

SEPTEMBER 17, 2017

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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THE LADDER

SUNDAY AFTER 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.

TEARS

"What profit is there for gaining the whole world, but losing one's soul?" (St. Mark 8:36). Christ recognizes that we have free will and that we can actually choose to follow Him. Our lives with Christ are not lived by force. They are lived through love; but, love is the Cross. It is not simply "a feeling." In reality, love is our *voluntary* acceptance of responsibility for the salvation of our fellow human beings: *"...Let us commit ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God."*

Spiritual life is a life of prayer, worship, fasting, and study of the Holy Scriptures. The "worldly" way of life is zeal for wealth, pride, fun, sports and worry over political and economic issues. Unfortunately, we find ourselves trying to live a sort of "combined" spiritual/worldly way of life. That is, sometimes we try to selectively live a spiritual way of life, while also trying to live a worldly way of life. Perhaps this is why many find it difficult to worship God.
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WHAT IS MEANT BY THE WORDS "DENY THYSELF?" - To "deny" yourself means to say "No" to yourself and "Yes" to God. Our Lord showed an example of what it means to "deny yourself" when He was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, addressing the Father, saying, *"Not my will but Yours be done."* It is consistent with the Lord's Prayer, as we say, *"Thy Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."* (Matthew 6:10).

How do we live out this prayer in real-life terms? Here is an example: someone hurts you. Your natural reaction is to get angry and hurt them back. But, to follow Christ is to call to mind His way of thinking, saying, *"Not my will but God's Will be done."* We submit our will to God's will. Instead of getting angry, we remember the words of Christ from the Holy Cross, saying *"Forgive them, for they do not know what they do."* (St. Luke 23:34). In other words, following Christ requires *effort* to control our way of thinking so that we can do what God wants.

St. Paul reminds us, *"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you"* (Ephesians 4: 32). To live according to this mentality is difficult from the point of view of our imperfect humanity – a humanity which became imperfect from the time of Adam and Eve. Add to this frailty, the fact that it is becoming increasingly popular to simply ignore Christ's words and the voice of His Church, all the more we are called to be vigilant in following our Savior.
+FR. THEODORE



<Τι γὰρ ὠφελήσει ἄνθρωπον εἰν κερδῆσαι τὸν κόσμον ὅλον καὶ ζῆμιωθῆ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ;> Ὁ Χριστὸς ἀναγνῶριζει ὅτι εἶχει ὁ καθενὰς αὐτεξουσίον νὰ κανεὶ ἀποφασὴ νὰ Τὸν ἀκολουθῆσαι. Ἡ <ζωὴ ἐν Χριστῷ> δὲν γίνεταὶ μετὰ βίας. Γίνεταὶ διὰ μεσοῦ τῆς ἀγαπῆς, ἀλλὰ ἡ ἀγαπὴ εἶναι ὁ Σταυρὸς. Δὲν εἶναι ἀπλῶς <εἷνα αἰσθημα.> Στὴν πραγματικότηταν, ἡ ἀγαπὴ εἶναι ἡ ἐθελοντικὴ μας ἀποδοχὴ τῆς εὐθύνῃς μας πρὸς σωτηριαν τῆς ψυχῆς τοῦ συνανθρώπου μας: <...εἰαυτοὺς καὶ ἀλλήλους καὶ πασαν τὴν ζῶν ἡμῶν Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ παρὰ θῶμεθα.>

Ἡ πνευματικὴ ζωὴ εἶναι ζωὴ προσευχῆς, λατρειᾶς, νηστειᾶς καὶ μελετῆς τῆς Ἁγίας Γραφῆς. Ἡ κοσμικὴ ζωὴ εἶναι ζῆλον γιὰ τὰ πλουτῆ, ἐγωισμὸς, διασκεδάσεις, καὶ ἐνδιαφέροντα γιὰ πολιτικὰ, οικονομικὰ καὶ ἀθλητικὰ θέματα. Δυστυχῶς, πολλοὶ προσπαθοῦν νὰ περᾶσουν ἐναντὶ ἀνὰ μείκτο πνευματικὸ/κοσμικὸ τροπὸν ζωῆς. Δηλαδῆ, κάποτε δοκιμάζουν τὴν πνευματικὴν ζωὴν καὶ κάποτε δοκιμάζουν τὴν κοσμικὴν ζωὴν. Μῆπως γιὰ αὐτὸν τὸν λόγον μερικοὶ δυσκολεύονται νὰ πηγαινοῦν τακτικὰ στὴν ἐκκλησίαν. Ἡ Θ. Λειτουργία, ὁμῶς, ἀπαιτεῖ ἀπὸ ἐμας τὴν ἐκατὸ τοῖς ἐκατὸ ψυχικὴ προσοχὴν: <πασαν τὴν βιοτικὴν ἀποθῶμεθα μεριμνᾶν.>

Τι θὰ ἀνταλλάξομεν γιὰ τὴν ψυχὴν μας; Τὶς ἀνησυχίες μας γιὰ ἐπιτυχία; Τὰ χρυσαφικὰ μας; Ἐπεινοὺς ἀπὸ ἀνθρώπους; Ὅλα αὐτὰ ἐξαφανίζονται! Ἡ ψυχὴ δὲν ἐξαφανίζεται – δὲν πεθαίνει. Καὶ ποὺ θὰ περᾶσει ἡ ψυχὴ τὴν αἰώνιον ζωὴν; Αὐτὸ στηρίζεταὶ ἀπὸ τὴν ἀποφασὴν ποὺ κανοῦμεν σήμερᾶ νὰ ἀκολουθῆσομεν τὸν Χριστὸν.+ Ὁ ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

in an on-going manner. However, the Divine Liturgy requires our 100% participation: “Let us lay aside all worldly cares...” What will we give in exchange for our souls? Our stress over issues of perfection or visions of “success?” Our gems? Public praise? These things all fade away. But, where will our souls forever dwell?

I sometimes feel that “picking up our cross” to follow Christ is synonymous with learning to pray *sincerely*, with Christ our God always in our hearts. A cursory review of writings shared by St. Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain (contained in a book entitled, *The Philokalia*) suggests that prayer is a sincere connection with our Lord aided by the grace of the Holy Spirit through the Holy Sacraments. As such, prayer in this spirit opens to us a vision of ourselves in relationship to the glory of God. This is the beginning of Godly Wisdom, which, at the same time, can be thought of as the power of discernment.

Discernment is a basic component of a Christian way of life. St. John Cassian writes, “What is it then, that has made [many Christians] stray from the straight path? In my opinion, it was simply that they did not possess the grace of discernment...The power of discernment scrutinizes all the thoughts and actions of an individual and distinguishes and sets aside everything that is base and not pleasing to God. It keeps one free from delusion.” (*Philokalia*, Vol. 1, pg. 99). In this regard, it is our conscience anchored in love for God which is our inner voice guiding us to do God’s Will. St. Nicodemos quotes St. Isaiah the Monk, saying, “Let us stand firm in the fear of God, rigorously practicing the virtues and not giving our conscience cause to stumble. (*Philokalia*, Vol. 1, pg. 22).

The voice of conscience guides our behavior with other people. Hence, sin not only creates distance from God, it injures others. Many of the Saints, upon becoming aware of the gravity of sin, would shed tears of sorrow for having committed sins. Tears of sorrow arise from the awareness of the distance that exists between us and God. In the desire to follow Christ in every way, those who comprehend the distance that exists between them and God, also comprehend the damage that sin causes to other people. In short, the Saints are aware that sins they commit either voluntarily, due to one’s spiritual weakness which gives rise to such things as anger or jealousy (and the like), or involuntarily, due to neglect or self-centeredness (and the like), harm other people in far-reaching ways. Their sorrow for having sinned rather than performing virtuous deeds to God’s glory is doubly magnified by the realization that virtuous deeds, in turn, heal and enliven other people also in far-reaching ways. We all have much to learn from Saints who have truly followed Christ every way.

+FR. THEODORE

PRAY FOR THE SICK: George Aeder, Adele Gallade, Kathy Ligeros, Constantine Papapetru, Erika Aguilar, Mary Mitsias, Nula Papapetru, Tom Evans, Jim Alex, Jean Chronis-Kuhn, Chris Laskaris (Many faithful on our 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— O God, my God, hear me; why have You forsaken me? The words of my transgressions are far from my salvation.

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

Verse 2— O my God, I will cry out by day, but You will not hear me; and by night, but not for a lack of understanding in me.

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

Verse 3— But You dwell among the saints, O praise of Israel.

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— O God, why have You rejected us to the end? Why has Your anger raged against the sheep of Your pasture?

Refrain: *"Soston imas Ie Theou, O sarki stavrotheis, psallontas si alleluia."*

Verse 2 — Remember Your congregation You acquired from the beginning.

Refrain: *"Save us, O Son of God, Who was crucified in the flesh, we sing to You, Alleluia."*

Verse 3 - That You redeemed the rod of Your inheritance, this Mount Zion, where You encamped. But God is our King before the ages; He worked salvation in the midst of the earth.

Refrain: *"Soston imas Ie Theou, O sarki stavrotheis, psallontas si alleluia."*

Doxa Patri ke Yio ke Aghio Pnevmati ke nin ke aei ke eis tous aonas ton aonon. Amin. *"O Monogenis Yios ke Logos tou Theou..."*

ANTIPHON III- *The Lord reigns; let the peoples be angry. The Lord sits upon the cherubim; let the earth be shaken. The Lord is great in Zion, and He is exalted above all the peoples. And call upon the name of the Lord. Let them give thanks to Your great name, for it is fearful and holy. And call upon the name of the Lord.*

Sunday Resurrection Hymn— *Angeliki dynamis epi to mnima Sou [Tone 6]... (When the Angelic powers appeared at Your tomb and those who guarded You became as though dead and standing by Your sepulcher was Mary seeking Your Pure and Sacred Body for You did vanquish Hades and uncorrupted by its touch, You came unto the Virgin Woman bestowing the gift of Life. O You, Who arose from the dead, O Lord, we give glory to You.)*

Hymn for the Exaltation of the Holy Cross - *Soston Kyrie ton laon Sou... (Save, O Lord, Your people and bless Your inheritance. Grant victory to Your faithful and by Your Cross protect all Your people.)*

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— *O ipsotheis en to Stavro... (You Who was lifted upon the Cross voluntarily, O Christ our God, bestow Your tender compassions upon Your New community to which You gave Your name. Cause our faithful emperors to be glad in Your power, granting them the victories against their adversaries. And for an ally, Lord, may they have You, peace as their armor, the trophy invincible.)*

READINGS: Epistle— Galatians 2: 16-20 / Gospel— St. Mark 8: 34-38; 9:1

Axion Estin.

Communion Hymn— *Enite ton Kyrion. See page 64 in our Divine Liturgy books*



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Coffee Hour Hosts: Nelly, Steve and Stevie Banki

PHILOPTOCHOS – Our General Meeting will be tomorrow Monday, September 18 at 11:30 a.m. Be sure to come and enjoy visiting, having a light lunch, a short meeting and hearing our speaker **Presvytera Petula**. Please sign up for our Coffee Hours. You may be a sponsor by donating a monetary amount and Philoptochos will provide the snacks or a hostess/host by bringing your own snacks. We have dates in October that are available. Any questions, see **Athena Snarskis or Linda Petalas**.

SUNDAY SCHOOL – Today is the first Sunday of Sunday School for the school year 2017-2018. Let us all encourage our students to learn about God's love. Regular attendance is very important!

GENERAL ASSEMBLY– The date of September 24th listed in *The Voice of St. George* for our **special General Assembly meeting** is no longer accurate. The date for this General Assembly meeting has been changed and is now scheduled for **Sunday, October 1, 2017**. This special General Assembly meeting to called in order to present the plans to upgrade our parish courtyard before our Festival (February 16-17, 2018) and to upgrade our parish hall by installing new flooring.

DONATIONS FOR HURRICANE VICTIMS – Monetary donations are being accepted at our parish office to be sent to IOCC (International Orthodox Christian Charities) to help the victims of Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Irma. Please write "Hurricane Relief-IOCC" on the memo line of your check.

ALTAR FLOWER BOUQUETS – This is to inform you that a **very gracious and generous contributor** has sponsored the **Altar Flower Bouquets for this entire season – the October 2017 through May 2018!** We will provide you with more information in October. To God Be the Glory, and thank you all for your past and continuous support! May God bless you. **Louise Dobbs Barringer**, Altar Flower Coordinator.

WEEKDAY CALENDAR

Monday, September 18th.....Philoptochos General Meeting and Luncheon – 11:30 a.m.

Tuesday, September 19th.....Bible Study – 10:00 a.m.
Parish Council Meeting – 2:30 p.m.

Wednesday, September 20th.....Men's Bible Study – 2:30 p.m. (St. Luke 5: 1-11)

Thursday, September 21st.....Choir Practice – 1:00 p.m.

Saturday, September 23rd.....Vespers – 5:00 p.m.

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.