

## 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.

On June 19th we celebrate the feast day of St. Thaddeus (Jude) the Apostle and Brother of our Lord, who is also known as Juda or Lebbaeus. St. Thaddeus was one of the twelve apostles and the brother of James the Just, both of whom were the sons of St. Joseph the Betrothed from his first marriage and, through St. Joseph's betrothal to the Virgin Mary, were the brothers of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. St. Thaddeus was a disciple of St. John the Baptist and Forerunner before becoming a disciple of Christ. After Christ's Resurrection he preached the Good News to the churches of Syria, Arabia and Mesopotamia and met a martyric death, as all twelve Apostles did. The Church Fathers recognize him as the writer of the encyclical letter of Jude, which we may find in the New Testament right before Revelation.

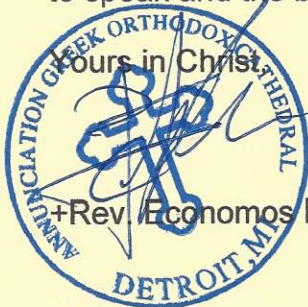
On June 20th we celebrate the feast day of St. Methodios the Martyr, Bishop of Olympus of Lycia, and, later, Bishop of Tyre in Phoenicia. He lived during the end of the 2nd century A.D and the beginning of the 3rd century A.D. As a Shepherd of Christ's flock on earth, he was a superb Christian preacher, writer and administrator of the Churches he was called to serve. He lived a holy life according to what he preached about the Holy Word and Wisdom of God. St. Methodios was one of the most prominent defenders of his time of the human-divine nature of Christ against the heresy of the Origenists. After his martyric death, St. Methodios's holy life left for the entire Orthodox world a rich Christian legacy, and his intercessory prayers helped all who seek God's spiritual guidance and the protection of their Christian faith and soul as we strive towards deification and unification with our Triune God.

On June 23rd we celebrate the feast day of St. Agrippina the Martyr of Rome. St. Agrippina was from Rome and lived during the 3rd century A.D. As a young Christian woman, she dedicated her entire life to her heavenly Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, and lived a monastic way of life in the city of Rome. St. Agrippina unceasingly instructed many people in her city regarding the Christian faith and prepared them to be ready both in body and spirit to be baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity. Her life, as with the lives of many other Holy Christians, was dedicated in steadfast faith and allegiance to Christ. She tirelessly gave alms and engaged in philanthropic works. For her faith, St. Agrippina was condemned by the local pagan authorities. She was sentenced to be tortured and put to death, and she accepted her martyrdom willingly. Her holy relics were secretly taken by other Roman Christian women and respectfully buried in Sicily.

On June 24th we celebrate the feast day of the Nativity of St. John the Forerunner and Baptist. His conception, along with his birth, was a wonder, a mystery and a miracle. St. Zachariah, St. John's father, was one of the holy priests of the Holy Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. His wife St. Elizabeth was not able to conceive children and, according to Israelite society, this was perceived to be a shame, a curse and a dishonor. Even though she was old and barren our almighty God blessed her to carry in her womb not just any human being but the Forerunner and Baptist of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ about whom Christ Himself said, "among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist." (Matthew 11:11)

As St. Zacharias was sensing and offering his prayers to God at the Holy of Holies, Archangel Gabriel appeared to him and announced the good news that his old and barren wife would conceive a child and foretold his name and that he would be a great man of God. St. Zacharias was in disbelief at the news and, for his lack of faith, he became mute and was unable to speak until the 8th day following St. John's birth when he wrote the child's name on a tablet to identify his name. Instantly, St. Zacharias's tongue was untied and he glorified God.

Let us all walk the narrow and spiritually-challenging path towards Christ by imitating the lives of St. Thaddeus (Jude) and each of the twelve Apostles, which we can do by reading about their holy lives through the books of the New Testament. Let us all become like St. Methodios the Martyr, Bishop of Olympus, and be honest and authentic followers of Christ in thought, word and deed. Let us all remember St. Agrippina's holy life and become, as she did, a Christian light of hope, faith and love for all our fellow human beings and all of Creation. And let us all glorify God for the nativity of the greatest of all born of women, St. John the Forerunner and Baptist, who baptized people and preached their repentance in preparation for them to accept the Messiah, and let us believe faithfully that, through God's Grace and Will, anything is possible — the childless bear children, the mute begin to speak and the blind regain their sight.



+Rev. Ekonomos Fr. Georgios Manias

