

JANUARY 1, 2017

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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THE LADDER

CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD; COMMEMORATION OF ST. BASIL

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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.*

GOD'S LAW & OUR LIFE

According to the Old Testament, circumcision worked as a reminder that the Chosen People of God were to respect their ancestors and not enter sexual relationships with pagans and unbelievers.

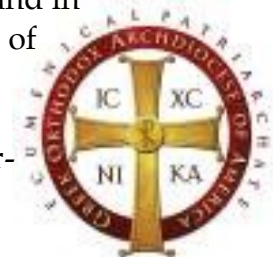
The Orthodox theologian, Metropolitan Ierotheos of Nafpaktos and Vlasios, in his book, *The Major Feast Days of our Lord*, wrote: *"In this way, these people avoided intermingling, and, indeed, the consequence of intermingling which result-*

sulted in change from the Revealed Faith." (pg. 67). To be true, St. Epiphanius once said that circumcision worked as a seal of "branding" so that the Chosen People would remain in Faith to the True God, Who is the "God of our Fathers." And, something else: circumcision was closely tied to the naming of a child.

Today we commemorate the Circumcision of Christ, Who is both God and Man. The Word of God Who was born in the flesh observed this practice
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THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD – Since the Mosaic Law commands that if a woman give birth to a male child, he should be circumcised in the foreskin of his flesh on the eighth day (Lev. 12:2-3), on this, the eighth day from His Nativity, our Savior accepted the circumcision commanded by the Law. According to the command of the Angel, He received the Name which is above every name: JESUS, which means "Savior" (Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:31 and 2:21).

ST. BASIL THE GREAT – About the year 370, when the bishop of his country reposed, St. Basil was elected to succeed to his throne and was entrusted with the Church of Christ, which he tended for eight years, living in voluntary poverty and strict asceticism, having no other care than to defend holy Orthodoxy as a worthy successor of the Apostles. The Emperor Valens, and Modestus, the Eparch of the East, who were of one mind with the Arians, tried with threats of exile and of torments to bend the Saint to their own confession, because he was the bastion of Orthodoxy in all Cappadocia, and preserved it from heresy when Arianism was at its strongest. But he set all their malice at naught, and in his willingness to give himself up to every suffering for the sake of the Faith, showed himself to be a martyr by volition. Modestus, amazed at Basil's fearlessness in his presence, said that no one had ever spoken to him with such conviction. "Perhaps," answered the Saint, "you have never met a bishop before."



Κατα την Παλαιαν Διαθηκην, η περιτομη ελειτουργουσε ως υπενθυμιση οτι οι εκλεκτοι του Θεου επρεπε να σεβωνται τους προγονους των και να μην ερχωνται σε ερωτικες σχεσεις με ειδωλολατρεις και απιστους.

Ο Ορθοδοξος θεολογος, ο Μητροπολιτης Ναυπακτου και Βλασιου, κ.κ. Ιεροθεος, στο βιβλιο του, *Οι Δεσποτικες Εορτες*, εγραψε: <Με αυτον τον τροπο αποφευγονταν οι επιμειξιεις, και, βεβαιως, οι συνεπειες τους, που ηταν η αλλοτριωση απο την αποκαλυφθεισα πιστη.> (σελ. 67). Ο Αγιος Επιφανιος, επισης, ειπε καποτε οτι η περιτομη ελειτουργουσε ως σφραγιδα στο να παραμενουν οι εκλεκτοι του Θεου στην πιστιν στον αληθινο Θεον, ο Οποιος ειναι <ο Θεος των Πατερων ημων>. Και κατι αλλο: η περιτομη εσυνδεοταν στενωσ με την ονοματοδοσια του παιδιου.

Σημερα μνημονευουμεν την Περιτομην του Χριστου, ο Οποιος ειναι Ανθρωπος και Θεος. Ο εν σαρκι γεννηθεις Λογος του Θεου ετηρησε αυτην την πραξιν της περιτομης, και τοιουτοτροπως εσυμπληρωσε ολην την δικαιοσυνην του νομου. Ο Νομοθετης ετηρησε τον νομον για να εκφρασει την αγαπην Του δια της οποιας εγινε ανθρωπος ωστε να γινη ο ανθρωπος σαν τον Θεον.

Η περιτομη ειναι σαρκικη θυσια προς τον Θεον ενος μελους του ανθρωπινου σωματος. Το Μυστηριο του Αγιου Βαπτισματος ειναι θυσια προς τον Θεον του ολοκληρου σωματος και της ψυχης του ανθρωπου. Δια του Βαπτισματος, ειμεθα ανθρωποι του Αληθινου Θεου.

+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

ctice of circumcision and, in this way, He fulfilled all the righteousness of the Law. The Lawgiver observed the Law so that He could express His love through which He became Man so that Man can become like God. Circumcision is the sacrifice of flesh to God—a “blood-sacrifice” from a part of the human body. The Sacrament of Holy Baptism is a sacrifice to God of the entire person — body and soul. Baptism is the “new” circumcision. Through baptism we belong to God.

We also commemorate today St. Basil the Great. He is an example of one sacrificing everything for God—body (in the form of self-discipline) and soul (in the form of intense, living prayer). St. Basil used his wealth to become educated at the finest school of philosophy in Athens, Greece, and became an expert in the art of rhetoric. After his education, he gave away his wealth and established hospitals and orphanages. He also authored 92 of the Church’s Canon Laws and set forth the monastic rule for both monks and nuns—observed to this day. In St. Basil the Great, we see a beautiful blend of Christian personality traits: the willingness to be all things to all people with love for and in Christ, as St. Paul had once said of himself. While of a monastic mind, St. Basil was very much involved in the life of the Church in his society; he communicated with people living in the cities, as well as with those living in monasteries. He urged his flock to follow the customs of all the other parishes of his time, stressing the need for unity of Faith and of decorum in the life of the Church. He is an example of one who truly lived his Baptism in Christ.

Understanding the intention and the effect of Holy Baptism, the Apostles felt that it was unnecessary to require circumcision for those who turned to Christ. Their decision regarding this issue is recorded in the Book of Acts 15:1-21, and was the outcome of the Council of the Apostles at Jerusalem, which serves as a model for the Ecumenical Councils of our Church—past, present and future.

We can honor Christ today by imitating His Saint, St. Basil the Great, and St. Basil’s mother, St. Emily, who, through love for Christ our God made the world a much better place.

+FR. THEODORE

PRAY FOR THE SICK: Yvonne Flessas, George Aeder, Adele Gal-lade, Kathy Ligeros, Nicholas Kyriakou, Erika Aguilar (Ana and Wynn Storton’s daughter), Jim Alex (*Many of the faithful on our Prayer List face chronic or serious illness*).

HYMNS AND READINGS FOR TODAY'S CELEBRATION OF THE DIVINE LITURGY

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

Verse 1— Shout to God, all the earth. Sing now to His name; give glory to His praise.

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

Verse 2— : Describe all His wonderful works.

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

Verse 3— : Say to God, "How fearful are Your works; in the greatness of Your power Your enemies will lie to You."

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— Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth greatly rejoice; let the sea be shaken and all its fullness. Sing to the Lord; sing to His name.

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

Verse 2— From Zion in beauty's splendor, God will come openly.

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

Verse 3— Our God: both in heaven and on earth, all things whatsoever He wills, He does.

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— O Lord, I will sing of Your mercies forever; I will proclaim Your truth with my mouth from generation to generation. You loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions.

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 Feast Day of the Lord's Circumcision: Morfein analliotos anthropinin-(pg. 106 in the Divine Liturgy books)

Hymn for St. Basil the Great: Eis pasan tin ghin exilthen (pg. 106 in the Divine Liturgy books)

Hymn for St. George: Os ton ehmaloton eleftherotis (pg. 110 in the Divine Liturgy books)

Kontakion Hymn for this Sunday: O ton olon Kyrios (As the Master over all has undergone circumcision, so He cuts away the sins of humankind in His goodness. On this day, upon the world He bestows salvation. And on high does the Creator's hierarch Basil now rejoice, for he is known as a most divine and light-bearing mystic of Christ)

Trisagion Hymn: Aghios o Theos...("Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.")

READINGS: EPISTLE- Colossians 2: 8-12 / GOSPEL-St. Luke 2: 20-21; 40-52

The Liturgy of St. Basil the Great continues. See pages 125-143 in the Divine Liturgy books.

Post-Communion Hymn: Eis pasan tin ghin exilthen...(pg. 106 in the Divine Liturgy books)

Post-Communion Prayer: *Instead of, "Lord, save Your people..."*, *the following: "O Christ our God..."* (pg. 143 in the Divine Liturgy books.)



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Coffee Hour: Today we participate in the Annual Philoptochos Vasilopita Celebration

PHILLOPTOCHOS – Taverna Night is this Saturday night, January 7, 2017. This is the last day to make reservations. They may be made at the Philoptochos table; see Linda Kallis & Tina Veroulis. **Coffee Hour Hostesses** are needed for the month of January. See Linda Petalas. We are having a **Board Meeting tomorrow, Monday, January 2 at 11:00 a.m.** Our **General Meeting will be on Thursday, January 12, 2017** at 11:30 a.m.

ALTAR FLOWER BOUQUETS – Today’s Altar Flower Bouquets were lovingly donated by:

Annette Lewis - “In loving memory of my dear husband, Skip Lewis. May God grant him Eternal Rest!”

Louise Dobbs Barringer - “Testimony: I Thank God for giving me another day of life, for His love, His greatness, and kindness to me!”

Announcement: Parishioners we need your participation in supporting the Altar Flower Program for 2017. Remember your family and/or love ones that have passed on, by sponsoring Altar Flowers, and making a dedication in their name. If you have an anniversary, or other special occasion during the months January thru May, sign-up today on the Parish Hall Bulletin Board, or see Louise Dobbs Barringer for more information! Availabilities that need attention now: January 15th (1), February 5th (1), February 19th (1)

GREEK FESTIVAL – Important Festival Meeting tomorrow night: January 2, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. All parishioners of St. George who use **Facebook** are asked to place announcements for our 2017 Greek Festival on **Facebook** and to allow people to “like” their message so that notice of our Greek Festival can spread to others. Please contact Ana Storton and/or Jim Christopoulos for more information.

FUNERAL PLOTS / ORTHODOX SECTION – In a joint effort, Fr. Ted and Fr. David Kruse of the St. Raphael Antiochian Orthodox parish in Thousand Palms, California are looking into establishing an Orthodox Church Section at Desert Memorial Park Cemetery at the corner of Ramon and DeVall in Cathedral City. The first step in the process is to determine how much interest there is among the Orthodox Christian faithful in the Coachella Valley (Greek Orthodox, Antiochian Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox, Romanian Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, etc). We have the opportunity for burial plots to be purchased together in one area and then bless the ground making it an Orthodox area. We were given a price of **\$1585.00** per plot. 6 people have expressed an interest at this point.

WEEKDAY CALENDAR

Monday, January 2nd.....(office closed) Festival Meeting – 7:00 p.m.

Tuesday, January 3rd... .. Bible Study – 10:00 a.m.

Thursday, January 5th.....EVE OF THEOPHANY–Holy Water Bottles are available.

Royal Hours-8:30 a.m. / Vespers Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great-9:30 a.m.

Great Blessing of the Waters – 11:00 a.m.

Friday, January 6th.....HOLY THEOPHANY (EPIPHANY)

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

Great Blessing of the Waters – 10:30 a.m.

Saturday, January 7th.....ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

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

Vespers-5:00 p.m./ Taverna Night-6:00 p.m.

A BLESSED NEW YEAR TO ALL!

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 SERVICE OF THE VASILOPITA

Priest: Blessed is our God always, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Faithful: Amen. (The hymn for St. Basil is chanted – see front page of today's Ladder).

Priest: Have mercy upon us, O God, in Your great mercy, hear us and have mercy. Faithful respond: "Lord, have mercy" after this and the following petitions)

Priest:-Again, we pray for all pious and Orthodox Christians.

-Again, we pray for our Archbishop Gerasimos; for mercy, life, peace, health, visitation, forgiveness and remission of sins of the servants of God: the pious Orthodox Christians who live in this city and parish; parishioners, parish leaders, Stewards and benefactors of this Holy Church; for those who labor and worship herein and for our families – spouses, children, parents, brothers and sisters and relatives – and for all of our brotherhood in Christ.

-Again, we pray for the personnel; the leadership, teachers and students of the St. Basil Academy and for their well-being in Christ.

- Again, we pray for the officers of our Philoptochos Society, who sponsor this holy feast; for peace in the whole world and the stability of the Holy Churches of God and the unity of all.

-For You are a merciful and loving God and to You we offer glory, to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages.

Priest: Let us pray: "O Creator of all things and King of ages, the One abundant in mercy and goodness, Who accepted the gifts of the Wise Men in Bethlehem; Who is the Bread of Life and Who came down from heaven and Who puts times and years under Your authority and Who holds our lives in Your hands: hear us as we pray to You on this day of our entrance into the New Year of Your goodness and +bless this bread+ which is offered for Your glory and in honor of our Father among the Saints, St. Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia. Look down from Your Holy Heaven and send down upon us Your Heavenly Gifts, for we have placed our hope in You, the living God, unto the ages. Bless the St. Basil Academy and bless all that we do in our homes and in our parish. Enrich our lives and direct our steps to do Your Will, for we do not live by bread alone. Bless us, by the intercessions of Your All-Holy Mother, the Theotokos, our Father among the Saints, St. Basil, St. George the Great Martyr and our Patron Saint – and all the Saints, who have please You in every age. Amen."

The priest then repeats the above petitions, cutting out a piece of Vasilopita for our Lord, the Theotokos, St. George, our Patriarch, Archbishop, Metropolitan, fellow clergy and the leaders of each parish organization, concluding with Dismissal Prayers found on page 80 of our Divine Liturgy Books.