



ANNUNCIATION GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

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May 15, 2022

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Χριστός Ανέστη! Αληθώς Ανέστη!

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

I pray this message finds you all well and healthy.

On May 15th we celebrate the feast day of St. Pachomios the Great who was born in 292 A.D. in Upper Thebaid of Egypt and reposed in the Lord in 346 A.D. Despite the fact that he was born to pagan parents and knew nothing about Christianity, after our Triune God was introduced to him by other Christians while serving in the Roman army of St. Constantine the Great, he vowed to become a Christian. Upon completion of his military service around the year 313 A.D., he was baptized and became a disciple of the hermit, St. Palamon. After several years as his disciple, he established the first monastic community at Tabennisi Island, where monks could pray, work and break bread together. For this reason, he is known as the father of cenobitic monasticism, which is one of the greatest monastic institutions of Christianity. Around 14,000 monks lived there as his disciples in the monastic community that he established. He organized the life of the monks by giving them a rule of life. In terms of prayer, he assigned each monk a specific type of prayer every hour of the day and night, which could be prayed in common (said together when gathered) or in private. Eventually he established several other monasteries with thousands of other monks dedicating their life to Christ.

St. Pachomios was led by God to establish this highly organized, communal monastic community so that those wishing to lead an ascetic life dedicated to our Triune God could do so in authenticity and in obedience. It is amazing that despite the great number of monks living in the same place, under St. Pachomios's humble guidance there was peace and harmony among the monks. He became the great father among all the Holy Fathers of the Church who guided many to holiness and the Heavenly Kingdom of God. His spiritual virtues benefitted all who came to live in his cenobitic community and those who came to see him for guidance. For both monastics and laypeople alike, he was a spiritual eagle and guard of the true Christian faith and authentic Christian worship. His name reflects his contribution to Christianity—in Coptic 'pachom' means 'eagle' which perhaps is a reference to his imitating the evangelic eagle of our Lord, St. John the Theologian (May 8th), who wrote one of the four Gospels of the New Testament.

On May 16th we celebrate the feast day of St. Theodoros the Sanctified who was one of the most loyal, humble, hardworking and zealous disciples of St. Pachomios. St. Theodoros was born in Upper Thebaid of Egypt to Christian parents. He was the son of one of the wealthiest families of the region. Despite being well-off, St. Theodoros gave up all his wealth, status and social privileges for poverty, humility and strict asceticism, all for the glory of God. St. Theodoros loved to read the Holy Scriptures on a daily basis to the point that he became very familiar with the entire Old and New Testaments. His knowledge, understanding and spiritual perceptiveness of the Holy Scriptures distinguished him from all the other monks of his spiritual brotherhood. Because of this, St. Pachomios gave him the authority to teach his fellow monks about the Holy Scriptures. His youth, however, proved to be an obstacle because his fellow monks did not take him seriously, but as time passed, he gained the respect of the entire brotherhood and became Abbot of the monastic community. As his name reveals, he was 'a gift of God' to all the monks who wished to live an ascetic, spiritually-sanctified life in the heavenly realm of God.

On May 20th we celebrate the feast day of St. Thalleus the Martyr. St. Thalleus was born in the region of Lebanon during the end of the 3rd century and he martyred for the love of Christ in 284 A.D.

He was a young eighteen-year-old youth studying medicine during the time of Christian persecution under the reign of the Roman Emperor Numerian. As a young physician, he imitated the life of the Holy Unmercenaries and treated the sick without payment. Not only was he merciful to the sick of bodily ills but, also, to those with unclean, sinful souls who suffered from their passions. He became for them a living hope in Christ, both in body and spirit. When St. Thalleleus was arrested and brought to the Roman prefect Tiberius, he confessed his Christian faith, and after several unsuccessful attempts to torture and kill him, he was beheaded. The patience that St. Thalleleus showed during his tortures revealed his Christian virtues and served as a speechless catechism to his two executioners, Alexandros and Asterios, who confessed their belief in Christ, and were also beheaded likewise.

On May 21st we celebrate the feast day of St. Constantine the Great and St. Helen, Equal-to-the-Apostles. St. Constantine was born in 272 A.D. and reposed peacefully in our Lord in 337 A.D. His mother St. Helen was born in 247 A.D. in the province of Bithynia, Asia Minor, and reposed peacefully in the Lord in 327 A.D. at around 80 years old. Christian tradition tells us that St. Constantine the Great was born in the city of Naissus of Dardania (modern-day Niš, Serbia). When his father died in 306 A.D. St. Constantine ascended the throne to become emperor of the westernmost parts of the Roman Empire. Roman Emperor, St. Constantine was a believer in Christ, owing to the pious faith of his mother, and was the first emperor who supported and defended Christianity.

In 326 A.D., St. Helen went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in search of the Holy Sepulcher and Holy Cross. She found the Holy Cross and as a result, the Holy Cross, then, became freely accessible and open to be venerated and embraced by the entire Orthodox world. St. Helen went on to establish churches all around her son's empire, including at the sites of Christ's birth, Crucifixion and Resurrection. Both St. Constantine and St. Helen travelled constantly throughout their lives in order to spread the Gospel of Christ and establish Christian Churches for the glory of God and the spiritual comfort of His people. This is why St. Constantine and St. Helen are called 'Equal-to-the-Apostles,' because, alongside their imperial duties, their main concern was spreading the truth about Christianity all around the world.

In addition to this, St. Constantine was responsible for calling the First and Second Ecumenical Councils by gathering the most important Christian hierarchical figures to resolve theological disputes and address Christian wrongdoings of that time. The name 'Constantine' in Latin means 'the one who is able and strong in character and status,' and this is truly what St. Constantine was in terms of becoming the first defender and life-keeping ruler of Christians who worshiped our Trinitarian God. The name 'Helen' means 'the one who radiates light' and this accurately describes who St. Helen was throughout her holy life as she established churches and found the Holy and Life-giving Cross of Christ, which allowed God's Uncreated Light to be illuminated and to support the Sacramental life of all Christians.

Let us all imitate the authenticity, spiritual virtue and obedience of St. Pachomios the Great in his daily life, which was lived, also, by the monks under his guidance who worshipped and prayed to our Triune God and whose spiritual asceticism flourished like a flower in Paradise. Let us all always remember to dedicate a few minutes each day to read and study the Holy Scriptures, which include the books of the Old and New Testaments, as did St. Theodoros the Sanctified, and apply their Holy Wisdom and the Word of God in our daily lives. Let us all become unmercenary, sleepless Christians, as well as selfless and merciful like St. Thalleleus did in his lifetime. Let us all worship our Lord through the sacramental life of the Orthodox Church and be physical and mentally present in the House of God—many of which were established by holy Christians such as St. Constantine and St. Helen. And let us all live our Christian faith according to the spiritual guidance of all seven Ecumenical Councils, alongside the unfading Orthodox traditions and patristic writings of the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church, for the glory of God and the spiritual-nourishment and eternal salvation of our souls.

Yours in our Risen Christ,

+ Rev. Econdios Fr. Georgios Manias

