

DECEMBER 24, 2017

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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THE LADDER

SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

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.

PRAYER: A CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Every Orthodox Christian lives in accordance with his or her faith in the truth that Jesus Christ is Perfect God and Perfect Man, Who is the Savior of the whole world at all times and in all places. Indeed, God gave the Holy Forefathers of the Old Testament gifts by which they accomplished God's Will. However, all of their preaching and all of their deeds did not bring about the salvation of humanity. Only when God took on human flesh was union between God and humans achieved – and

through this union, the salvation of each individual is granted. This union is expressed in the words, "God with us," which is the meaning of the very name, "Emmanuel."

Spiritual life consists of our faith in the teachings of our Church, as well as our personal faith that Christ loves us, such that He enters into a spiritual relationship with us through prayer. St. Maximos the Confessor writes that the Lord's Prayer has everything that we need in order to find unity

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JOSEPH THE BETROTHED

In the Book of Esther, we find that the tradition of the Chosen People regarding betrothal and marriage is clear. In Chapter 2, verse 7, we note that Mordecai's relationship with Esther was that of being both a guardian and a husband. Such a relationship was that of betrothal, since a sexual relationship was reserved only for marriage. This prefigures the relationship between Joseph and the Virgin Mary, since Esther had remained a virgin.

Regarding the righteousness of Joseph, we read the following in the *Orthodox Study Bible*: "The righteousness of Joseph consisted of a mercy that transcends the Law. Hosea 6:6 emphasizes mercy – 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than whole burnt offerings.' Joseph showed this mercy by his unwillingness to expose Mary's supposed sin, even though he was obliged to do so by the Law. Her husband: the Bible calls engaged couples husband and wife before their marriage (Rachel was called the wife of Jacob before marriage by virtue of their engagement in Genesis 29:21). Thus, Joseph is called the husband of Mary, and Mary is called his wife. In the Church, Joseph is remembered as the Betrothed, pointing out Mary's ever-virginity." (pg. 1267)

+FR. THEODORE



Ο κάθε Ορθόδοξος Χριστιανός ζει σύμφωνα με την πίστην του στην αληθειαν ότι ο Ιησους Χριστος είναι Τελειος Θεος και Τελειος Ανθρωπος, ο Οποιος είναι ο Σωτηρ της ολοκληρης ανθρωποτητος της καθε εποχης. Μαλιστα, ο Θεος εδωσε στους Αγιους Προπατερες της Παλαιας Διαθηκης χαρισματα δια των οποιων εκαναν το θελημα του Θεου. Ομως, ολα τα κηρυγματα και τα εργα των δεν επραγματοποιησαν την σωτηριαν της ανθρωποτητος. Μονον οταν ενσαρκωθηκε ο Θεος εγινε η ενωσις μεταξυ Θεου και ανθρωπου και, δια μεσου της ενωσεως αυτης, εγινε (και γινεται) η σωτηρια του καθε ανθρωπου. Αυτη η ενωσις εκφραζεται με τα λογια <ο Θεος μεθ ημων> – η ερμηνεια του ονοματος <Εμμανουηλ.>

Η πνευματικη ζωη αποτελειται απο την πιστην μας στις διδασκαλιες της Εκκλησιας και απο την προσωπικην μας πιστην οτι ο Χριστος μας αγαπα σε σημειον που εισερχεται σε ψυχικην σχεση με τον καθεναν μας δια μεσου της προσευχης. Ο Άγιος Μαξιμος ο Ομολογητης γραφει οτι η Κυριακη Προσευχη εχει ολα τα στοιχεια που χρειαζονται για να ενωθουμεν ψυχικως με τον Θεον μας Χριστον. Η αγαπη του Θεου εκφραζεται με τα λογια: <Πατηρ ημων.> Ετσι αναγνωριζουμεν οτι ο Χριστος είναι ο Μονογενης Υιος Του. <Γενηθητω το θελημα Σου,> το οποιο είναι να συγχωρηθουμεν και να συγχωρεσουμεν, ουτως ωστε να αποφυγουμεν τους πειρασμους και την κακιαν. <Εαν θελουμεν να αποφυγουμεν την κακιαν και να μην εισελθουμεν σε πειρασμον, ας εμπιστευθουμεν στον Θεον και ας συγχωρεσουμεν τους συνανθρωπους μας.> (<Η Κυριακη Προσευχη>, (Φιλοκ. Τομ. 2, σελ. 303).

+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

with Christ our God. God's love is expressed in the words, "Our Father." In this way, we acknowledge that, in love for us, He gave us His Only-Begotten Son. "Thy Will be done," which means that we seek forgiveness and give forgiveness so that we can avoid temptations and evil. "If we want to avoid evil and not enter into temptation, let us trust in God and let us forgive our fellow human beings." (Treatise: "On The Lord's Prayer," *Philokalia*, Vol. 1, pg. 303). Forgiveness is the purpose of Christ's presence in the course of human history.

In the forgiveness of sins, Christ gives us both increased faith and greater abilities to pray. Through prayer we have the power to reverse evil through repentance, given that repentance includes the humility to submit to whatever God wants from us, no matter how demanding it may seem. For example, King David, as a figure who forecasts the image of repentance through Christ, asks for forgiveness, *so that he may teach transgressors the ways of God.* (See Psalm 50/51). From the lineage of David, then, the Virgin Mary was born, and from Her, Christ was made flesh, as St. Matthew tells us in today's Gospel.

Hence, with Christ, prayer is more than nirvana and more than "positive thinking." It is a relationship with the living God, which begins now and extends into Eternal Life. We know this from the lives of the Saints, through whose prayers miracles still occur. Following the example of the Apostles, millions of Christians even today, find themselves experiencing miracles through prayer. History is overwhelmed with generations of Saints whose prayers cured illnesses; changed the course of events, and converted the pagan world to Christ. This heritage of prayer has been an experience of many even in our own parish.

Let us not forget, however, that prayer with faith and love by which we worship together, brings about the greatest of all miracles: the changing of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. It is this kind of prayer and this particular miracle that brings about other miracles, such as repentance and forgiveness, giving rise to entire changes of personalities into ones of Godliness among many individuals. Through prayer, we acquire the Wisdom to make life-saving decisions and to inspire others to live a life of Christ-like virtues and love.

The best gift that we can give to Christ our God; to our loved ones, and to the world around us as we celebrate Christmas is our personal and collective prayer to execute the Will of God, which is to unite ourselves with His love – a love which is personified in His Only-Begotten Son as the new-born Perfect God and Perfect Man...Emmanuel (*God with us*).

+FR. THEODORE

PRAY FOR THE SICK: George Aeder, Adele Gallade, Constantine Papapetru, Erika Aguilar, Mary Mitsias, Tom Evans, Jim Alex, Nicholas Kyriakou, Chris Laskaris, J.J. Richards, Spiro Canakis (*Many faithful on the Prayer List face chronic or serious illness*).

HYMNS FOR THIS SUNDAY'S CELEBRATION OF THE DIVINE LITURGY:

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."*

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 Ie 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. 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.*

Sunday Resurrection Hymn— *To fedron tis anastaseos [Tone 4]... (When the tidings of the Resurrection from the glorious angel was proclaimed unto the women disciples and our ancestral sentence also had been abolished, to the Apostles with boasting did they proclaim that death is vanquished ever more and Christ our God has Risen from the dead and granted to the world the Great Mercy.)*

Hymn for the Forefeast of the Nativity— *Apegrafeto pote sin to presviti Iosif... (As she carried in her womb what she conceived without seed, Mary went to Bethlehem with elder Joseph to enroll, for they were of the house and lineage of David. The time arrived for her to give birth to her Child; but then there was no place in the inn for them. Therefore the grotto served as a luxurious royal palace for the Queen. And Christ the Lord is born, to raise the image which was formerly fallen.)*

Hymn for the Sunday Before Christmas: Megala ta tis pisteos... (Magnificent are Faith's accomplishments! The three holy Youths exultingly stood in the fountain of fire as if beside the still waters of rest. And Daniel the Prophet was shown to be a shepherd of lions. At their entreaty, O Christ God, save our souls.)

Hymn for St. George— *Os ton echmaloton eleftherotis... (Since you are a deliverer of captives and a defender of the poor; a physician for the sick and a noble attendant to kings, O Great among the Martyrs and Glorious 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 grotto to give birth to the pre-eternal Word in an ineffable manner. Dance for joy, all the inhabited earth, on hearing. Glorify along with Angels and with the shepherds Him who willed that He appear as a newborn Child, the pre-eternal God.)*

READINGS: *Epistle—Hebrews 11: 9-10; 9-10 / Gospel—St. Matthew 1: 1-25*

Axion Estin

Communion Hymn— *Enite ton Kyrion... (Praise the Lord...) page 64 in the Divine Liturgy books.*



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Coffee Hour: Galina Repin

PARISH ELECTIONS - The following candidates were elected last Sunday to serve as members of the Parish Council for 2018: **Paul Carkonen, Chris Maletis, and Rhonda Latkovic**. We are most grateful to Christ our God for the dedication and accomplishments of both **Mike Vawter** and **Tasia Richards**, who served last year as members of the Parish Council with love for God and our parishioners. We will all benefit from their continued service as participants in the ministries of our parish.

PHILOPTOCHOS - Philoptochos members wish you all a Merry Christmas. We hope you will be with family and friends. Thank you for supporting our Christmas Bake Sale. Enjoy! We need sponsors or hosts for Coffee Hour on Sundays in January. Please sign up. See **Pat Dalkas**.

2018 CHURCH CALENDARS NOW AVAILABLE – One calendar per household. Please see Fr. Ted today in our parish hall in order to receive your 2018 Church Calendar.

2018 GREEK FESTIVAL - **Note: Festival preparations begin on Monday, January 8th**. Please see **Stacey Argyros** or **Lula Valissarakos** for more information. Festival fliers are available and ready to be delivered to friends, neighbors and businesses. Next Festival Meeting: Monday, January 8th at 7:00 p.m.

2018 FEATURE TO THE VOICE OF ST. GEORGE – Beginning January 2018, the *Voice of St. George* will feature guidelines for examining the condition of our souls based on the Ten Commandments. It is hoped that this will help in terms of reviewing and improving our daily way of life and for participation in the Sacrament of Holy Confession as needed.

FR. TED TRAVELS TO THE METROPOLIS – Fr. Ted will be traveling to the Metropolis offices this week in order to meet with His Eminence, Metropolitan Gerasimos. He will be away from Monday, December 26th to Saturday, December 30th. In case of emergency, call Fr. Ted at (760) 880-5869, who will arrange for the prayer services of a neighboring Orthodox Christian priest as needed.

WEEKDAY CALENDAR

Today, December 24th.....SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

Orthros-8:30 a.m. / Divine Liturgy- 9:30 a.m.

Sunday School Christmas caroling – following the Divine Liturgy

Vespers – 5:00 p.m.

Monday, December 25th.....THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST OUR GOD AND SAVIOR

Orthros-8:30 a.m. / Divine Liturgy- 9:30 a.m.

Saturday, December 30th.....No Vespers

*The Ladder for December 2017
is sponsored by:
Rhonda & Nicholas Latkovic*

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.