



Weekly Bulletin

Orthodox Church of the Annunciation

The Wedding Banquet

Troparion of the Resurrec- tion, Tone 8

Thou didst descend from on high, O Merciful One. Thou didst accept the three-day burial to free us from our sufferings. O Lord, our Life and Resurrection: Glory to Thee!

Troparion of Annuncia- tion, Tone 4

Today is the beginning of our salvation, the revelation of the eternal mystery! the Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin as Gabriel announces the coming of Grace. Together with him let us cry to the Theotokos: Rejoice, O Full of Grace, the Lord is with you.

Kontakion of Annuncia- tion, Tone 8

O Victorious Leader of triumphant hosts! We, your servants delivered from evil, sing our grateful thanks to you, O Theotokos! As you possess invincible might set us free from every calamity so that we may sing: Rejoice, O Unwedded Bride!

The 33rd Sunday after Pentecost, Tone 8, January 21st, Matt.22:1-14

It is the same warning — the dangers of being unfaithful to the divine summons — that the Gospel for the 14th Sunday after Pentecost brings us (Matt. 22:1-14). A king has prepared a feast for the occasion of his son's marriage; he sends his servants to call those that were bidden, but they excuse themselves under one pretext or another: their business negotiations, their farms, etc.; some of them ill-treat and kill his servants (the analogy with the gospel for the previous Sunday is striking). The King destroys the murderers and, instead of the unworthy guests, sends his servants out into the highways to gather all those they can find. The house is filled. However, the King notices the presence of one guest who has no wedding garment. He has this too presumptuous guest bound and thrown into outer darkness.

The general meaning of this gospel is clear. Jewish tradition frequently compared the messianic kingdom to a feast. Here we are concerned with the great and continual feast which is the union — the marriage — of the Son of God with our human nature. All of us are bidden to take part in this union. Woe betide us if we prefer the things of this world to the "wedding of the Lamb" or if, carried away by a real hatred of God, we kill the messengers of the King! Strangers will take the place of those unworthy guests. But here begin certain difficulties of interpretation. If the King brings all the people from the street into his house — "as many as they found, both bad and good" — he cannot expect all of them to be equipped with wedding garments (these evidently symbolize the spiritual preparation necessary to enter into the eternal kingdom): consequently, how can he punish someone for this reason? And what exactly is the significance of the last phrase: "For many are called, but few chosen"? One could assume that there is a certain interval in time between the invitation and the feast. The King sincerely desires that all should come to his feast: "As many as you shall find, bid to the marriage". He can therefore say: "Many are called". But he expects his guests to prepare themselves for the feast, which will be the final outcome, and to fulfill the conditions of admission. A poor person encountered in the street cannot be expected to have a wedding garment; but, once in the house, he can, he must get hold of one. In other words, God does not expect us, sinners, to come to him on our own merits (for we have none); he brings us into the house, his Church, purely through his own grace and mercy, and opens to us opportunities for purification and communion with him; it is for us to make use of these

Announcements and Activities

Great Vespers— Saturday, at 5:30 PM.

Divine Liturgy— Sunday, at 10AM.

Coffee Hour— This week's Coffee Hour is potluck for the Annual Meeting. Next week's Coffee Hour will be the sponsored by Mike M. and Alex B..

Parish Council— met last week and adopted the year end statement and unanimously voted to present the 2024 Proposed Budget that Sunday and Father presented to the Council. We discussed a number of financial details about the year of our consecration.

Church School/Adult Ed— January 28th, at 9AM.

Annual Meeting— this is the third and final announcement before the Annual Meeting. The meeting is being held today. Voting members are, according to the Parish By-laws, those who are 18 years of age, have received the Sacraments of Holy Confession and Holy Communion at least once in the past 12 months and offer support, as they are able, through the giving of Time, Talent and Resources. The meeting is open and may be attended by catechumens and friends of the parish.

Pray for... Sarah, the daughter of Fr. Lawrence's godfather, health issues. **Youseff and Jimmy**— who are ill. **Jonathan**— ill. **Reposed Barbara Ranjo**. . **Laure**— battling Cancer. **Paul**— ill **Ralph**—ill **Archpriest Lawrence**, from Canada, progressive eye disease. **Tsige Roman**— our beloved Tsige reposed on December 3rd. Please keep praying for her homeland of Ethiopia. **Brian**— ill.. **Jonathan**— ill. **Katia**— sister of Shkbarra's . **Patrick**, reposed. **Heather Mary**— uncommon fatigue **Lou Mendez**. Battling ongoing health issues. **George and Steve**, a request from Luci. F. Dr. Joseph—personal needs. **Lance**— special request for prayers. **Christian**— prayers for upcoming surgery. **Michelle**— looking for housing. Mike Meko's Mother-inlaw, **Lois**. Recovering from a fall. Larissa's newly-reposed husband **Raphael**. Departed **Matushka Priscilla** and **Newly-departed, George. Luci F. recovering from surgery. Newly-Departed Marylyn; ill, Diane, ill, Colin. Injured, Cody. John Truman**—lightheadedness and a recent fall. **Daniel** reposed, Tom and Amy, who lost their son

opportunities and to prepare ourselves to take our place, repentant and pardoned, at the table of the Lord. In this way only can we clothe ourselves in the wedding garment and, having been invited, be chosen. But few men, even from among those whom this King has so generously brought into his house, prepare themselves for the Feast. We have been called: shall we be amongst the chosen?

(taken from *The Year of Grace of the Lord*, by A Monk of the Eastern Church)

From the Lives of the Saints... THE VENERABLE MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR

Maximus was a Constantinopolitan by birth. At first he was a high-ranking courtier at the court of Emperor Heraclius, and after that he was a monk and abbot of a monastery not too far from the capital. He was the greatest defender of Orthodoxy against the so-called Monothelite heresy, which proceeded from the heresy of Eutyches. As Eutyches claimed that there is only one nature in Christ [Monophysitism], so the Monothelites claimed that there is only one will in Christ [Monothelitism]. Maximus opposed that claim and found himself an opponent of the emperor and the patriarch. Maximus did not frighten easily, but endured to the end in proving that there were two wills, as well as two natures, in Christ. Because of his efforts, a council was held in Carthage, and another in Rome. Both councils anathematized the teachings of the Monothelites. The suffering of Maximus for Orthodoxy can hardly be described: he was tortured by princes, deceived by prelates, spat upon by the masses of the people, beaten by soldiers, exiled and imprisoned--until finally, with his tongue and one hand severed by the torturers, he was condemned to exile for life in the land of Skhimaris [near Batumi on the Black Sea], where he spent three years in prison and gave up his soul to God in the year 662 A.D.

BLESSED MAXIMUS THE GREEK

Maximus was born in Greece and from there was invited to the court of the Russian Tsar Basil Ivanovich, to act as the tsar's librarian and translator. He labored much, but also suffered much for the truth. He spent a long time in prison, where he wrote the well-known Canon to the Holy Spirit, which is still in use in the Church. He reposed in the Lord in the year 1556 A.D.

THE HOLY HIEROMARTYR [PRIEST-MARTYR] NEOPHYTUS

Neophytus was born in Nicaea. While he was still a child, he worked great miracles by the grace of God. Neophytus brought forth water from a rock and raised his dead mother. He was led by a white dove to Mount Olympus, where he drove a lion from its cave and took up residence in it. At age fifteen he was tortured for Christ in Nicaea, during the reign of Emperor Diocletian. By no means would he deny Christ. After beatings and imprisonment, Neophytus was thrown into the fire, but God preserved his life. Then they placed him before a hungry lion, but the lion fawned about Neophytus. The saint, recognizing this lion as the same one in whose cave he had practiced asceticism, began to pet him and ordered the lion to return to the cave. Then Neophytus was pierced with a lance, and his soul took up its habitation in the mansions of the Lord.

A.D. Taken from the Prologue of Ochrid, by St. Nikolai (Velimirovich)

“There do not exist many or few, nor small or great problems. The only problem is the absence of Christ from our lives” (From the life and teachings of Elder Epiphanius Theodoropoulos)