

SEPTEMBER 11, 2016

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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THE LADDER

SUNDAY BEFORE THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

Mailing Address:

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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 SYMBOL OF OUR SALVATION

Reading the Book of Numbers in the Old Testament, we see these words: *“The people spoke against God and against Moses, saying, ‘Why did you bring us out of Egypt? To die in the desert?... Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them and they bit the people and many Israelites died...And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Make a serpent and mount it upon a pole; anyone who is bitten can look upon it and live...’”* (Numbers 21: 4-9).

This is a telling description of our own

relationship with God. Sometimes we become ungrateful for all of God’s blessings and we turn away from God. As a result, we commit sins, and death is the fruit of their poison. The golden serpent of Moses was then a sign of God’s forgiveness.

As is evident from today’s Gospel reading, the “serpent in the wilderness” was a prototype of God’s real deed of forgiveness for all of humanity. Christ Himself said, *“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that*

Continued on Page 2

THE “TREE” AND THE CROSS

In the Garden of Eden there was the “Tree” of “knowledge of good and evil”. Hidden in this Tree of Eden was Satan who continues to bring us every form of temptation, as was done through the serpent. Upon “the Tree”, which we know to be The Cross, God is nailed – our Savior; He Who is both God and Man. Remember the temptation offered by the serpent in the Garden of Eden? He said, “You will not die,... but you shall be as gods...” (Genesis 3:4...). The Cross is, however, the Symbol of Truth that contradicts the temptation of the serpent. The Holy Cross says, “You will not die, *because you will be with God.*” The Holy Cross of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ stands as the unifying message throughout the Bible – bringing together the Book of Genesis and the Book of Revelation, guiding us against the deception of the serpent and leading us to the truth of God’s love.

Let us become aware of our thoughts and ideals so that we can compare them to the thoughts and ideals of our Lord’s Holy Gospel. Let us bring ourselves to judgment so that we can turn to repentance, which is the synonym for “taking up one’s Cross” and following our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

+FR. THEODORE



Ο Χριστός ο Ιδιός ειπε: <Καθως Μωυσης υψωσε τον οφιν εν τη ερημω, ουτως υψωθηναι δει τον Υιον του ανθρωπου, ινα πας ο πιστευων εις Αυτον μη απολυται αλλα εχη ζων αιωνιον> (Ιωαν. 3:14).

Δια του θανατου του Χριστου επανω στον Σταυρον εδωθηκε η συγχωρησις των αμαρτιων στην ολοκληρην ανθρωποτητα και στον καθεναν μας, προσωπικως. Ισως, ειναι δυσκολον να κατανοησουμε την μεγαλην σημασιαν του Σταυρου και την σχεσιν την οποιαν εχει με το Μυστηριον της Θειας Κοινωνιας και την δικην μας γενικην διανοησιν.

Λοιπον, ας αναφερω εναν στοιχον εκ των γραπτων του θρησκευτικου ποιητου, Ι. Π. Θεοδωροπουλου, καθως ευρισκεται στο βιβλιο του, *Κατηχητικη Μουσα*:

<Αληθεια, εχεις νοωσει βαθεια σου το μυστηριο της Θειας Ευχαριστιας – την φρικτη και απεριγραπτη αυτη θυσια; Την ωρα που τελειται το μυστηριο, τα ιδια τα Χερουβειμ και τα Σεραφειμ παρευρισκονται στην Αγια Τραπεζα σκεπαζοντας τα προσωπα τους απο φοβο και σεβασμο, οι δε ουρανιες δυναμεις, μαζι με τον αρχιερεαν, τους ιερεις και διακονους, προσευχονται για σενα, για ολους τους αμαρτωλους, ενω το Αιμα του Χριστου χυνεται απο την αχρανταν Πλευρα Του μεσα στο Αγιο Ποτηριο. Συλλογησου την ιεροτητα της στιγμης, στασου με σεβασμο, προσευχησου.> (σελ. 37)

Ας μην ξεχασουμε ποτε οτι ο σκοπος για τον οποιον εκκλησιαζομεθα και συντηρουμε την Εκκλησιαν ειναι για να προσευχωμεθα στον Αναστанта εκ νεκρων Χριστον για καθε καλο προς συμφερον της αιωνιου σωτηριας μας.
+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

whoever believes in Him will have eternal life." (St. John 3:14).

Through Christ's death upon the Cross, forgiveness was granted to all of humanity and to each of us individually. Perhaps we find it difficult to understand the great significance of the Cross and its relationship to the Sacrament of Holy Communion and to our current mentality.

Let me quote a stanza from the religious poetry of the religious poet, J.P. Theodoropoulos, from his book, *Musings in Catechism*:

"Have you ever felt deep within you the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist – that amazing and indescribable sacrifice? At the moment at which the Sacrament is celebrated, the very same angels from the Orders of the Cherubim and the Seraphim are present at the Holy Altar, shielding their faces out of awe and great respect. The powers of heaven, along with the bishop, the priests and the deacons, pray for you; for all those who are laden with sin, since the Blood of Christ drips from His most pure Side from the Cross and into the Holy Chalice. Think about the great holiness of this moment. Live with respect for God and pray." (pg. 37).

+FR. THEODORE

On Wednesday, September 14th, we will commemorate the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. We share here an excerpt, with a parenthetical analysis, from:

THE SERMON OF ST. JOHN of KRONSTADT ON THE FEAST OF THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS:

"Let us enter into the meaning of the mystery of the Cross...The world, that is, the human race, would have been given over to eternal death, according to the unchanging, most strict justice of God, if the Son of God had not become, out of His limitless goodness, a voluntary Intermediary and Redeemer of all of humanity, which became corrupted by sin. For, by the deception of the serpent, humanity was cut off from God and cast into a frightful abyss. (Note: Hence, the serpent of Moses in the wilderness was the beginning of the "unraveling" of the deception of the first serpent, which caused the "fall of Man". When Christ was raised upon the Cross, it was the "rise of Man" in the person of Christ, the Son of God. – Fr. Theodore) So that we might be capable of this redemption from above, it was necessary for the Son of God to descend into the world; to take upon Himself a human soul and body, and become the God-Man, in order that in His own Person, in His human nature, He might fulfill all the righteousness of God which had been brazenly violated by all manner of human unrighteousness." ("The Meaning of the Mystery of the Cross", by St. John of Kronstadt)

PRAY FOR THE SICK: Yvonne Flessas, George Aeder, Adele Gallade, Kathy Ligeros, Nicholas Kyriakou, Fred Xalis (*Many of the faithful on our Prayer List face chronic or serious illness*).

ANTIPHON I: "Tes presvies tis Theotokou..." (By the prayers of the Theotokos...)

Verse 1— Remember David, O Lord, and all his meekness. Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah; we found it in the plains of the wood.

Refrain: "Tes presvies tis Theotokou, soter, soston imas."

Verse 2—: Glorious things were said concerning you, O city of God.

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

Verse 3—: God is in her midst; she shall not be shaken; God shall help her early in the morning.

Refrain: "Tes presvies tis Theotokou, soter, soston imas."

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

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

ANTIPHON II: "Soston imas Ie Theou..." (Save us, O Son of God...)

Verse 1— The Lord swore to David this truth, and He shall not reject it. I shall set upon your throne one from the fruit of your loins.

Refrain: "Soston imas, Yie Theou, O Anastas ek nekron, psallontas si alleluia."

Verse 2 - There I shall cause to spring up a horn for David; there I prepared a lamp for my anointed.

Refrain: "Save us, O Son of God, Who Arose from the dead, we sing to You, Alleluia."

Verse 3 - For the Lord has chosen Zion; He chose her for His dwelling.

Refrain: "Soston imas Ie Theou, O Anastas ek nekron, psallontas si alleluia."

Doxa Patri ke Io ke Aghio Pnevmati ke nin ke aei ke eis tous eonas ton eonon.

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

HYMNS FOR THE ENTRANCE WITH THE HOLY GOSPEL: ANTIPHON III— This is My place of rest unto ages of ages. Here I shall dwell, for I have chosen her. The Most High sanctified His tabernacle.

Sunday Resurrection Hymn: Efrenestho ta ourania [Tone 3]... (Let all things above in heaven rejoice and let all things below on earth be glad. With all the might and strength of His arm an eternal deed the Lord did perform. Beneath His feet He has trampled down death by death and First Born of the dead has He become. From the womb of Hades has He delivered us and to all the world has granted His great redeeming mercy)

Hymn for The Nativity of the Theotokos: Ie ghenisis Sou Theotoke... (Your Nativity, O Theotokos, imparted joy to the entire earth, for out of you has risen the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God. He nullified the curse and instead gave His blessing; and causing death to be neutralized, He granted us eternal life.)

Hymn for 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: Ioakim ke Anna onidhismou... (Both Joachim and Anna from their sterility's stigma, and Adam and Eve from their mortality's ruin have been set free, O immaculate Maid, by your holy nativity. For this do your people hold celebration, redeemed from the guilt of transgression as they cry to you, "The barren one bears the Theotokos, the nourisher of our Life.")

READINGS: Epistle - Galatians 6: 11-18 / Gospel - St. John 3: 13-17

Megalinarion: Axion Estin (page 52 in the Divine Liturgy Books)

Communion Hymn: Enite ton Kyrion... (Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise Him in the highest. Allelouia.)

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

Proverbs 4:23

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



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Coffee Hour: Tasia Richards

MEMORIAL – Today’s Memorial Service is for the Eternal Rest and Salvation for the servant of God, **Florence Ladis (5 years)**, the beloved sister of **Presvytera Petula Pantels**. May our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ grant Eternal Rest to **Florence Ladis** and peace and comfort to **Presvytera Petula Pantels** and family.

PHILOPTOCHOS – We have received a donation from one of our parishioners that will be put towards purchasing knitting needles and yarns for the The Knitting Project. We look forward to the knitting class in September and a crocheting class in October. We will be producing afghans, caps and headbands for the patients of City of Hope; hopefully in time for Christmas. A reminder that the Board Meeting will be tomorrow Monday, September 12 at 11:00 a.m. The General Assembly Meeting will be Monday, September 19 at 11:30 a.m.

FESTIVAL MEETING – The **2017 St. George Greek Festival** will be held on Saturday and Sunday, **February 25-26, 2017**. **George Argyros** is the **2017 Festival Chairman**. The first **Festival meeting** will be held **tomorrow, Monday, September 12, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.** in our parish hall. It is a very important meeting since the following agenda items will be presented:

- Festival Service & Booth chairpersons
- Publicity needs
- Volunteer assignments
- Parking (volunteers/vendors/valet)
- Health Department requirements

We look forward to seeing everyone at this important **2017 Festival meeting**.

COLORING BOOK SESSION – Mark your calendars for **Friday, September 16, 2016** and plan to join the Coloring Book Session at our parish hall. **Today is the deadline to RSVP** in order for preparations to be made for the Coloring Book luncheon. See the enclosed flier for details.

SUNDAY SCHOOL – Sunday School begins on **Sunday, September 18th**. Enclosed, please find the **2016-2017 Sunday School Registration Form**. We ask all parents to register their children for Sunday School and to bring them to Sunday School classes every Sunday.

SPECIAL FUNDRAISER FOR THE MONASTERY AT ST. NICHOLAS RANCH – **October 1st at St. Prophet Elias Church in San Bernardino**. Fliers available in our parish hall.

PARISH GUESTS & VISITORS – A special table is reserved for you in our parish hall! Join us for “coffee hour” today so we can introduce ourselves to you.

WEEKDAY CALENDAR

- Monday, September 12th.....Philoptochos Board Meeting – 11:00 a.m.
Festival Meeting – 7:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, September 13th.....Bible Study – 10:00 a.m.
Vespers – 6:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, September 14 th.....EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS
Orthros-8:30 a.m./ Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.
AHEPA meeting – 6:30 p.m.
- Friday, September 16th.....Coloring Book Session – 11:30 a.m.
- Saturday, September 17th..... Vespers– 5:00 p.m.

The September 2016 Ladder is sponsored by Harry Psaltis “in memory of the first people who introduced me to St. George parish: George Flessas, Steve Geotas, and Pat DiLuzio.”

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.

THE LADDER – Sunday, September 11, 2016

ANNOUNCEMENTS, continued

NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT SURVEY – Results from a survey from some of our St. George parishioners have been tabulated by the Natural Church Development (Church-Smart Resources). This resource group made a presentation at our 2014 Archdiocese Clergy-Laity Congress, as reported by our parish delegate at that time, Rhonda Latkovic. Together with Anna Prineas, participation in this program serve to enlighten us as to ways to improve our parish ministries. The results are available from our church office upon request.

OUTREACH – Save the dates: **October 2, 2016** – kick-off for this year's Baby Bottle campaign in support of Birth Choice of the Desert, which is a charity encouraging parents to give birth to expectant babies, rather than to opt for abortion. **November 6, 2016** – the annual St. George Veterans Day Program.

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE-Parishioners will soon be receiving in the mail a semi-annual statement summarizing their YTD donations. We would like to thank all stewards who have made & continue to make contributions to our beloved church. If you have not yet completed a stewardship form for 2016, please see Rhonda Latkovic.

REMEMBERING 9/11 (15 years) - We will include a petition for Eternal Rest and Salvation for those who departed to our Lord as a result of the attack on our country on September 11, 2001 in New York City.