

**DECEMBER 27, 2015**

**ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT**

**74-109 Larrea Street  
Palm Desert, California 92260**

**Website: [www.go-stgeorge.org](http://www.go-stgeorge.org)**

**Email: [pdsaintgeorge@gmail.com](mailto:pdsaintgeorge@gmail.com)**

# THE LADDER

*SUNDAY AFTER THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST; St. Stephen the Martyr*

## **Mailing Address:**

**P.O. Box 4755**

**Palm Desert, CA.92261**

**Tel: (760) 568-9901**

**or: (760) 880-5869**

**– 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 MYSTERY OF GOD'S LOVE**

Egotism is based on the idea that we have no need of God and, consequently, we are "gods." Herod characterizes the spirit of self-centeredness by which we fight with God rather than dedicating ourselves to the work of doing God's Will.

Spiritual life is defined as the effort to control our own desires and, instead, to do God's Will. To do God's work, egotism must disappear and humility needs to emerge.

Through humility every set-back in life is turned into a blessing, once we rely on the humility and love of God. We can observe this in the fact as we ponder the event of the Nativity of Christ our God in that He was born in a simple manger. Yet, this simple manger had become Paradise through the very presence of Christ. In the face of this reality every our homes become "Paradise" for each of us. Herod, however, made his whole kingdom "hell" due to his rejection

*Continued on Page 2*

## **ST. STEPHEN THE FIRST MARTYR**

While disputing with the Pharisees concerning Jesus, and wisely refuting their every contradiction, so that no one was able to withstand the wisdom and the spirit of his speech, St. Stephen was slandered as a blasphemer and was dragged off to the Sanhedrin of the elders. Then, he proved from the divine Scriptures the coming of the Just One (Jesus), of Whom they had become the betrayers and murderers. As a result, they sentenced him to be stoned to death, accusing him of blasphemy. Among those who assisted in the stoning of St. Stephen was Saul, who, after encountering the Risen Christ in a tremendous vision, became the Apostle St. Paul.

As St. Stephen was dying as a martyr for Christ, he gazed into Heaven and, beholding the divine glory, he said: "*Lo, I see the Heavens opened and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God ... Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*"

Then, imitating the long-suffering of the Master, he bent his knees and prayed in a loud voice for them that were stoning him, and he said, "*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*" And saying this, he fell asleep (Acts 6, 7), thus becoming the first among the Martyrs of the Church of Christ.



Ο εγωισμος βασιζεται στην ιδεαν οτι δεν εχουμεν αναγκη απο τον Θεον, και, συνεπως, εμεις ειμεθα <θεοι.> Ο Ηρωδης χαρακτηριζει το πνευμα του εγωισμου, δια του οποιου παλευουμεν με τον Θεον αντι να αφιερωσουμεν τον εαυτον μας προς εργασιαν για να γινη το θελημα Του.

Ο πνευματικος αγωνας οριζεται ως η προσπαθεια για τον ελεγκο του δικου μας θεληματος, προκειμενου να κανουμεν το θελημα του Θεου. Για να κανουμεν το θελημα του Θεου, εξαφανιζεται ο εγωισμος μας και εμφανιζεται η ταπεινοφροσυνη.

Δια της ταπεινοφροσυνης το καθε ατυχο γινεται ευλογια, διοτι βασιζομεθα στην χαριν και την αγαπην του Θεου. Παρατηρουμεν αυτο καθως μελετουμεν την Γεννησιν του Θεου μας Χριστου – αφου εγεννηθηκε σε μια απλη φατνην. Αλλα η φατνη εγινε Παραδεισος δια της παρουσιας του Χριστου. Κατα αυτην την πραγματικοτηταν, ακομη τα σπιτια μας μπορουν να ειναι <παραδεισος> για τον καθε ανθρωπον. Ο εγωιστης ο Ηρωδης εκανε την βασιλειαν του <κολαση> επιδη δεν ηθελε τον Θεον – σαν εναν <ψευτο-θεο> ηθελε να γινη μονον την δικη του θελησην.

Οταν εχομεν τον Χριστον μεσα στην ψυχην μας και στις σκευεις μας, ζουμεν οπως μας εδιδαξε ο Χριστος κατα σαρκαν. Προσωποιοουνται στην πραγματικοτηταν η ταπεινωσις και η αγαπη – τα δωρα του Θεου. Ο Επισκοπος Καλλιστος Ware λεγει: <Ο Ιησους Χριστος ηνωσε τον ανθρωπον με τον Θεον δια της Ενσαρκωσεως και ανοιξε για τον καθεναν την οδον προς την προσωπικην ενωσιν του με τον Θεον.> +Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

of God; as a “false-god,” he wanted only his own will to be done.

When we have Christ in our souls and thoughts, we live as Christ taught us when He appeared in the flesh. Humility and love are personified in reality. These are God’s gifts to us. Bishop Kallistos Ware said, “*Jesus Christ united humanity with God by way of His Incarnation and opened the way for each person’s unity with God.*” (*The Orthodox Church*, pg. 225).

When we speak of Paradise as Orthodox Christians, we are not speaking of some place “up in the sky,” as some would think. Nor is Paradise an “ideal earth,” where everybody lounges around in eternal luxury. More so, Paradise is a reality both “in heaven as on earth,” as we pray in the Lord’s Prayer. It is a *state of being* with God. While God’s Kingdom is beyond this material world, it includes this present life, as well. Hence, wherever Christ is, that is where God’s Kingdom exists. When Christ is in our lives, everything around us turns into a taste of eternal life with Him. This is the meaning behind the reason for consecrating our church edifices; blessing our homes; participating in the Holy Sacraments. This “heaven on earth” begins with the manger in which Christ our God was born and continues into our lives today.

In this regard, the *Proskomide* (i.e., the Service of Preparing the Holy Gifts) that is conducted during the Orthros prior to the Divine Liturgy references the Nativity of Christ. As the priest covers the Chalice and Paten, he recalls in prayer: “*And a star come over the place where the Young Child was with His Mother.*” This “star” covers the Paten on which particles of the bread (which will be transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ) are placed – each particle representing the name of the parishioners of the parish and their loved ones – in other words, the whole Church – His Kingdom.

+FR. THEODORE

**“Glory to God in the Highest and on earth peace and good will among all people.” (St. Luke 2:14)**

**PRAY FOR THE SICK:** Yvonne and George Flessas, George Aeder, Adele Gallade, Kathy Ligeros, Aryroula Krespis (Nick Krespis’ mother), Bob Maverick, John Kouletsis (Mary Mitsias’ brother), Robert Fleming (Rhonda Latkovic’s father), Debbie Vawter, Skip Lewis, Doris Elmo, Anne Boukidis-Michas (*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:** I will give thanks to You, O Lord, with my whole heart, in the council of the upright and in the assembly.

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

**Verse 2:** Great are the works of the Lord, sought out in all things with regard to His will.

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

**Verse 3:** Thanksgiving and majesty are His work, and His righteousness continues unto ages of ages.

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

**Verse 4:** Holy and fearful is His name

**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:** Blessed is the man who fears the Lord; He will delight exceedingly in His commandments.

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

**Verse 2:** His seed shall be mighty on earth; The generation of the upright shall be blessed.

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

**Verse 3:** Glory and riches shall be in his house, and his righteousness continues unto ages of ages.

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

**Verse 4:** For the upright, light springs up in darkness, for he is merciful, compassionate, and righteous.

**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:

*The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand, until I make your enemies the footstool of Your feet." With You is the beginning in the day of Your power, in the brightness of Your saints.*

**Resurrection Hymn:** Ton synanarchon Logon [Tone 5]... (Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word, coeternal with the Father and the Spirit, Who for our salvation was born of a Virgin for He willed to be lifted up bodily upon the Cross, to endure death and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.)

**Hymn for the Sunday After Christmas:** Ee Ghenisis sou Christe o Theos... (Your nativity, O Christ our God, has caused the light of knowledge to rise upon the world. For therein the worshippers of the stars were by a star instructed to worship You, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know You as Orient from on high. Glory to You, O Lord.)

**Hymn in honor of St. Joseph:** Evangelizou Iosif to Thavid... (Annunciate the miracles to David the ancestor of God, O Joseph. You saw the Virgin pregnant. You glorified with the shepherds. You worshipped with the Magi. And you were warned by an Angel. Entreat Christ God to save our souls.)

**Hymn for St. Stephen the First Martyr:** Vasileion Diadima estefthi si korifi... (O Stephen, a crown of royalty was laid on your head \* for contests you courageously endured for Christ our God, \* as first among Martyr saints. \* You stood in accusation of the raging Judeans; \* and you saw your Savior at the right hand of the Father. \* We pray that you will ever entreat 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.)



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Ushers: Linda Kallis, Anna Prineas**

**Greeter: Linda Petalas**

**MEMORIAL** – Today's Memorial Service is for the Eternal Rest and Salvation of the servant of God, **Serafia McQuaid (3 years)**, the beloved wife of **Arthur McQuaid**. We pray that our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ will grant Eternal Rest to **Serafia McQuaid** and that He will grant peace and comfort to **Arthur McQuaid**. **MAY HER MEMORY BE ETERNAL!**

**PHILOPTOCHOS** – **Taverna Night is in 3 weeks**. Make your reservation and pay today at the Philoptochos Table after Church Services. If you need a ride to this event, let **Susan Clark** know. **Taverna Night will be in the Church Hall on Saturday, January 9, 2016 starting at 5:00.** We need Coffee Hour Hostesses for January 3, 10 and the 17. See **Linda Petales**. Our next Board Meeting will be **Monday, January 4, 2016 at 11:00 a.m.** There will not be a General Meeting in January due to Taverna Night.

**2016 CHURCH CALENDARS ARE AVAILABLE** – Following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy today, Stewardship members of our parish are invited to pick up a **2016 Church Calendar** which are available in our parish hall.

**CHRISTMAS OFFERING ENVELOPES** – **Christmas Offering Envelopes are available in the Narthex of our church.** Please consider giving a special "Christmas Gift" to our parish today.

---

**NOTE SCHEDULE CHANGE:** Beginning **next Sunday, January 4, 2016** the Sunday schedule of services will be **changed** as follows:

**Orthros – 8:30 a.m.**

**Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.**

**Sunday School --10:30 a.m.**

**Adult Education Session – shortly after the beginning of Coffee Hour (in the church).**

---

### WEEKDAY CALENDAR

Note: Fr. Ted will be away from tomorrow until Thursday afternoon, December 31. Fr. David Kruse of the St. Raphael Antiochian Orthodox Church will be available in the event of emergency-(760) 408-6116.

Friday, January 1st...**CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST** and commemoration of **ST. BASIL THE GREAT**  
Orthros-8:30 a.m. / Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

Saturday, January 2nd.. Vespers-5:00 p.m.

*Next Sunday, January 3rd... Please note the Sunday Schedule change: Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m./ Sunday School-10:30 a.m./ Adult Education Session- shortly following the Vasilopita celebration in the parish hall.*

*Next Monday, January 4th...Festival Meeting-7:00 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.