



ANNUNCIATION GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

707 East Lafayette Boulevard • Detroit, Michigan 48226
Church: (313) 965-2988 • Fax: (313) 965-2988
Email: Annunciation@prodigy.net



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My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I pray this message finds you all well and healthy.

On August 1st we celebrate the feast of the Procession of the Precious Cross. It is one of the four Ecclesiastical feasts that we celebrate annually that is dedicated to the Precious and Life-Giving Holy Cross. More precisely, according to the Church calendar we celebrate the Precious Cross on the following feast days: 'The Exaltation of the Holy Cross' (September 14th), 'Sunday of the Veneration of the Holy Cross' (every third Sunday of Great Lent), 'The appearance of the Precious Cross in the Sky over Jerusalem in 351 A.D.' (May 7th) and 'The Procession of the Precious Cross' (August 1st). The Feast of the Procession of the Precious Cross is celebrated by all Orthodox Christians for two reasons. Firstly, this Holy Feast commemorates the victory of Emperor Emmanuel Comnenus in the battle against the Saracens during the 12th Century A.D., which he won as a result of the intercessions of the Holy Cross. And secondly, we remember the Litany of the Precious Cross, which typically took place throughout the city of Constantinople during the month of August, for the protection and safekeeping of all those in the city from fatal illnesses and diseases (which mostly occurred during that time of the year).

On August 2nd we celebrate the feast day of St. Basil the Fool for Christ and Wonderworker of Moscow. St. Basil lived from 1468 A.D until 1557 A.D, reposing in the Lord at the age of 88 years old. From his youth he was blessed by God to foresee things and to intercede with his prayers to assist his fellow man. St. Basil willingly lived barefoot on the cold streets of Moscow under extremely low temperatures that are typical of Russian winters. He did not complain but praised the Lord for the gift that was given to him, which was experiencing daily our Living God within himself and His glorious Heavenly Kingdom. This left him untouched and impassioned from all earthly matters and worries that typically plague us in this temporal world. He freely served others with a burning heart full of Divine Love, especially the poor and needy, both in body and in spirit. His philanthropy made evident to others his love for Christ and glorified God. With compassion, divine hope and unshakable trust towards God, St. Basil visited those in prisons, in alcohol rehabilitation centers and places of prostitution with the firm belief that everyone living in sin can be saved with intercessory prayers. St. Basil intentionally behaved foolishly in order to hide his extraordinary holiness. While on earth, he lived the unceasing presence of God through his ascetic, human body, as well as his prayerful soul, which worked for the benefit and salvation of the souls of the entire Orthodox world. He reposed in peace in the Lord and left behind his spiritual legacy of meekness and tirelessly being in service to others for the benefit of bringing God's Grace on earth, so that we may come closer to Christ.

On August 4th we celebrate the feast day of Maximilian, Iamblicus, Martinos, Dionysius, Antoninus, Konstantinos and John, known as the Seven Youths, who were friends and served in the military together. They lived during the middle of the 3rd century. These youths lived during the Edict of Decius which was issued against all Christians. Decius ordered all of his subjects to embrace and worship the pagan idols as their god, otherwise they would be arrested, tortured and executed. The Seven Youths left the city of Ephesus and hid in a cave to avoid Decius's persecution against Christians. When the soldiers discovered the hideout of the Seven Youths, they blocked the entrance of the cave with a stone so that they may die of hunger and thirst. But the Lord miraculously placed them in a deep state of sleep, and after nearly two hundred years, God awoke them in order to resolve the dispute between the Christians who believed in the

resurrection of the dead at the Second Coming of Christ and those who doubted it. When the Seven Youths appeared in the city of Ephesus, resurrected by God from their deep sleep, all doubting Christians became believers of God's ineffable power to resurrect the dead at Christ's Second Coming.

On August 5th we celebrate the feast day of St. Eusygnius the Martyr of Antioch. St. Eusygnius was born in the city of Antioch in 252 A.D and in 362 A.D., after 110 years of life, he martyrically reposed in the Lord. From the age of 50 years old until his martyrdom, he was an active soldier of the Roman Empire under the reigns of Emperors Constantius Chlorus, St. Constantine the Great and Julian the Apostate. As a faithful, loyal and dedicated Christian, St. Eusygnius was not afraid to rebuke Emperor Julian the Apostate when he visited the city of Antioch. When the Emperor heard the old-aged soldier rebuking him for venerating the idols, he immediately ordered St. Eusygnius to be arrested and beheaded.

Let us all venerate the Holy Cross of Jesus Christ, our God, on the Feast Day of the Procession of the Precious Cross and always keep the Holy Cross within our hearts, minds and hanging from our necks as we frequently do the sign of the Holy Cross to protect us against all harm, both bodily and spiritual. Let us become Fools for Christ, as was St. Basil the Fool for Christ and Wonderworker of Moscow, and despise the sinful pleasures, temptations and desires of this world, so that we may dedicate our lives to the one who sacrificed His earthly life for our eternal salvation and avoid spiritual harm from the enemy of humankind who wants nothing more than for us to join him in eternal damnation away from our Triune God's presence and love. Let us wholeheartedly believe in Christ's Resurrection by always remembering the Seven Youths who, after two hundred years, awoke from their deep sleep to serve as a testament to unbelieving Christians to the resurrection of the dead at Christ's Second Coming. And let us all imitate the courage and unwavering faith of St. Eusygnius the Martyr of Antioch and pray to God to give us His Grace, patience and strength so that, until our last breath, we remain faithful and good Christian soldiers as members of his Church Militant, so that we may worthy of joining His Church Triumphant in the Heavens.

Yours in Christ,

+ Rev. Eusebios Fr. Georgios Manias

