where, it is said, the three Magi had spent the night after coming to worship the newborn Christ. He lived there in abstinence, solitude and prayer.

His holiness and reputation led many different people (such as monks, patriarchs, and working lay people) to visit him to seek his blessings, prayers and miracles. He willingly offered his help to all who asked him. Monks seeking to live the ascetic life moved to live close to him to be under his spiritual guidance. Around 476 A.D., St. Theodosios established the first cenobitic monastery for all these monks. He did this by entrusting God to reveal to him the location that God wished for the monastery to be built, and, by God's Grace, He revealed to St. Theodosios its location, which was near the cave that he had dwelt for the previous three decades. This monastery is known today as the Monastery of St. Theodosius. When St. Theodosios reposed, many came to honor him and pray in front of his holy relics, and he was buried in the cave that he spent much of his early years in asceticism.

On January 12th we celebrate the feast day of St. Tatiana the Martyr of Rome. St. Tatiana lived in the 3rd century and was the daughter of a noble Roman family. She was a student of the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul. She had a very strong belief in and relationship with our Trinitarian God, and, by God's Grace, her soul was beautified by her various Christian virtues, such as love, compassion, understanding and philanthropy. All of these holy virtues were accompanied by fasting and unceasing prayer. St. Tatiana lived as a holy, earthly angel of Christ and loved all her fellow humans. For these reasons she was elected to be a Deaconess of the early church, which she served with loyalty, dedication and self-denial. Soon, the pagan Emperor of Rome, Alexander Severus, learned that she was Christian, and she was instantly arrested and taken to the pagan temple to offer sacrifice to the idols. St. Tatiana confessed her allegiance and love for our Trinitarian God, and when she made the Sign of the Cross and began to pray, an earthquake shattered the idols. St. Tatiana was, then, imprisoned, had her head shaven and was tortured. But each night the angels would appear and heal her of her

wounds. After she continually refused to offer sacrifice to the idols, she was beheaded. Despite the threats and tortures that she was subjected to, St. Tatiana did not lose her faith in Christ but had the courage to unwaveringly honor God until her earthly end, so that she could gain entry into the Heavenly Kingdom of God.

On January 15th we celebrate the feast day of St. John the Cave Dweller. Born of noble parents in Constantinople, St. John lived during the middle of the 5th century. When St. John was 12 years old, he secretly went to the Monastery of the Unsleeping. Having longed for his parents, he returned to his father's home after 6 years of being away. However, he did not return as himself but as a beggar and lived in a hut outside his parents' house without letting them know who he truly was. In this hut he lived a humble and ascetic life in poverty and self-denial of his sinful passions and desires. Just before he departed from this earthly life, he revealed his true identity to his parents. For the love of our Trinitarian God, St. John shunned all the comforts of life and endured mockery. But, as a reward for his love, God granted him eternal rest in the Heavenly Kingdom.

Let us all imitate St. Gregory of Nyssa in his love for silence, prayer and asceticism, and become true Christians in thought, word and deed, so that we are deemed worthy of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (the Christian virtues). Let us work hard to earn Christ's love, as did St. Theodosios the Great, the Cenobite, who was a spiritual pulpit of holiness and paradisiac, tranquil and joyful heavenly revelations. Let us learn from the life of St. Tatiana the Martyr of Rome who lived a life of philanthropy and love for her poor and needy brothers and sisters in Christ. And let us all live a holy life, as did St. John the Cave Dweller, in simplicity and self-denial, and let us endure any mockery with humbleness and forgiveness for all, for the salvation of our souls and for the Glory of God.

Yours in Christ,



+Rev. Ekonomos Fr. Georgios Manias

