



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.

Happy and New Ecclesiastical year! Χρόνια πολλά, καλή χρονιά και καλό Εκκλησιαστικό έτος!

As we begin this new ecclesiastical year we will be focusing on the biographies of holy men, women and children Saints along with major feast days. Today we celebrate the feast of St. Zacharias and St. Elizabeth, and I would like to take this opportunity to say a few words about this holy couple of God.

The name Zacharias is from the Hebrew meaning 'God remembers.' And the name Elizabeth is from the Hebrew meaning 'God is an oath.' The name John is from the Hebrew meaning 'God is gracious.' Zacharias was a priest, and an honorable, respected and loyal Levite. He and his wife Elizabeth were elderly and, although they wished to have children, they did not have any. In those times a couple that could not bear children was perceived as not being blessed by God. A childless couple was shamed in society. But both Zacharias and Elizabeth were just and holy in the eyes of God and obeyed the commandments of our Lord. And, so, even in their advanced age God blessed them to bear a child, who we know to be St. John the Baptist and the Forerunner of Jesus Christ.

This miracle took place behind the veil of the glorious temple of Jerusalem. Zacharias was inside the holy of the holies when Archangel Gabriel appeared to him and announced to him the good news, which was the conception of St. John the Baptist in his wife Elizabeth's womb. To Zacharias, the words of Archangel Gabriel seemed impossible to conceive, which led to his doubt. His doubt caused his temporary deafness and dumbness until the time his son was born and he wrote his name on a tablet—the same name that was announced to him by Archangel Gabriel. It is very important to recognize that St. John the Baptist and Forerunner was conceived by St. Zacharias and St. Elizabeth in a natural manner, as was the Virgin Mary by her parents St. Joachim and St. Anna.

On September 8th we celebrate the nativity of our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. We celebrate the conception of the Virgin Mary by her elderly parents nine months earlier on December 9th, and this miraculous event parallels that of the conception of St. John the Baptist. Joachim, the Virgin Mary's father, was from the tribe of Judah and was a descendant of David and his name means 'established of God.' Anna, his wife and the Virgin Mary's mother, was the daughter of the priest Matthan of the tribe of Levi, and her name in Hebrew means 'favor' or 'grace.' As with St. Zacharias and St. Elizabeth, St. Joachim and St. Anna lived moral and faithful lives but reached an advanced age without the ability to bear any children. But a miracle of the Lord resulted in the conception of the Holy Ever-Virgin Mary to Joachim (who was 80 years old) and Anna (who was 70 years old). We commemorate their feast day one day after the Nativity of the Theotokos, and the fruit of their love became the gateway for the salvation of the entire human race.

Let us all imitate the divine love that both these holy couples had for our Trinitarian God. Let us imitate the respect, loyalty, love and justness that they had for each other and for the holy commandments of God the Father. Let us all rejoice with the birth of the Ever-Virgin Mary and honor her by becoming a Christ-loving offering to humanity, for the benefit of all and for the salvation of our souls.



Rev. Economist Fr. Georgios Manias

