

**JANUARY 7, 2018**

**ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT**

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# THE LADDER

OF THE FORERUNNER, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

## 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.

## UNITY WITH DIVERSITY

The Orthodox theologian, Vladimir Lossky, in his book, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, explains the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives after baptism, since it is the Holy Spirit that sanctifies the water in the Baptismal Font and in the Holy Water that blesses our homes. He says that our individual natures are incorporated into the glorious humanity of Christ, Who took upon Himself our humanity and cleansed it with His own Baptism in the Jordan. "We enter into unity with His Body with the Sacrament of Holy Baptism - union which is conformed to

*the death and resurrection of Christ. However, our persons need to be confirmed in accordance to the personal dignity given by the Holy Spirit, so that each one of us may freely realize his or her own unity with the Divine. Baptism - the Sacrament of unity in Christ - needs to be completed by Chrismation - the Sacrament of diversity in the Holy Spirit...The Son became like us through His Incarnation. We become like God with dedication, participating in the life of the Holy Spirit, Who grants God's Divinity to each one of us in a particular way."* (pgs. 108-109).

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**THE BLESSING OF THE WATER** – In celebration of the Holy Theophany of our Lord (yesterday), services were held to bless the water. The prayers that were read are parallel in meaning to the same prayers that are read during the Sacrament of Baptism, when the baptismal water is blessed. *The Planner: The Orthodox Daily Calendar and Resource Guide* published by our Holy Archdiocese offers the following explanation for the service and prayers for blessing the water:

*"The striking connection between the natural world and the world of the Spirit is indicated in the ceremony of the Great Blessing of the Waters performed on January 6, the Feast of Theophany..."*

*Water, then, signifies the depth of life and the calling to cosmic transfiguration. It can never be regarded or treated as private property or become the means and end of individual interest. Indifference toward the vitality of water constitutes both a blasphemy to God the Creator and a crime against humanity."*

In that water is the "sign of life" it is the "birth-place" of a new life with God. Hence, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism is performed by one being immersed into water three times, each time in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

+FR. THEODORE



Ο Ορθόδοξος θεολόγος, Vladimir Lossky, στο βιβλίο του, *Κατά την Εικόνα και την Ομοίωση του Θεού*, ξηγει τον ρόλο του Αγίου Πνεύματος στην ζωή μας μετά το βάπτισμα μας, αφού το Άγιο Πνεύμα ενεργεί στο Μυστήριο του Βαπτίσματος και αγιάζει το υδωρ το οποίο ευρίσκεται μέσα στην κολυμβηθρά – και λέγει ότι οι ατομικές μας φύσεις ενσωματώνονται στην ενδοξη ανθρωπότητα του Χριστού, ο οποίος ανέλαβε την ανθρωπότητα μας και την εκαθάρισε με το Ίδιο Του το βάπτισμα στον Ιορδάνη. <Εισαγαγούμεν στην ενοτητα του Σωματος Του με το Μυστήριο του Αγίου Βαπτίσματος – ενωσις η οποία είναι συμμορφουμένη με τον θάνατον και την αναστασιν του Χριστού. Αλλά τα πρόσωπα μας χρειάζονται να επιβεβαιωθούν κατά την προσωπική των αξιοπρέπειαν από το Άγιο Πνεύμα έτσι ώστε ο καθενάς μας να συνειδητοποιήσει ελεύθερα την δικήν του ενωσιν με την Θεότητα. Το Βάπτισμα – το Μυστήριο της ενοτητας μας με τον Χριστόν – πρέπει να συμπληρωθεί με το Άγιο Χρίσμα – το Μυστήριο της διαφορετικότητας μας κατά την χάριν του Αγίου Πνεύματος... Ο Υιός έγινε σαν εμάς δια της ενσαρκώσεως Του. Γίνουμεν σαν τον Θεόν με αφοσιωσιν, συμμετεχόντας στην Θεότητα του Αγίου Πνεύματος, ο οποίος χαρίζει την Θεότητα του Θεού στον καθενά μας κατά ένα συγκεκριμένον τρόπον.> (σελ. 108–109). Λοιπόν, η σωτηρία μας πραγματοποιείται δια μέσων του έργου του Σωτήρος μας Χριστού και της ενεργείας του Αγίου Πνεύματος στην προσωπικήν ζωήν του καθενός. Όλα τα Μυστήρια είναι γεγονότα του Αγίου Πνεύματος που μας φέρνει ενώπιον του Θεού.

+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

This individual, particular way for each of us becoming like God through the Holy Spirit is what makes each of us unique. Yet, together, we are one body in union with our Lord as members of His Church. This is made evident in the collective lives of our Saints. Each Saint of the Church is unique in terms of his or her personal attributes and circumstances. Yet, as a whole, all the Saints are united to Christ our God through the Holy Spirit. Hence, the Scriptures apply to the members of the Church as a whole, which is why they are read during our worship services. They are interpreted by the common body of the Church from the time of the Apostles to the present. Yet, they also apply to each one of us in particular and are to be interpreted in the context of our own circumstances, through the spectrum of the common spiritual discipline lived in every generation.

Hence, the celebration of the Divine Liturgy is accomplished only with the participation of the faithful gathered in worship as a community, but the grace that is imparted to each person upon partaking of Holy Communion works in his or her life uniquely, making one's personal salvation relevant to the entire community in union with others for the glory of Christ our God, making us "in communion" with God and with each other. Our individual uniqueness is then carried into God's Eternal Kingdom in the hereafter as we join with the community of Saints. This reality is reflected in the "colors" of the Church. The Altar coverings are white today in observance of Christ's Baptism, because the whole Church is baptized in Christ. The Church wears white, just as we individually wear our white baptismal garments following our own baptism. The "colors" of the Church reflect our collective- individual "state of soul" as we follow the life of Christ throughout the year.

All the Sacraments are the action of the Holy Spirit, Who, although is one of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, is still God in the same essence, together with Christ the Only-Begotten Son of God the Father. The Holy Spirit manifests Christ, Who is Himself the Brightness of the Father.

Upon lighting upon Christ at the Jordan, the Holy Spirit carries Christ into everything about us and at all times – and brings us individually into the presence of Christ wherever we are. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann amplifies this point, "To be truly human means to be fully oneself. Chrismation is the confirmation of each person in his or her own unique personality. Baptism and Chrismation were always fulfilled in the Eucharist (the Divine Liturgy) – which is the sacrament of the Church's ascension to the Kingdom, the sacrament of the 'world to come.'" (Sacraments and Orthodoxy, pg. 82).

+FR. THEODORE

**PRAY FOR THE SICK:** George Aeder, Adele Gallade, Constantine Papapetru, Erika Aguilar, 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:** In the exodus of Israel from Egypt, the house of Jacob from a foreign people.

*Refrain— Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, Savior, save us. Judah became His sanctuary, and Israel His authority.*

**Verse 2:** The sea saw them and fled, the Jordan turned back.

*Refrain— Tes presveies tis Theotokou, Soter soston imas.*

**Verse 3:** What is it to you, O Sea, that you fled, and to you, O Jordan, that you turned back?

*Refrain— Through the prayers of the Theotokos, Savior, save us.*

**Glory.** Both now. Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, Savior, save us.

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

**Verse 1:** I have loved, because the Lord shall hear the voice of my supplication. For He inclined His ear to me, and in my days I shall call upon Him.

*Refrain— Save us, O Son of God, who were baptized in the Jordan by John. we sing to You, Alleluia.*

**Verse 2:** The pains of death surrounded me; the dangers of Hades found me.

*Refrain— Soston imas, Yie Theou, O en Iordani ipo Ioannou vaptistheis, psallontas Yie, Allilouia.*

**Verse 3:** The Lord is merciful and righteous, and our God has mercy.

*Refrain— Save us, O Son of God, who were baptized in the Jordan by John. we sing to You, 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...)*

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**ANTIPHON III-** *Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endures forever. Let the house of Israel say that He is good, for His mercy endures forever. Let the house of Aaron say that He is good, for His mercy endures forever. Let all who fear the Lord say that He is good, for His mercy endures forever.*

**Sunday Resurrection Hymn— Angelike dynameis [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. Lord we give glory to You.)*

**Hymn of the Holy Theophay:** *En Iordani vaptizomenou ... (As You were baptized in the Jordan, O Lord, then the worship of the Trinity became manifest, for the voice of the Father bore witness to You, naming You the Beloved Son; and the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the certainty of the word. O Christ God, who appeared and illumined the world, glory to You.)*

**Hymn for St. John the Baptist— Mnimi dhikeh-ou...***(The memory of the just is observed with hymns of praise; for you suffices the testimony of the Lord, O Forerunner. You have proved to be truly more ven'erable than the Prophets, since you were granted to baptize in the river the One whom they proclaimed. Therefore, when for the truth you had contested, rejoicing, to those in Hades you preached the Gospel, that God was manifested in the flesh, and takes away the sin of the world, and grants to us the great mercy.)*

**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— Epephanis simeron...***(You appeared today to us on earth, O Master, and Your light was signed on us who cry aloud to You and say with understanding, O Christ our God: You came and shone forth, O Light unapproachable.)*

**READINGS:** *Epistle— Acts 19: 1-18 / Gospel— St. John 1: 29-43*

**Instead of Axion Estin, the following is sung:** *Meghalinon psychi mou... (O my soul, magnify the ever-virgin Maid who from the curse has redeemed us... )*

**Communion Hymn— Enite ton Kyrion.**



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**VASILOPITA** - Today we hold the Annual Vasilopita celebration following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. A special tray will be passed today in support of our St. George Philoptochos.

**OATH OF OFFICE**— Following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy today, the Oath of Office will be administered to the members of the 2018 St. George Parish Council (in alphabetical order): **Becky Allen, Spiro Astmos, Paul Carkonen, Tony Dalkas, Linda Kallis, Nick Kaperonis, Nick Krespis, Rhonda Latkovic, Chris Maletis, Lula Valissarakos, Tina Veroulis.**

**PHILOPTOCHOS** -We are passing a tray today for Vasilopita. Your donations are appreciated. We need sponsors for the Coffee Hour in January and February. See **Athena Snarskis** or **Pat Dalkas**. Our next Board Meeting will be this **Thursday, January 11 at 11:00 a.m.** Our next General Meeting will be on Thursday, January 18 at 11:30 a.m. We have changed the day of the meetings due to the Festival food preparation schedule.

**2018 GREEK FESTIVAL** - **Note: Festival preparations begin tomorrow, January 8th at 9:00 p.m.** Please see **Stacey Argyros** or **Lula Valissarakos** for more information. **Festival fliers** are available and ready to be delivered to friends, neighbors and businesses. **Please note: the date and time for this week’s Festival Meeting has been changed. Instead of tomorrow evening, the Festival Meeting will be held on Tuesday evening, January 9th at 7:00 p.m.**

**SPECIAL THANKS TO ANA & NICK KYRIACOU** – **Ana and Nick Kyriacou** have graciously donated the wheat (kolyva) for all of our Memorial Services which will be conducted over the first part of this New Year. Their donation of wheat (kolyva) is a blessing for all the members of our parish.

**THE VOICE OF ST. GEORGE & CHURCH CALENDARS**—Our parish newsletter for January 2018 is available at the coffee bar in our parish hall. Please take one. Also, 2018 Church Calendars are available in our parish office. Please...one calendar per household.

## WEEKDAY CALENDAR

- Monday, January 8th.....Festival Preparations begin at 9:00 a.m. Please see Stacey Argyros and/or Lula Valissarakos to help. We need everybody!
- Tuesday, January 9th.....Bible Study-10:00 a.m.  
Festival Meeting- 7:00 p.m.
- Thursday, January 11th.....Choir Practice – 1:00 p.m.  
Parish Council – 2:30 p.m.
- Saturday, January 13th.....Vespers – 5:00 p.m.

*The Ladder for January 2018  
is sponsored by:  
Matushka Gloria Lehman*

**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.**