

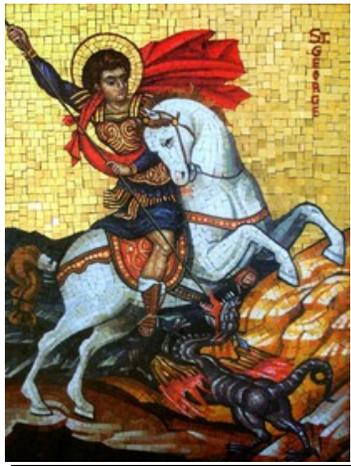
SEPTEMBER 4, 2016

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

## 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.

## GOD'S WILL = FORGIVENESS

Today's Gospel reading offers a dramatic interpretation regarding the meaning of the Lord's Prayer, where we say, "And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." We understand that sin is the misuse of God's gifts for the benefit of our own ego, rather than for God's Will. As a result, *we owe* God that which we did not use as He wanted. In that we owe anything to God, that is exactly what prevents us from being in union with

God.

However, God forgives what we owe if we forgive everything that others owe us. This is the essence of God's justice.

We quite often hear about "human justice." Human justice differs from Divine justice in that people want personal satisfaction (in accordance with their own idea of whatever would satisfy them). Divine justice is God's Will for us to be with Him, since we were *continued on page 2*

## THE NATIVITY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD & THE HOLY CROSS

The Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God on September 8th is the first major Feast Day of the Church Year, which began on September 1st. The second major Feast Day of the Church Year is the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on September 14th.

The Holy Virgin Mary was called by God to give birth to God in the flesh, Who would dwell among us and forgive us through His death on the Cross – and this, for no other reason than to give Eternal Life to everyone born into the world through His third-day Resurrection. From the Nativity of the Holy Mother of God to the Resurrection of Christ, most of the calendar year passes by – from September (in the fall of one year) to April or May (in the spring of the next year). In essence, we live the New Testament story from one year to the next.

But, when we talk about "a year," in terms of the Church's view of the world, we are talking about a "temporal" year, which represents symbolically the "eternal" year of the Lord...the year that never ends. Living the life of Christ our God (beginning with the birth of His Most Holy Mother on September 8th) is on earth what it is in heaven – a life with Christ and in the love of Christ – the Divine Love which is contained in the power of His Holy Cross.

+FR. THEODORE



Η σημερινή Ευαγγελική περικοπή μας προσφέρει μια δραματική ερμηνεία περί της σημασίας της Κυριακής Προσευχής, εκεί που λέμε: *<Και αφες ημιν τα οφειλήματα ημων ως και εμεις αφιεμεν τοις οφειλεταις ημων.>* Καταλαβαίνουμε ότι η αμαρτία είναι η κατάχρησις των δωρών του Θεού προς ικανοποίησιν του δικού μας εγωισμού, και όχι προς ικανοποίησιν του θείου θέληματος. Επομένως, *οφειλούμεν* στον Θεόν αυτό το οποίο δεν εχρησιμοποιήσαμε προς εργασίαν του θέληματος Του. Το ότι οφειλούμεν στον Θεόν, αυτό ακριβώς μας εμποδίζει οσον αφορά προς την ενωσιν μας με τον Θεόν.

Ο Θεός, όμως συγχωρεί τα οφειλήματα μας εάν εμείς συγχωρούμεν όλα τα οποία οι άλλοι οφείλουν σε εμάς. Αυτό είναι η ουσία της δικαιοσύνης του Θεού. Ακουμέν συνεχώς για *<ανθρωπινή δικαιοσύνη.>* Αλλά, η ανθρωπινή δικαιοσύνη διαφέρεται από την Θείαν δικαιοσύνην. Ο άνθρωπος θέλει προσωπικήν ικανοποίησιν. Ο Θεός θέλει την ενωσιν μας μαζί Του, αφού μας επλάσσε *<εις εικόνα και καθ' ομοίωσιν του Θεού.>* (Γεν. 1: 26). Όπως ο Θεός αγαπά τον άνθρωπον, ο άνθρωπος είναι να αγαπά τον συνάνθρωπον του ομοίως. Και αυτή η αγάπη εκφράζεται σε δύο τυπούς: 1) ελεημοσύνη και 2) συγχωρήσις. Χωρίς συγχωρήσιν, η ελεημοσύνη υποσκαπτεται. Μάλιστα, η συγχωρήσις είναι η μεγαλύτερη ενδειξις της Θείας αγάπης, αφού ολό το νοήμα του Σταυρού είναι ότι μας αγαπά ο Θεός και *μας συγχωρεί τις αμαρτίες*, ώστε να ειμεθα για πάντα μαζί Του στην αιωνιότηταν. Η συγχωρήσις δίνει μιαν προσωπικήν ποιότηταν για την αγάπη, παρά απλώς να παρεχόμεν υλικά αγαθά.

+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

created in the "Image and Likeness of God." (Genesis 1:26).

As God loves us, we are likewise to love one another. This love is expressed in two ways: 1) charity and 2) forgiveness. But, without forgiveness, charity is undermined. Forgiveness is the greater expression of love, since the whole meaning of the Cross is bound in the fact that God loves us *and, therefore forgives us* so that we can be with Him forever. Forgiveness gives a personal quality to our love, rather than just providing material goods.

For example, even going back to the ancient world, meals and housing were provided to slaves. However, a relationship based on love requires much more. Forgiveness is needed to raise children; to hold families together; to maintain lasting friendships. It is the bedrock upon which other expressions of caring take on deeper meanings.

One of the most painful things that a priest can hear from any parishioner is this: "I don't forgive; God forgives!" It betrays a warped theology. The consequence of such thinking is this: indeed God forgives—and, God does forgive your enemy. But, if "you don't forgive," you cannot be forgiven and your fate is no better than that of the wicked servant from the Lord's parable in today's Gospel.

Keep in mind that the "fellow-servant" was not condemned at all in our Lord's parable, even though he, in fact, did owe the wicked servant something. Being a "just judge," the king in the parable had every right to hold the "fellow-servant" accountable, since what he owed to the wicked servant was part of what the wicked servant owed to the king in the first place. In the infinite mercy of Christ our God, the forgiveness of one person's debt also covers the debts of many others.

But, that's how God rolls. It's not what we humans would call "normal." Yet, it is God's way of looking at our world, which is not in focus with our "normal" way of looking at it. Or, rather, our way of looking at the world is not in focus with God's reality, much like seeing the earth as being flat when, in fact, it is really round.

+FR. THEODORE

*"Brethren, give thanks always  
for all things in the Name of our  
Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.  
Be subject to one another  
out of reverence for Christ."  
— Ephesians 5:20*

**PRAY FOR THE SICK:** Yvonne Flessas, George Aeder, Adele Gallade, Kathy Ligeros, Nicholas Kyriakou (*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— Bless the Lord, O my soul, and everything within me, bless His holy name.

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

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

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

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

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."

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

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.

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

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

Refrain: "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.

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...)

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**HYMNS FOR THE ENTRANCE WITH THE HOLY GOSPEL: ANTIPHON III—** *This is the day the Lord made; let us greatly rejoice and be glad therein.*

**Sunday 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 the inner depths and the darkness below did raise the dead, all the hosts of heavens did proclaim and cry out: O Life-giving Christ and our God we give glory.))*

**Hymn for St. Babylas, the Martyr:** *Ke tropon metochos ke thronon dhiadhochos... (Becoming a partner with the Apostles in way of life and successor to their thrones, O God-inspired Saint, in the active life you found an entrance to contemplation. Hence you rightly expounded the word of truth, and you shed your blood in struggling for the faith, O Hieromartyr Babylas. Intercede with Christ our God, beseeching that our souls be saved.)*

**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 – 1 Corinthians 9: 2-12 / Gospel – St. Matthew 18: 23-35

**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*



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Coffee Hour: Presvytera Petula Pantels**

**PHILOPTOCHOS** – We need volunteers for the Knitting Project - Part 2. We will have a class to learn how to crochet in September. If you are interested, see **Rhonda Latkovic** or **Linda Kallis**. This project provides afghans, hats and headbands for the patients at City of Hope. Our next Board meeting will be on Monday, September 12 at 11:00 a.m. The next General Assembly Meeting will be on 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 on **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
- Volunteer assignments
- Health Department requirements
- Publicity needs
- Parking (volunteers/vendors/valet)

We look forward to seeing everyone at this important **2017 Festival meeting**. The more volunteers that come forward to help in working the Festival, the greater will be the over-all success of the Festival.

**COLORING BOOK SESSION** – Mark your calendars for **Friday, September 16, 2016** and plan to join the Coloring Book Session at our parish hall. 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** – A special fundraiser will be held on **Saturday, October 1, 2016 at the St. Prophet Elias Greek Orthodox Church** in San Bernardino for the **Monastery at St. Nicholas Ranch**. Fliers indicating details are available in our parish hall.

## WEEKDAY CALENDAR

Tuesday, September 6th.....Bible Study – 10:00 a.m.

Thursday, September 8th.....THE NATIVITY OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS  
Orthros-8:30 a.m./ Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.  
Parish Council – 6:30 p.m.

Friday, September 10th.....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.



# GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

8-10 East 79th St. New York, NY 10075-0106 \* Tel: [\(212\) 570-3530](tel:2125703530) Fax: [\(212\) 774-0237](tel:2127740237)  
[www.goarch.org](http://www.goarch.org) - Email: [communications@goarch.org](mailto:communications@goarch.org)

## Protocol No. 159/16

September 1, 2016

### **Beginning of the Ecclesiastical New Year**

### **Day for the Protection of our Natural Environment**

To the Most Reverend Hierarchs, the Reverend Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, the Presidents and Members of the Parish Councils of the Greek Orthodox Communities, the Distinguished Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Day, Afternoon, and Church Schools, the Philoptochos Sisterhoods, the Youth, the Hellenic Organizations, and the entire Greek Orthodox Family in America

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We give thanks to our merciful and holy God for this blessed opportunity to begin another ecclesiastical year, and we anticipate the witness of His presence and power in our lives and in our worship and work of spreading His Gospel. In addition to the observance of this day as the beginning of a new liturgical cycle, it has also been designated by our beloved Ecumenical Patriarchate as the Day for the Protection of our Natural Environment.

The connection of these two observances is significant in a number of ways. First, this is the beginning of the agricultural year and the cycle of harvesting, tilling, and sowing that is essential to our physical existence. On this day we affirm very clearly the priority of proper stewardship of the natural order to provide for the physical well-being of all humankind.

Second, this is the beginning of our annual observances that connect the present with our witness of the salvific events of the Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection of our Lord. In our services throughout this cycle, we connect time, space and our natural order to the One who created it and transcends it as we celebrate and experience the power of God's grace.

Third, as we hear and sing in the hymns of this day, it is a day of hope in which we share with God's creation the longing for redemption (Romans 8:22-23). It is a day leading us to dedicate the days and months ahead to offering a witness of love, justice and peace.

We anticipate the blessings and provision of our Creator, and as we receive them we will offer thanksgiving and praise. We gather at the beginning of this ecclesiastical year with hearts filled with joy. Our experience of an abundant life in Christ leads us in our mission to the world—to be His voice, to offer the Gospel of truth and love, and to guide others to salvation and His promise of eternal life.

May you have a blessed ecclesiastical new year and feast, making its beginning filled with expectations of the glorious works and blessings of Jesus Christ our Lord.

With paternal love in Him,

†DEMETRIOS  
Archbishop of America