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Voice of St. George

**SAINT GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
OF THE DESERT**

74-109 LARREA ST., PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA



“THROUGH THE INTERCESSION OF THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD”

Inside this issue

The passage in St. John’s Gospel describing the event at Cana of Galilee has always been one of my favorites. It is a passage regarding a marriage feast to which Christ our God was invited, along with His Mother and disciples. It is one of the happiest occasions in the life of our Lord. It is a marriage between a man and a woman according to the Law of Moses at which wine was served as a symbol of joy for a new creation – that being, a new family, with new life in the persons of future children.

From the time of St. Paul, marriage was considered to be a road to eternal life. St. Paul described the role of the man as that of sacrificing his life for his wife, “as Christ did for the Church.” (Eph. 5:28). The woman, in turn, has the role of “respecting her hus-

band.” (“respect” being a synonym for “honor” as the Church honors Christ). Marriage is the “laboratory” of intercessory prayer—people praying for one another. In this atmosphere, the saying of our Savior rings true: “Where two or three are gathered in My Name, I am in the midst of them.” (St. Matthew 18:20). Hence, the new home is a place where Christ is to live.

I cannot help but to see that the wine at the Marriage in Cana is a prophecy for the wine that is present at the “Proskomidi” table in the altars of our church temples. It is through this lens that I see the deeper meaning of the words uttered by the Mother of God at the Marriage of Cana: “They have no wine.” (St. John 2: 3).

Wine is not simply a drink. It is a message of

joy in the gift of life. It is sad that we have come to think of wine as simply a drink containing alcohol. Where there is wine, there is joy. And, where there is joy, there is life.

In essence, then, when we consider the unfolding events at the Marriage in Cana, we can understand the urgency that accompanies the lack of wine at the feast. The steward of the feast failed to anticipate the measure of wine that was to be consumed at this feast, for the “wine had failed.”

It was at this point that the Mother of God jumped in, “They have no wine.” The reply of Jesus sounds curt, at first, “Woman, what have you to do with Me; for, My time has not yet arrived.” At closer look, however, these words speak volumes. As we interpret them against the back-

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drop of the New Testament reality, the Mother of God is *interceding on behalf of the marriage couple, knowing that Christ can most certainly do something to solve the predicament*. She is inadvertently confessing that Jesus Christ is True God and that, as True God, He *cares* for the welfare of each individual. That is the best explanation for the words of our Lord, *"What have you to do with Me; For, My time has not yet arrived."* The Mother of God proclaims Christ as God before Christ proves it Himself through His saving miracles (this being the first). She intercedes for the benefit of others, knowing that Her request will be honored. In fact, She *prays for other people!*

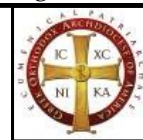
This is *intercessory prayer*. It is the model by which we pray for one another, individually and for individual's needs—not for the "best for the most," and not for the "national masses" only. From this model, we not only pray for one another in our present physical lives in the here and now. We pray for our ancestors who lived before us, knowing that, in Christ our God, life does not end—the address changes from one on earth, to one in heaven. It is the basis for praying to our Saints, asking them to pray for us.

As we prepare to commemorate the Dormition of the Holy Mother of God on August 15th, we can only remind ourselves of the value of intercessory prayer—first offered by the Mother of God. That people need "wine" in their lives is tantamount to saying that people need Christ in their lives. Asking Christ our God to be in the lives of our children and grandchildren; our parents and grandparents; our neighbors and fellow parishioners is a beautiful prayer. It puts our own existence in perspective and makes known that we have faith in the Risen Christ to make all things good for the salvation of the people around us.

This is why Orthodox Christians believe in the power of intercessory prayer, which is expressed during nearly every Orthodox Christian Church Service: *"...Through the intercession of the Most Holy Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary, and through the prayers of all the Saints, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy upon us and save us. Amen."*

+FR. THEODORE

METROPOLIS OF SAN FRANCISCO OFFERS GREATER RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES



- The Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco has updated their website at: (<http://www.sanfran.goarch.org>) it is now available to all. A key feature of this site is the "Our Faith" section which enables Orthodox faithful and seekers of Orthodox Christianity the opportunity to learn more about our Faith, and includes links to educational podcasts, videos and articles. This site will continue to be expanded and updated on a regular basis. In addition, we have migrated content from the separate Metropolis of San Francisco Religious Education website to the new main Metropolis website, in order to have content for catechists available through the main metropolis website.

- "Core Church School Curriculum goals: Church School Directors from across the metropolis have begun monthly online meetings to share ideas and contribute supplemental materials to augment the curricular materials available from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Department of Religious Education. We are working closely with **Dr. Vrame at the Department of Religious Education of our Archdiocese** to keep our parish catechists abreast of curriculum releases, as well as a new archdiocesan teacher certification program to be release later this year.

Parish Council Catechetical Instruction and Certification has now been aligned with the Orthodox Leadership Development Ministry as a pathway to directly reach parish ministry leaders. We are currently in the process of studying the needs of parish leaders in the area of leadership development and catechetical instruction.

MESSAGE FROM THE PARISH COUNCIL PRESIDENT

In the Divine Liturgy we frequently pray for mutual love and unity. Before we recite the Creed, the priest turns to the congregation and says, "Let us love one another that with one mind we may confess." After the consecration of the Eucharistic gifts, and toward the end of the long prayer of thanksgiving and commemorations, the priest prays to God on behalf of all: "And grant that with one voice and one heart we may glorify and praise Your most honored and majestic name." One of the frequent petitions invites us to "commit ourselves and one another" to Christ. The whole Liturgy offered in the first person plural, and shared as a mystical meal with the Lord, leads us to affirm and to live the gift of unity which Christ bestows.

But unity of hearts and mind is not intended as a liturgical experience alone. The common life of Christians in community should also reflect the mutual love and harmony which Christ intended for His people. Unity of faith should be joyously confirmed by unity of life based on true Christian love and forgiveness. Christ commanded his disciples: "As I have loved you, so you must love one another (John 13:34). He prayed to the Father: "I pray that they may be completely one, in order that the world may know that You sent me and that You love them as You love me" (John 17:21,13).

But how can this gift of perfect unity be realized in the ordinary give and take of parish life? Parish council members have different views of administration and of priorities in the Church. The spirit of the choir may suffer because of personality clashes amongst its members. Various parish groups may be competing with one another. Young people may want to go off in different directions on their own. The priest himself may be frustrated by the gap he sees between, on the one hand, the unity of hearts and minds for which the Liturgy call and, on the other hand, the lack of actual unity in the parish.

As long as we keep our eyes on ourselves, on our

own interests, as well as on the personality traits and weaknesses of others, misunderstanding and conflicts will abound. But when we set our eyes on Christ, and are truly willing to serve Him and His mission with a love that does not seek its own, then we are able to transcend our peculiarities and shortcomings, and begin to experience unity as a gift of grace. The more we love Christ and see to be true to Him by acquiring His mind and following His precepts, the more we grow to love one another. We find new ways of cooperation and mutual forgiveness. We discover the unity of which the Liturgy speaks!

– JIM CHRISTOPOULOS,
Parish Council President

SAINT OF THE MONTH – THE PROPHET MICAH

This Prophet (whose name means "who is like God?"), was a Morasthite from the land of Judah. He prophesied more than fifty years in the days of Joatham, Ahaz, and Hezekias, Kings of Judah. Hezekias was a contemporary of Hosea and Esaias, and of Hoshea, the last King of the ten tribes of Israel, when that kingdom was destroyed by Salmanasar (Shalmaneser), King of the Assyrians (IV Kings 17: 1 - 16; 18: 1).



The Prophet Micah is sixth in rank among the minor Prophets. He prophesied that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5: 2). In the reign of Saint Theodosius the Great, the holy relics of the Prophets Micah and Abbacum were found.

The prophesy of Micah is worded as a prayer on behalf of all of us: "I will look to the Lord. I will wait for God my Savior, for my God will hear me. Do not rejoice over me, you enemies of mine, for though I have fallen, yet will I arise, because, even if I should sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me." (Micah 7: 7-8). Of note is that Micah reveals that God hears the personal prayers of His people. In addition, he foretells the opportunity of repentance ("though I have fallen, yet will I arise

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SAINT OF THE MONTH, continued

arise...”) and he foretells the “Light of God,” the Divine Light of Christ our God at the Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor (St. Matthew 17: 1-9).

+FR. THEODORE

OUTREACH COMMITTEE – Save the following dates:

- **Sunday, October 2, 2016**—Kick-off for the annual Baby Bottle Drive to supply the *Birth-Choice of the Desert* organization, helping pregnant women to bring their pre-born children to life, rather than opting for abortion.

- **Sunday, November 6, 2016**—Annual Veterans Day Program and Luncheon.

AHEPA NEWS



As we enter the summer we concluded a great year with the AHEPA District Convention was a tremendous his as St. George’s own **Jenni Pulos** served as emcee for the banquet sharing with everyone her humor, beauty and love for Greek Heritage. She introduced a new “AHEPA” rap and she helped **Wynn Storton** finished his term as District Governor.

Wynn was able to recognize another Phil-Hellene, **Chris Hillman**, lead singer for **The Byrds**, with the AHEPA District 20 Periclean Award for his tremendous work in support for the St. Nicholas National Shrine at Ground Zero.

Chapter elections resulted in the following, as we progress on to the upcoming year: **President: Wynn Storton; Vice-President: Nick Krespis; Secretary: Gus Kurupas; Treasurer: Harry Loukatos.**

On AHEPA Sunday, May 15, 2016, we gave **Harry Loukatos** a recognition of **25 years membership in AHEPA** and an appreciation plaque for 13 years as **Founding President of AHEPA Chapter 528**. Thank you Harry for your continued leadership.

We also gave four scholarships of \$3,500 to worthy recipients: **Depy Karalis, Katrina Storton, Stephanie Christopoulos and Alec Steele.**

We are sorry to lose two brother AHEPANS in the past month: **Steve Geotas and Col. Steve Piasanos**. May their memories be Eternal! At the same time, we are looking forward to celebrating brother **Tom Evan’s 100th Birthday** this November.

Starting in September, members of the AHEPA Chapter 528 will begin their work in support of the many AHEPA charitable programs across the nation, as well as in support of the Church. AHEPA will be working with the St. George Outreach Committee members for the annual **St. George Veterans Day Program**, which will take place on **November 6th**. Efforts will continue to be made toward enthusiastically growing AHEPA membership and actively promoting the values of AHEPA and the Orthodox Christian Church.

– WYNN STORTON

AHEPA Chapter 528 President



Harry Loukatos received the AHEPA Appreciation Plaque for serving 13 years as the **Founding President of AHEPA Chapter 528** on AHEPA Sunday, May 15, 2016

SUNDAY SCHOOL

The Registration Form for the upcoming 2016-2017 Sunday School Year will be included in the September 2016 *Voice of St. George* parish newsletter, as well as in the last two weeks of August’s publications of *The Ladder*.

We look forward to seeing all of our children in Sunday School this year. It is the spiritual responsibility of parents to bring their children to Sunday School every Sunday and to faithfully participate in the Sacramental life of the Church.

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS



We would like to update you with the donations we have made through July, 2016.

1. We have completed all our donations to National Philoptochos for a total of \$4,670.
2. We have donated a total of \$1,705 so far this year to Metropolis.
3. Our local charities through July include CVRM, Salvation Army, Shelter from the Storm, Ophelia Project and Visiting Nurse Association for a total of \$3,100.

We have given a total of \$9,475 to our charities.

Thank you so much for your support.

The Coffee Hour after Church each Sunday is supported by our volunteers from the parish. The June and July volunteers were **George and Emily Tcharos, Debbie Pousen, Becky Allen, Tommie Maverick and Louise Dobbs Barringer, Josie Desnoyers and George Megalonakis, Linda Bozigian, Melissa Hawkins and Mariya Dunkel, John and Linda Petalas, Pres. Petula and Annette Lewis**. The Chairperson for Coffee Hour is Linda Petalas. She is doing a terrific job. When she comes to the tables in the hall and asks if you would sponsor a Coffee Hour - please say YES! Thank you for volunteering!

– LINDA KALLIS,

Philoptochos Chapter President

LOOKING AHEAD: FEAST DAYS IN SEPTEMBER

Thursday, Sept. 1st...Ecclesiastical New Year

Thursday, Sept. 8th...Nativity of the Theotokos*

Wednesday, Sept. 14th...Exaltation of the Holy Cross**

Monday, Sept. 26th... St. John the Theologian

*Vespers: Wed., Sept. 7th – 6:30 p.m.

**Vespers: Tues., Sept. 13th – 6:30 p.m.

All Feast Days: Orthros-8:30 a.m.

Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

A WAY A CHRISTIAN MAY “SEE THE LIGHT” – In the month of August there are two very important feasts of the Church. One of these, is the “*Falling Asleep of the Virgin Mary*” on August 15th. The other is the “*Transfiguration of Christ*” (*Η Μεταμορφωσις*) on August 6th. The Transfiguration is a demonstration of Christ’s Messiahship through a supernatural showing of Christ’s being as God’s Son. There are three accounts of this amazing event from each of the “Synoptic Gospels.” Each of these are remarkably similar: Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-9; Luke 9:28-36. All three start with a curious statement by Christ Himself: “*Assuredly, I say to you: there are some standing here who shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom.*”

So, what happened? Jesus took Peter, James and John to Mt. Tabor where He was truly transformed before the three. His face shone like the sun and His clothes became white like a brilliant light. Then Moses and Elijah appeared with Christ. A voice proclaims Christ’s true nature: “*This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased. Hear Him.*” After this, they saw Jesus by Himself, Who told them to tell nobody of this incident until Christ had arisen from the dead.

When the Orthodox Church speaks about “light,” She usually means that the Divine Light is something different than ordinary light. It is an “uncreated light,” which comes from the Trinity. Peter, James, and John, became like many Saints who experience the real light of God. Other times in the Old Testament we are shown about this light also. Moses experienced the Burning Bush, which was lit up as if on fire together with a message, but did not burn. On Mt. Sinai, Moses is again given messages with the special light. It is not wonder that Moses and Elijah are together with the Lord when He appears as God.

If we desire, we will also share in this Divine Light, given by the Trinity for us to experience. The Transfiguration is the gateway to knowledge of God and true fellowship with Him! This “Uncreated Light” is an experience of God.
– MATTHEW DAVIS

THE HOLY AND GREAT COUNCIL OF THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Given below is an abbreviated statement given at the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, which convened recently in June 2016. I hope to share in future editions of *The Voice of St. George* other statements discussed at the Orthodox Council, together with analyses of various theologians on each topic. Eventually, we will receive official statements regarding all the deliberations of the Holy and Great Council. +FR. THEODORE

THE MISSION OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN TODAY'S WORLD

"For God so loved the world that he gave his Only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (Jn 3:16). The Church of Christ exists in the world, but is not of the world (cf. Jn 17:11, 14-15). The Church as the Body of the incarnate Logos of God (John Chrysostom, Homily before Exile, 2 PG 52, 429) constitutes the living "presence" as the sign and image of the Kingdom of the Triune God in history, proclaims the good news of a new creation (II Cor 5:17), of new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells (II Pt 3:13); news of a world in which God will wipe away every tear from people's eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain (Rev 21:4-5)...."

The Dignity of the Human Person

1. The human person's unique dignity, which stems from being created in the image and likeness of God and from our role in God's plan for humanity and the world, was the source of inspiration for the Church Fathers, who entered deeply into the mystery of divine *oikonomia*. Regarding the human being, St. Gregory the Theologian characteristically emphasizes that: *The Creator sets a sort of second world upon the earth, great in its smallness, another angel, a worshipper of composite nature, contemplator of visible creation, and initiate of intelligible creation, a king over all that is on earth... a living being, prepared here and transported elsewhere and (which is the culmination of the mystery) deified through attraction towards God (Homily 45, On Holy Pascha, 7. PG 36, 632AB)*. The purpose of the incarnation of the Word of God is the deification of the human being. Christ, having renewed within himself the old Adam (cf. Eph 2:15), *made the human person divine like himself, the beginning of our hope*. For just as the entire human race was contained in the old Adam, so too, the entire human race is now gathered in the new Adam: *The Only-begotten One became man in order to gather into one and return to its original condition the fallen human race (Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of John, Book 9, PG 74, 273D-275A)*. This teaching of the Church is the endless source of all Christian efforts to safeguard the dignity and majesty of the human person.

2. On this basis, it is essential to develop inter-Christian cooperation in every direction for the protection of human dignity (the sanctity of all human life) and of course for the good of peace, so that the peace-keeping efforts of all Christians without exception may acquire greater weight and significance.

3. As a presupposition for a wider co-operation in this regard the common acceptance of the highest value of the human person may be useful. The various local Orthodox Churches can contribute to inter-religious understanding and co-operation for the peaceful co-existence and harmonious living together in society, without this involving any religious syncretism.

4. We are convinced that, as *God's fellow workers (I Cor 3:9)*, we can advance to this common service together with all people of good will, who love peace that is pleasing to God, for the sake of human society on the local, national, and international levels. This ministry is a commandment of God (Mt 5:9).