

DECEMBER 6, 2015

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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THE LADDER

ST. NICHOLAS THE WONDERWORKER

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– Fr. Theodore Pantels,

Proistamenos (Pastor)

– Deacon Euthym Kontaxis,

M.D.

Holy Communion Order

1. Please remain standing while following the directions of our ushers.
2. Ladies, kindly remove lipstick before receiving.
3. When receiving Holy Communion, make the Sign of the Cross, state your name (baptismal name), and naturally receive as if being fed.
4. Non-Orthodox Christians may not receive Holy Communion, but they may receive the Holy Bread at the end of the service.
5. All Orthodox Christians must be spiritually prepared to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Please see the priest if you have any questions.

THE WILL OF GOD

Today's reading from St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, is read during the Divine Liturgy whenever we commemorate one of the Holy Hierarchs of our Church, in that today, we commemorate St. Nicholas the Wonderworker. St. Paul wrote: "Submit to your leaders and obey them." (Hebrews 13:17). These words are addressed to us today with two meanings: 1) we are to be obedient to our leaders of the Church in our own place and time, since they have the response-

bility to guide us to the Kingdom of God – and, 2) we are to be obedient to our leaders from past generations, who are, in fact, the Saints of our Church. Obedience is evidence of one's humility and humility begins with our love for God.

Love supersedes the law, especially in terms of how people observe it. As we heard from today's Gospel reading, the Pharisees felt that the law supersedes love. Yet, there is no day on which we are *not* to

Continued on Page 2

ST. NICHOLAS THE WONDERWORKER

Because of the many miracles attributed to his intercession, he is also known as **Nikolaos the Wonderworker**. He had a reputation for secret gift-giving, such as putting coins in the shoes of those who left them out for him. He was the only son of wealthy Christian parents named Epiphanius and Johanna. He was very religious from an early age and, according to legend, Nicholas was said to have rigorously observed the canonical fasts of Wednesdays and Fridays.

His wealthy parents died in an epidemic while Nicholas was still young and he was raised by his uncle – also named Nicholas – who was the bishop of Patara. He tonsured the young Nicholas as a reader and later ordained him a priest. In the years 312-315, St. Nicholas lived there and came as a pilgrim to visit shrines in the Holy Land. It was in his prayers that St. Nicholas heard the Holy Spirit call him back to Asia Minor, to Myra, where soon after his return in 317, he was consecrated bishop. In 325, he was one of many bishops to answer the request of Constantine and appear at the First Ecumenical Council. There, Nicholas was a staunch anti-Arian and defender of the Orthodox Christian position, and one of the bishops who signed the Nicene Creed.

"I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me." Phil. 4:13



Η σημερινή περικοπή από την Επιστολή του Αποστόλου Παύλου αναγιγνώσκεται κατά την τελετή της Θείας Λειτουργίας όταν εορτάζουμε έναν από τους Αγίους Ιεραρχές της Εκκλησίας μας, όπως εορτάζουμε σήμερα τον Άγιον Νικόλαον. Έγραψε ο Απόστολος Παύλος στους Εβραίους: <Πειθεσθε τοις ηγουμένοις υμών, και υπείκειτε.> Τα λόγια αυτά απευθύνονται σε εμάς σήμερα με δύο εννοίες: 1) πρέπει να εμείς υπακούμε προς τους ηγέτες μας της εποχής μας, οι οποίοι έχουν την ευθύνη να μας οδηγούν προς την Βασιλείαν του Θεού – και, 2) πρέπει να εμείς υπακούμε προς τους ηγέτες μας των προηγούμενων γενεών, οι οποίοι είναι οι Άγιοι της Εκκλησίας μας. Η υπακοή είναι ενδειχίς ταπεινοφροσύνης. Η ταπεινοφροσύνη αρχίζει με την αγάπη μας για τον Θεόν.

Η αγάπη υπερβαίνει τον νόμον, σύμφωνα ιδιαίτερος με το πως οι άνθρωποι διατηρούν τον νόμον. Οι Φαρισαίοι, όπως ακουσαμε κατά το ανάγνωσμα της σημερινής Ευαγγελικής περικοπής, εθεώρουν ότι ο νόμος υπερβαίνει την αγάπη. Δεν υπάρχει ημέρα κατά την οποίαν δεν χρειάζεται να δείξουμε αγάπην για τον Θεόν και για τον πλησίον μας. Καθε ημέρα είναι <ημέρα του Θεού.> Οι Φαρισαίοι, ως φαίνεται, εκάταλαβαν ότι ο νόμος απαγορεύει την ενδειχίς αγάπης κατά το Σάββατο, επειδή ο Θεός δεν είναι Θεός της αγάπης, αλλά Θεός για την <ελευθερίαν του εθνούς.> Μερικές φορές ξεχνούμε ότι ο Χριστός ο Θεός μας είναι ο Θεός της αγάπης. Ας προσευχωμεθα πως ο Χριστός θα γέμιση τις ψυχές μας με την αγάπην Του, ώστε να κάνουμε το έργο του Θεού της αγάπης.

+ ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

show love for God and our neighbor. The Greeks have a saying: “*Today is God’s Day!*” This saying applies to *everyday* of our lives. The Pharisees, as it seems, understood that the law forbids acts of love on the Sabbath, because God is somehow not the “God of love,” but a “nationalistic” God, Who is interested only in their freedoms collectively as a nation. Sometimes, we forget that Christ our God is the God of Love.

Often we wonder what “The Will of God” is. The Will of God is always good, because God loves us *individually* and *collectively*. We must remember that if God’s Will does not agree with our own will, it is due to our own imperfections. Our faith in God must be strong enough to understand that, in the end, everything works out for the good. The crucifixion of Christ our God can be seen as a “bad” thing, from our own emotional point of view – it was unjust and tragic. Yet, it is the expression of God’s love for us. In our own circumstance, it is healthy for us to try to look for God’s love in things that are both pleasant and difficult.

Faith in God grows with prayer. Prayer enlightens us with God’s knowledge and wisdom. Indeed, the Saints of our Church are living examples of prayer and wisdom. In our own present time, we would do well to learn about the lives of our Saints, such as St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, whom we commemorate today.

Understanding the lives of the Saints helps us to understand the teachings of our Church at the same time. This may be challenging for us in the face of the general mentality of our society today, in which Christianity is often attacked as being “out of step” with whatever society considers to be normal. Many people either misinterpret the Bible or they neglect studying the Bible altogether. At the same time, the Bible is not just a document to be studied, but it is to be lived.

This is why we honor the Saints of the Church – they personify the proper interpretation of the Bible. God loves us and rejoices in our repentance, forgiving us of our sins; at the same time, the Saints are deeply aware of their own imperfections, which are the result of sinful thinking and weak prayer, for which they are constantly repenting. Through this relationship with God, they have grown to be examples of virtue and truth. Christian virtues and God’s wisdom are blessings that work for all things that are good; for, the Will of God is love, goodness and Eternal Life.

+FR. THEODORE

PRAY FOR THE SICK: Yvonne and George Flessas, George Aeder, Adele Gallade, Kathy Ligeros, Erika Aguilar, Aryroula Krespis (Nick Krespis’ mother), Bob Maverick, John Kouletsis (Mary Mitsias’ brother), Robert Fleming (Rhonda Latkovic’s father), Debbie Vawter, Skip Lewis, Doris Elmo (*Many of the faithful on our Prayer List face chronic or serious illness*).

HYMNS FOR THIS SUNDAY'S CELEBRATION OF THE DIVINE LITURGY

ANTIPHON I:

Verse 1: Bless the Lord, O my soul, and everything within me, bless His holy name.

Response: "Tes presvies tis Theotokou, Soter, soston imas."

Verse 2: Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His rewards.

Response: "By the prayers of the Theotokos, Savior, O save us."

Verse 3: The Lord prepared His throne in heaven, and His Kingdom rules over all.

Response: "Tes presvies tis Theotokou, Soter, soston imas."

Chanter(s): "Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, both now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen".

Response: "By the prayers of the Theotokos, Savior, save us."

ANTIPHON II:

Verse 1: Praise the Lord, O my soul! I shall praise the Lord while I live; I shall sing to my God as long as I exist.

Response: "Soston imas Ie Theou, o Anastas ek nekron, psallontas si: Allilouia."

Verse 2: Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob; his hope is in the Lord his God.

Response: Save us, O Son of God, Who arose from the dead, we sing to You: Alleluia.

Verse 3: The Lord shall reign forever; your God, O Zion, to all generations.

Response: "Soston imas Ie Theou, o Anastas ek nekron, psallontas si: Allilouia."

Chanter(s): "Doxa Patri ke Io, ke Ayio Pnevmati, ke nin ke ai ke is tous eonas ton eonon. Amin."

People: O Monogenis Ios ke Logos tou Theou... (O Only-Begotten Son and Word of God...)

ANTIPHON III: *This is the day the Lord made; let us greatly rejoice and be glad therein.*

Resurrection Hymn: Ote katilthes pros ton thanaton [Tone 2]... (When You descended to the realm of death, You as Life Immortal rendered to Hades a mortal blow by Your all radiant Divinity. And when You from infernal depths and the darkness below did raise the dead, all the hosts of heaven's powers did proclaim and cry out: O Life-giving Christ and our God, we give glory.)

Hymn to St. Nicholas: Kanona pisteos ke icona prah-oteetos... (The actual facts of your life manifested you to your flock as a rule of faith and an icon of gentleness and a teacher of self-control. By humility, therefore, you acquired the things on high, and riches through poverty. Father holy hierarch Nicholas, intercede with Christ our God, entreating Him to save our souls.)

Hymn to St. George: Os ton ehmaloton eleftherotis... ("As the one who sets the captives free and the protector of the poor; as physician to the sick and the champion defender of kings, bearer of trophies are you, O Great Martyr George, intercede with Christ our God that He may save our souls.")

Kontakion Hymn for this Sunday: Ee Parthenos simeron... (On this day the Virgin Maid goes to the cave to give birth to the Pre-eternal Word in an ineffable manner. Dance for joy all the inhabited earth as you hear of this. Glorify along with the Angels and the shepherds Him Who willed that He appear as a newborn Child, the Pre-eternal God.)

Kontakion Hymn for this Sunday: READINGS: Epistle: Ephesians 5: 8-19 / Gospel: St. Luke 18: 18-27

Megalynarion (Hymn to the Theotokos): Axion Estin... (Divine Liturgy Book, Pg. 51)

Communion Hymn: Enite ton Kyrion ek ton ouranon... (Divine Liturgy Book, pg. 64)

"Above all else,
guard your heart, for
it is the well-spring
of life" Proverbs 4:23



ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Ushers: Linda Kallis, Josie Desnoyers, Morgan Yerxa
Greeter: Josie Desnoyers**

Pancake Breakfast today: Offered by Nick Krespis on the occasion of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, the Patron Saint of those named Nicholas, Nikoletta (Nikki or Nicole). The breakfast is offered to raise funds for the National Archdiocese Shrine of St. Nicholas in New York – \$7 for adults; \$3 for children.

A year ago this month, John Petalas’ mother, Eleni Petalas, passed away to our Lord. Along with John and Linda Petalas, we pray: “May your memory be Eternal, Eleni!”

PHILOPTOCHOS –Our next Board Meeting will be tomorrow **Monday, December 7, 2015 at 11:00 a.m.** We will not have a General Meeting this month due to our Christmas Lunch. Today, December 6 is the deadline to pay for your reservation for the Christmas Lunch on Saturday, December 12, 2015. See Angie Dyer at the Philoptochos Table in the Church Hall. We need your help to make Kouralackia on **Wednesday, Dec. 9 and Thursday, Dec. 10 for our Bake Sale.**

AHEPA – CHRISTMAS PARTY...Wednesday, December 9th at Si Bon Restaurant in Rancho Mirage at 6:30 p.m. (See enclosed flier). Make your reservations today!! Contact **Stavros Olympios!**

BABY BOTTLE DRIVE – SAVE A LIFE! - To those who were not here during the start of this worthy cause, you still have two (2) weeks to participate. "Giving is a BLESSING", and your Gift can make a difference! See **Louise Dobbs Barringer or Fr. Ted** in the Parish Hall after Divine Liturgy.

PARISH ELECTIONS –Next Sunday, **December 13, 2015.** In order to be given a ballot, one must be a Stewardship member of our parish. The members of the Election Committee are: **Annette Lewis, Eve Meek and Angie Dyer.** The candidates listed on the ballot, who are to serve as members of the Parish Council for 2016 are: **Linda Kallis, Nick Kaperonis, Nick Krespis and Tina Veroulis.**

ALTAR FLOWER SPONSORS – 2015 and 2016 are SOLD OUT,! Please check the Bulletin Board for your individual sponsorship date. Some parishioners paid up front, however, if you have not, you may do so if you wish: just **make checks payable to St. George Church, with the month, and attach your dedication (in memory of, Anniversary, or other celebrations)** for the Ladder. Thank you!

TOY DRIVE –toys for children in need may be placed in our “Toy Drive” box in our parish hall.

WEEKDAY CALENDAR

- Monday, December 7th.....FESTIVAL MEETING -7:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, December 8th.....Bible Study – 10:00 a.m.
- Wednesday, December 9th.....CONCEPTION OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS
SAINT ANA THE MOTHER OF THE THEOTOKOS
Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.
AHEPA Christmas Party at Si Bon Restaurant, Rancho Mirage – 6:30 p.m.
- Thursday, December 10th.....Choir Practice –4:00 p.m.
Parish Council - 6:30 p.m.
- Saturday, December 12th.....ST. SPYRIDON THE WONDERWORKER
Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.
Philoptochos Christmas Luncheon at Classic Club – 11:30 a.m.
Vespers– 5:00 p.m.

*The Ladder for December 2015 is sponsored by:
Matushka Gloria Lehman*

We encourage all of our parents to sit in the church with their entire family as they participate in the beauty and mysteries of the Divine Liturgy. For those with young children, feel free to sit near an aisle so that you may easily take your children for a break, as needed. If necessary, we have a “crying room” in the narthex for your use. God Bless.