



## ANNUNCIATION GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

707 East Lafayette Boulevard • Detroit, Michigan 48226

Church: (313) 965-2988 • Fax: (313) 965-2988

Email: [Annunciation@prodigy.net](mailto:Annunciation@prodigy.net)



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My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I pray this message finds you all well and healthy.

Today, February 27th, is the Sunday of the Last Judgment (Meatfare Sunday). On this day, Jesus Christ reveals to His Holy Apostles what will happen on Judgment Day; this is something that we must all continually consider and keep in mind. On Judgment Day we will be judged on our thoughts, words and deeds according to God's Divine Will, Commandments and Holy Gospel. It is the day that all of us, in a timeless, instantaneous and simultaneous moment, will be in front of the Son of Man and Second Person of the Holy Trinity, Who will hear our virtues and philanthropic deeds of love, as well as sinful thoughts, words and actions.

In today's Gospel Christ emphasizes that divine love and human love is what will save us. He tells us that we should not only love and worship our Trinitarian God and venerate His Holy Saints in thought and words, but we should, also, do so in the way we choose to live our lives. He, also, tells us that we should love each other philanthropically through the spiritual framework of the heavenly realm of God and serve God's Holy Will by becoming continuous, living and indestructible blessings for His entire creation—for God's Glory and the salvation of our souls. Genuine repentance, confession and forgiveness, as well as a love for one another and giving of ourselves to help others, are what will save us and reunite us with our Creator.

When we help others, we should always pray, fast and ask for God's spiritual guidance on how we can offer relief, comfort, hope, joy and help to our fellow human beings in need. Then, by God's Grace and guidance, we will know how to properly and most appropriately show love and philanthropy to those in need. When we show our love and help others, we help ourselves in the same way because a day may come when we will find ourselves in the same or similar unpleasant and needy circumstances. So, let us all love each other by, firstly, learning how to love and serve our Trinitarian God unconditionally.

On March 1st we celebrate the feast day of St. Eudokia the Martyr of Heliopolis of Phoenicia (which is located in modern-day Lebanon). She lived during the end of the first and beginning of the second centuries. She was a very beautiful young woman of her time, which became a large temptation for her. Her beauty attracted many men, and, without the fear of God, she lived a sinful life. One night, St. Eudokia awoke to singing coming from a Christian neighbor of her, as well as a monk reading from a book about the Last Judgment. St. Eudokia was touched by what she heard, and she grieved her wealth and sinful life. By God's providence she became very ill to the point of death. This incident made her understand how short the human life is, how death can come suddenly and without warning and that we need to do our best to prepare ourselves in this life to gain entry into the eternal one that awaits us with Christ. After a short period of time, God healed her and being repentant for her sins, she sought to speak with the monk, whose name was Germanus, and under his guidance she secluded herself in fasting and prayer for several days. She gave away her wealth before receiving the Sacrament of Holy Baptism from the Bishop of Heliopolis. She, then, entered a monastery and lived a life of strict asceticism. Despite the sinful way she lived up until her conversion, she left it all behind and followed the path of repentance, as did St. Mary of Egypt a couple of centuries afterwards. Upon hearing about her

conversion to Christianity, one of her former lovers, a pagan, came to her in an effort to convince her to return to her former life. He did not succeed in converting her and after crying aloud, "May God rebuke you and not allow you to leave these premises," he fell down dead. Through her prayers, however, he was revived and began his own way on the path towards repentance. For several years afterwards, St. Eudokia's prayers resurrected others from the dead, performed miracles, healed the ill and brought many to Christ. She became a martyr for Christ when the Governor Vicentius, having heard of her miracles, ordered her to be beheaded, thus joining the Holy Saints of God in His Heavenly Kingdom.

On March 4th we celebrate the feast day of St. Gerasimos the Righteous of Jordan who lived during the 5th century in Lycia of Asia Minor. St. Gerasimos was very devoted to our Lord. He loved the silence of the dessert and the ascetic life and, so, he founded a great Lavra by the Jordan River and was abbot of a community of 70 monks. Under the teachings and guidance of St. Euthymius of Rouva, he repented and renounced the heresy of monophysitism, which falsely taught that the divine nature of Christ absorbed the human nature and, so, Christ was only God and not human. St. Euthymius helped St. Gerasimos understand that the human and divine natures of Christ were always unaltered and inseparable, non-divided and coexisting from the time of His incarnation by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary to the time of his Ascension and until His second coming, where all things will be renewed and become incorruptible, ageless and eternal. St. Gerasimos's holy life, through his humility and holy asceticism, allowed him to live in peace with wild animals. The devotion and love of a certain lion towards St. Gerasimos is very well known and is depicted in many of his icons. The lion was so devoted to the saint that he was his servant until the saint's death. Both St. Euthymius and St. Gerasimos reposed in the Lord in peace only two years apart and now continuously glorify God in His Heavenly Kingdom.

On March 5th we celebrate the feast day of St. Konon the Gardener who lived during the 3rd century. He was Nazarene of Galilee as our Lord Jesus Christ was. He was a gardener by profession and a great almsgiver to the poor and needy. He was a very simple, hard-working man who was dedicated to Christ. St. Konon was accused, arrested and sentenced to death for being a Christian. He was tortured and died martyrically for the glory and love of our Trinitarian God. He is the patron saint and protector of gardeners and, through his intercessory prayers, he unceasingly and continuously prays for mercy, hope, joy and peace for those who pray to him, as well as their families and those they serve.

Let us all repent, as the prodigal son did, to be forgiven through the sacrament of Holy Confession and let us love God above all else in the world, and we can show our love towards our Trinitarian God by loving and caring for each other, as well as His entire Creation. Let us imitate the deep repentance and holiness of St. Eudokia the Martyr of Heliopolis and become like her—a fragrance of God's spiritual joy, comfort, peace, and love for one another, all for God's Glory. Let us train ourselves in strict and holy asceticism, as St. Gerasimos did through his holy habits of prayer, fasting, studying the Holy Scriptures and almsgiving for the benefit of our souls and the souls of our fellow human beings and for the spiritual inheritance and sanctification of all Christians for generations to come. And let us all become simple, pure, honest and humble in our thoughts, words and deeds, as was St. Konon, and let us thirst for our eternal salvation by seeking God's love and allowing Him to be the protector and Master Gardener of our souls.

Yours in Christ,



+Rev. Economos Fr. Georgios Manias

