



ANNUNCIATION GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

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May 29, 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 29th we celebrate the feast day of St. Theodosia the Virgin Martyr of Tyre. St. Theodosia was born and raised in Constantinople by wealthy and faithful parents during the 8th century. From her early childhood she became orphaned, so she joined the monastic life and spread her parents' wealth through almsgiving. When the iconoclast Emperor Leo III the Isaurian issued an edict against Christians venerating and honoring icons, St. Theodosia followed the theological beliefs of the ecumenical Patriarch, Germanos of Constantinople, who was deposed by the Emperor and was replaced by the iconoclast Patriarch Anastasios. Because of her veneration of the holy icons, she was arrested and pierced to death by iconoclast soldiers.

On June 1st we celebrate the feast day of St. Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, who was born around 103 A.D. in Neapolis of Palestine and lived during the beginning and middle of the 2nd century. He was raised by Greek pagan parents who gave him the best education they could and supported him to excel in the areas of science and the arts. He especially loved to study philosophy and search for the truth and, so, he sought to answer questions about the existence of God. By God's providence, when he was well into his middle age years, he was instructed by a holy man in Palestine about Christianity, catechism and baptism in the Name of the Holy Trinity. He, also, answered his existential questions about life in relation to our True God. St. Justin soon came to the realization that our Trinitarian God is the Truth and that Christ is God's self-revelation and the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. He, thus, became a fervent Evangelical preacher teaching others about the Truth of Christ. He decided to go to Rome to give a Theological and philosophical confession defending the innocence of Christianity in front of the Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius, which was received positively by many who heard it but was, also, received negatively by some groups of idolaters. His earthy life ended when he was arrested for his Christian beliefs, tortured and behead at around the age of 65.

On June 2nd we celebrate the feast day of St. Nikephoros the Confessor, Patriarch of Constantinople. St. Nikephoros was born to pious parents in the 8th century A.D., around the year 758. From his early youth he was nourished in the Christian faith by his father Theodore and his mother Eudokia and constantly studied the Holy Scriptures and lived a holy life. He lived during the reigns of two iconoclast Emperors: Constantine V Copronymus and Leo V the Armenian. When Patriarch Tarasius of Constantinople found out about the steadfast faith and the Christian virtues of St. Nikephoros, he selected him

as his replacement upon his repose, so he became Patriarch of Constantinople in 806 A.D. Because St. Nikephoros was an iconophile and defender of the holy icons, he was deposed from his ecclesiastical position and exiled by Emperor Leo V. After experiencing many hardships and afflictions, he reposed in the Lord around 828 A.D., at the Monastery of St. Theodore, which he founded.

On June 4th we celebrate the feast day of St. Mary and St. Martha, the sisters of St. Lazarus who was the beloved friend of Jesus Christ. Whenever our Lord Jesus Christ was in the city of Bethany, He would always visit the three siblings and their families because He felt love and care for them and respected His friendship with them. We read in the Gospel of John (Chapter 12 Verses 1–8) about the hospitality given to Christ by St. Mary, St. Martha and St. Lazarus following the latter's resurrection. At this gathering, St. Martha (the older sister) carried out serving duties while St. Lazarus reclined at the table with Christ and St. Mary sat at the feet of the incarnated Holy Wisdom of God to listen to Him speak. And we read, too, that because of St. Lazarus's resurrection, many were coming to Christ (John 12:9–11), so the chief priests plotted to put St. Lazarus to death, as well. We know that in order to save his life, he fled from Judea and eventually settled in Cyprus becoming the first Bishop of Kition and reposing peacefully in the Lord in 63 A.D., approximately 30 years after Christ raised him from the dead.

Let us all fully dedicate our lives to Christ our God, as did St. Theodosia the Virgin Martyr of Tyre, and refuse to sacrifice ourselves to the tempting allure of the secular idols of our times, as many have unwittingly or willingly done. Let us all study the Holy Scriptures and writings of the Holy Fathers of our Orthodox Christian Church, as did St. Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, so that we may always know and experience our Trinitarian God and Christ, as well as why and what we believe as Orthodox Christians. Let us all always strive, as did St. Nikephoros the Confessor, Patriarch of Constantinople, to respect and reverently venerate the holy icons that we encounter both inside and outside of the Orthodox Christian Church and remember the many iconophile Christians who suffered persecution or whose lives were sacrificed during the iconoclast dispute so that today we can freely venerate and honor those depicted on the holy icons. And let us all, like the siblings St. Mary, St. Martha and St. Lazarus, become good friends of Christ, as well as joyful, peaceful and humble students of His, by worshiping Him and following the Holy Will of His Father—for the Glory of God and the eternal salvation of our souls.

Yours in our Risen Christ,

+Rev. Ekonomos Fr. Georgios Manias

