



Weekly Bulletin

Orthodox Church of the Annunciation

The Great Commandment

Troparion of the Resurrection, Tone 1

When the stone had been sealed by the Jews, while the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body, Thou didst rise on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world. The powers of heaven therefore cried to Thee, O Giver of Life: Glory to Thy Resurrection, O Christ! Glory to Thy Kingdom! Glory to Thy dispensation, O Thou who lovest mankind!

Troparion of Annunciation, 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 Annunciation, 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 34th Sunday after Pentecost, Tone 1, January 28th, Matt.22:25-46

The Gospel for the 15th Sunday after Pentecost (Matt. 22:35-46) is made up of two quite distinct parts.

First of all, a lawyer or a scribe comes to Jesus and to test him, asks which is the great commandment of the law. Jesus answers “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” And he adds: “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets”.

“Thou shalt love...”. This precept flows from the very nature of God. “God is love” (1Jn.4:8): that is why we must love. It is through loving that we go in the same direction as life and that, in our own feeble way, we imitate God. We will love God, which means that we shall love — “the Lord thy God”. This Lord-love, this God-love, is not an impersonal sentiment or some metaphysical entity. It is a living person who freely communicates his life of love to all creatures; he is that emotion of love which comes from a heart that is infinitely loving and multiplies itself. If loving God means loving love, it would seem that nothing could be simpler and easier than the great commandment. Yes, from a certain point of view, loving God is simple and easy; but what is required of us is a total love; it is to love God with *all* our heart, with *all* our soul, with *all* our mind, and this word *all* marks the difficulty and, somehow, the heroism of such a love. For it involves pruning away everything which is against, or not connected with, God, and the consecration to him of our whole being without reserve — permitting in ourselves only what can be integrated into his love and sanctified by it. God asks for our heart: in Hebrew, as in Greek, the word “heart” does not have the sentimental connotations that it has in modern languages, but it denotes the most noble part of the human person, the seat of the intellect and the will. God asks for our soul: the Hebrew word here is deeper and richer than the term we use, for it denotes at the same time the soul, life and blood; so that for Jesus and those Jews listening to him, loving God “with all one’s soul” carried in it, already, although obscurely, the connotation of immolation and sacrifice. God asks for our mind, our thought: our human logic, our science, our culture must become transfigured through him. This, then is the first and great commandment: Jesus makes it quite clear that the priority is love of God. Love of God and love of one’s neighbor cannot be put on an equal footing, for love of one’s neighbor flows from loving God. This love of God is the fountain-head, so all human-

Announcements and Activities

Great Vespers– Saturday, at 5:30 PM.

Divine Liturgy– Sunday, at 10AM.

Coffee Hour– This week’s Coffee is being sponsored by Mike M. and Alex B. Next week’s Coffee Hour will be sponsored by Tricia C. and Edie O.

Annual Meeting– We held our Annual Meeting last week. It was very well attended and so positive. We presented 14 reports from various departments and ministries. We encouraged questions and your finding a spot to plug-in. Our Treasurer presented a surplus year-end report and we adopted the council’s proposed annual budget for 2024. We elected John Truman as parish VP and re-elected Elise Russell, Mike Miller and Jason Nantze to the three vacant council seats, for two-year terms. Thank you, everyone, for making the day so productive and so joyful. Let’s do it again in 2025!

Church School/Adult Ed– February 11th, at 9AM.

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-in-law, **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

itarianism must find itself condemned and rejected. But Jesus, even if He does not identify the two loves, proclaims that love of one’s neighbor is a commandment which is “like unto” the precept to love God, and it is in bringing these two commandments together that He shows himself, with regard to the Jewish law, as an innovator and also as supremely original. He is this, again, by the new meaning he gives to the word ‘neighbor’. Jewish tradition restricted the use of this word to Jews and their proselytes, whereas Jesus, as the parable of the Good Samaritan will show, gives the word a limitless extension. The love of one’s neighbor, such as Jesus commands it, is no less total than the love of God: it involves loving one’s neighbor *as* oneself, and this word *as* makes us measure the whole difficulty of the commandment.

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

From the Lives of the Saints... THE VENERABLE EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN

Ephraim was born in Syria of poor parents during the reign of Emperor Constantine the Great. He spent his youth rather tempestuously, but suddenly a change took place in his soul, and he began to burn with love for the Lord Jesus. Ephraim was a disciple of St. James Nisibis (January 13). Due to the great grace of God, wisdom flowed from his tongue like a stream of honey, and ceaseless tears flowed from his eyes. Industrious as a bee, Ephraim continually wrote books, orally taught the monks in the monastery and the people in the town of Edessa, and dedicated himself to prayer and contemplation. Numerous are his books and beautiful are his prayers, the most famous of which is his prayer recited during the season of Great Lent: "O Lord and Master of my life, a spirit of idleness, despondency, ambition and idle talking give me not; but rather a spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love bestow upon me, Thy servant. Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own faults and not condemn my brother; for blessed art Thou unto the ages of ages. Amen." When they wanted to appoint him a bishop by force, he pretended to be insane and began to race through the city of Edessa, dragging his garment behind him. Seeing this, the people left him in peace. Ephraim was a contemporary and friend of St. Basil the Great. St. Ephraim is especially considered to be the apostle of repentance. Even today, his works soften many hearts hardened by sin and return them to Christ. He reposed in extreme old age in the year 378 A.D.

THE VENERABLE ISAAC THE SYRIAN

Isaac was born in Nineveh, and in his youth he lived an ascetic life in the Monastery of Mar [Saint] Matthew, in the proximity of Nineveh. When Isaac became known because of the sanctity of his life and his many miracles, he was elected Bishop of Nineveh and was forced to accept that rank. After only five months, however, he left the bishopric and secretly withdrew into the wilderness, to the Monastery of Rabban-Shabur. He compiled many works, of which about a hundred homilies on the spiritual life and asceticism, written primarily from his personal experience, have come down to us today. He was unequaled as a psychologist and director in the spiritual life. Even such saints as St. Simeon [the New Stylite] of the Wonderful Mountain sought counsel from him. Isaac reposed in extreme old age toward the end of the seventh century.

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)