



## 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, January 23rd, we celebrate the feast day of Hieromartyr St. Clement, Bishop of Ancyra. St. Clement was born in 258 A.D. in the city of Ancyra in Galatia and was raised by his mother in the Christian faith. His spirit, mind and soul loved our Trinitarian God and the Saints, making him desire to live in obedience to the Word of God. Soon, his spiritual virtues shone and he was exalted to the office of bishop of Ancyra. He lived a philanthropic life that became a testimony of his Christian faith and complete trust in God. St. Clement reposed after suffering many tortures and intermittent imprisonment over the course of many years and died by beheading during the reign of Roman emperors Diocletian and Maximian.

On January 24th we celebrate the feast day of St. Xenia, Deaconess of Rome. St. Xenia was born in Rome during the 5th century and was the daughter of a Roman senator. From a young age, she loved God. She and her two female servants secretly escaped from her parent's house, because she wished to avoid an arranged marriage. She travelled by ship and eventually settled in Mylasa of Karia in Asia Minor where she lived an ascetic life in prayer, fasting and philanthropy. Her name originally was Eusebia, but to conceal her identity from her family she took the name Xenia, which, in Greek, means 'stranger.' At Mylasa she built a church and dedicated it to St. Stephen the protomartyr and founded a woman's monastery. Soon afterwards, she was made a deaconess by Bishop Paul of Mylasa. She lived a virtuous life, helping everyone who sought her help and drawing many to Christ. She reposed in the Lord in 450 A.D.

On January 25th we celebrate the feast day of St. Gregory the Theologian, Archbishop of Constantinople. St. Gregory was born in 329 A.D. in Arianzus of Cappadocia and departed in the Lord in 391 A.D. at the age of 62. Even to this day, he is very well known for his theological writings and for this reason he is called 'the Theologian.' St. Gregory was a very good friend of St. Basil the Great and, for a time, they both lived the monastic life in hermitages of Pontus. He was a learned man having studied in Nazianzus, Caesarea, Alexandria and Athens, and he became bishop of Sasima (or Zansima) at the age of 43. Several years later he was elected Archbishop of Constantinople, and he participated in the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople against the heresy of Arianism. His Theological knowledge helped many see the heresy of Arianism and brought them back to the true faith. In his final earthy years he resigned as Archbishop of Constantinople, wishing to live a life of peacefulness, silence and in dedication to our Lord through constant prayer, fasting and studying the Word God.

On January 28th we celebrate the feast day of St. Ephraim the Syrian who was born around the year 306 A.D. to an impoverished family in the city of Nisibis of Mesopotamia. Although raised in piety, during his childhood he was quick-tempered and impulsive, but by the Grace of God he returned to the path of repentance and salvation. After running off to the mountains to join the hermits, he became a disciple of St. James of Nisibis and was, later, ordained a deacon by him. Under St. James's discipleship (until his mentor's death in 338 A.D.), St. Ephraim learned to live a life in strict asceticism, which helped him cultivate the Christian virtues. He was a great teacher of repentance and theologically defended the Orthodox faith against heretics. After the Persians captured Nisibis in 363 A.D., St. Ephraim went to live in a monastery near the city of Edessa, composed many hymns for the Church, helped the inhabitants of Edessa (such as during a severe famine by establishing a poor-house) and, later, lived in solitude in a cave near Edessa until he reposed peacefully in the Lord.

Let us all become like St. Clement the Hieromartyr, Bishop of Ancyra, by imitating his life of loyalty, sacrifice and martyrdom for the living Word of God. Let us imitate the divine love that St. Xenia, Deaconess of Rome, had for Jesus Christ, our God, and follow Him and His Father's Divine Will to the end of our earthly lives. Let us all share the divine thirst that St. Gregory the Theologian, Archbishop of Constantinople, had for holy writings of the Orthodox Christian Church, such as; the holy scriptures, the Patristic Theology of the Holy Fathers, as well as the written and oral inherited Orthodox tradition. And let us all, as did St. Ephraim of Syria, seek silence, peacefulness and tranquility in our lives, so that we may cultivate the Christian virtues for the benefit of our fellow human beings, for the salvation of our souls and for the Glory of God.

Yours in Christ,



+Rev. Economos Fr. Georgios Manias

