



## 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 30th, we celebrate the Synaxis of The Three Hierarchs: St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian, and St. John Chrysostom. It is astonishing to realize that, in addition to the feast day of The Three Hierarchs, we celebrate three other great feast days in January related to these Saints: On the 1st of January we celebrate the feast day of St. Basil the Great, on January 25th we celebrate the feast day of St. Gregory the Theologian and on January 27th we celebrate the feast day of the Removal of the Holy Relics of St. John Chrysostom.

The word 'Synaxis' means a gathering in that we celebrate all three Saints in one day. This feast day was established following a dispute that took place in approximately 1100 A.D. about who was the greatest of the three Saints. The faithful were divided into three parties, each named after one of the three hierarch Saints: Basilians, Gregorians and Johannites. In a dream, a holy man by the name of St. John, Bishop of Euchaita (in Asia Minor) saw all three holy hierarchs who told him that they are equally glorified at the throne of God, so they should be treated equally. Then they told St. John of Euchaita to compose a common service for them, which he did, and we now celebrate this feast day of the Synaxis of The Three Hierarchs on January 30th. In the Kingdom of Heaven, all humans are the beloved sons and daughters and children of our Trinitarian God, and they coexist in peace, harmony, divine happiness and love.

On February 2nd we celebrate the feast day of The Presentation of our Lord and Savior in the Temple. There are many things, both service-wise and sacramental-wise, that we do in the Orthodox Church without understanding the reason, or Orthodox tradition, behind them. One of these services is the service to welcome back to the Orthodox Church a mother, 40 days after the birth of her child.

According to Orthodox tradition, when a woman gives birth she should stay home with her newborn baby for 40 days to protect and heal herself from labor. Forty days after the birth of a child, both mother and child present themselves to the priest of the Orthodox Church and they receive blessings and prayers of healing and prepare for the future, Holy Baptism of the child. This tradition has its roots in the Old Testament, according to the Law of Moses. Christ is the fulfillment and completion of the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament, and He did not ignore but obeyed His Father's Law by being presented to the Temple by His mother, the most Holy Theotokos. In doing so, He wished to show all of humanity that He sustained the integrity, coherence and authenticity of His Father's Law. For this reason, it is very important for new parents, as well, to honor this tradition by presenting their newborn children to the priest of the Orthodox Church 40 days after their birth, so that, through the priest's prayers and blessings, our holy God will bless the mother and her baby to continue leading a God-pleasing life.

On February 3rd we celebrate St. Symeon the God-Receiver and St. Anna the Prophetess. St. Symeon was blessed by our Trinitarian God to see the Second Person of the Holy Trinity when the Most Holy Theotokos brought Him to the Temple 40 days after His birth. St. Symeon, while holding Jesus Christ as a baby in his arms, felt holy peace, comfort, happiness and love, and he prayed the following words, which confessed his belief in Jesus Christ as the Lord and prophesied Messiah: "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation Which You have prepared before the face of all people." (Luke 2:29–31) At that same time, St. Anna the Prophetess, also, confessed her belief to all at the Temple that Jesus Christ was our King and God who will grant salvation to the world. Both Saints were the first in Jerusalem to receive Jesus Christ as the Messiah of the world.

On February 5th we celebrate the feast day of the Sicilian Saint, Agatha the Virgin Martyr. St. Agatha lived in the 3rd century A.D. and was orphaned at the age of 15. She was well-known for her honor, integrity, gentleness and beauty both in body and spirit. When her parents reposed, she inherited their entire wealth and spent it in almsgiving and for philanthropic reasons, for the glory of God. She was a loyal, young Christian lady who dedicated herself to our Trinitarian God. Her physical beauty attracted the local Roman governor, and he asked her to marry him. St. Agatha refused, responding that she was the bride of Christ. On account of her being a Christian, he retaliated by turning her into the authorities who subjected her to various tortures. She eventually reposed in the Lord in prison after being cast into it following one of her tortures. Despite the fact that she was so young, her love for Jesus Christ, the Divine Wisdom and Word of God, was rooted deep in her heart, mind and soul, to the point that she sacrificed everything for His love, including her earthly life.

Let us all honor and respect equally each of The Three Hierarchs that we celebrate on the 30th of January: St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian and St. John Chrysostom. Let us all imitate the life of Christ—from His birth to His death and from His Resurrection to His Ascension—and always honor and respect both the Old and the New Testament by engaging in genuine, guided study of the Holy Scriptures and by dedicating a portion of our daily lives to Christ in silence and prayer. Let us all, as did St. Symeon the God-Receiver and St. Anna the Prophetess, confess our belief that Jesus Christ is the prophesied Messiah and the way through Whom we are able to experience a foretaste of the Kingdom of Heaven to come, even in this world of corruption, sinfulness and temptation. Let us all be grateful that Sicily produced holy women Saints, such as St. Agatha, and always try to honor St. Agatha's name day by remembering her deep love and sacrifice for our Lord, so that she will become for us a strong example of unwavering faith despite any challenges that come our way.

Yours in Christ,



+Rev. Ekonomos Fr. Georgios Manias