



## ANNUNCIATION GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

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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 22nd we celebrate the feast day of St. Vasilikos the Martyr, Bishop of Comana. St. Vasilikos was born in the city of Amasia on the Black Sea, and he was the nephew of St. Theodorou of Tyro. Like his uncle St. Theodore, St. Vasilikos was a very strong man, both physically and spiritually in faith. Because of his strong faith he became the Hierarch of Comana. He lived during the reign of Diocletian and his persecution of Christians, and his steadfast faith in Christ led to his arrest and imprisonment. After going through many tortures, he was beheaded and thrown into the river, thus gaining his crown of martyrdom and eternal rest in the Kingdom of Heaven.

On May 23rd we celebrate the feast day of St. Michael the Confessor, Bishop of Synadon. St. Michael was born and raised in Asia Minor and lived at the end of the 8th century A.D. and beginning of the 9th century. Early on in his childhood, his parents nourished his Christian faith, and he developed great Christian virtues. In his youth he spent a tremendous amount of time reading the Holy Scriptures, studying the writings of the Holy Fathers, praying, fasting, doing good deeds, participating in the sacramental life of the Church and attending liturgical services in whichever city he lived.

As an adult, he expressed a desire (along with his good friend St. Theophylact) to live the monastic life and, so, he went to a monastery located at Euxinos Pontus which was established by St. Tarasius, Patriarch of Constantinople. Not too long afterwards, both St. Michael and his friend St. Theophylact were compelled by Patriarch Tarasius to become bishops—St. Michael of Synnada and St. Theophylact of Nicomedia—so they accepted and served our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ and His Church as Holy Shepherds of His flock. Each of them worked hard to catechize, lead and philanthropically help all the people in their respective jurisdiction. During the iconoclasm dispute, St. Michael was a great supporter of venerating and honoring the holy icons of the Church. As a fearless iconophile, he was exiled from his See by the iconoclast Emperor Leo V the Armenian and was continuously driven from one place to another. His earthly life ended around 821 A.D. after experiencing many hardships and much poverty, hunger, pain and isolation. For his steadfast loyalty to the true faith, he is remembered as a 'Confessor.'



On May 24th we celebrate the feast day of St. Symeon the Stylite of the Mountain. He was born in the early 6th century A.D. His father died in an earthquake when he was young, and he was raised in the Christian faith by his mother Martha who taught him the Holy Word of God and immersed him in the Holy Scriptures. At the age of 12, St. Symeon moved to Seleukia where he met his spiritual father, Elder John, who was the Abbot of a monastery near there. He stayed there for 12 years and imitated the ascetic life of his elder so closely that he cultivated many Christian virtues. He, also, lived as a Stylite. Upon the passing of his spiritual father, the brotherhood of the Monastery chose St. Symeon to take his place and become the spiritual leader of the Monastery. However, St. Symeon the Stylite was thirsty for a stricter ascetic life so he went into the desert and became a Stylite, once again, living this way for 45 years. He reposed in peace in the Lord near the end of the 6th century A.D., leaving a rich ascetic legacy for monastics of the Orthodox Christian Church in Syria.

On May 27th we celebrate the feast day of St. Helladius the Hieromartyr. St. Helladius lived during the reigns of pagan Roman Emperors who worshiped idols and imprisoned, tortured and executed the Christians of their lands. Unfortunately, not much has been written about St. Helladius's life, but we know that from his early youth St. Helladius lived a Christian life in holiness and exhibited rapid spiritual progress. The wisdom of God shone through his humble and simple words, guiding those in spiritual need. Because of his holiness, he was asked to serve the church as a priest and, then, as a Holy Hierarch. He dedicated his life doing the work of God by continuously preaching, giving alms, ministering to the needs of the poor and sick (both in body and spirit) and celebrating the Holy Sacraments. Because he catechized and baptized a lot of idolaters into the faith, he was arrested. When he refused to sacrifice to the idols, he was tortured, and then cast into a fire but remained unharmed. In the end, he martyred by being beaten to death through the blow of fists. His self-sacrifice for the love of Christ inspired Christians of his time and those throughout the entire Orthodox world.

Let us all pray to our Trinitarian God, as did St. Vasilikos the Martyr, Bishop of Comana, so that, by God's Grace, we may maintain the holiness and purity of our Christian baptism, both physically and spiritually. Let us all ask God to give us the strength to maintain our upright faith by venerating and honoring the holy icons of the Orthodox Church, no matter what people may say or do to us, as did St. Michael the Confessor, Bishop of Synadon. Let us all not be afraid or discouraged to live an ascetic life in fasting, prayer and almsgiving, so that God will provide us with fearless courage and the strength of self-denial to live a God-pleasing, holy and spiritual life as did St. Symeon the Stylite of the Mountain. And let us all strive to lead a holy and virtuous life in Christ as did St. Helladius who, by God's grace, became a testimony of steadfast Christian faith and a spiritual inspiration to Christians everywhere.

Yours in our Risen Christ



Rev. Economos Fr. Georgios Manias

