



VOICE OF ST. GEORGE

**SAINT GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT
74-109 LARREA ST.,
PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA**



TRANSFIGURATION IN CHRIST

Inside this Issue

In essence, an Orthodox Christian is not a just a member of an “organized religion,” but an inheritor of all that God has to give, acquiring the grace of the Holy Spirit, which involves one’s *transfiguration* into a “personality” reflective of the love of Christ our God.

With the **Transfiguration of the Lord on August 6th**, the topic of our personal *transfiguration* in Christ looms up before us. In the book, *The Eros of Repentance*, featuring talks given by Archimandrite George Capsanis, Abbot of the Monastery of Osiou Gregoriou, we read that St. Gregory Palamas taught about the reality of the saints’ experience of the “Light of Christ.” Accordingly, once a person is being cleansed of his or her passions and flaws, by participating in the Holy Sacraments, he or she is able to receive a direct experience of God, beholding the uncreated Light of the Holy Trinity—the same Light of Christ as that beheld by the Apostles on Mt. Tabor.

As the sun’s rays carry the energy of the sun to nurture plants for food, God’s grace carries the uncreated energies of God to re-create us after having fallen as victims to temptation and sin, restoring us to our original beauty as images of God. God’s grace (His uncreated energies) comes to us through His *personal love* for each individual in

ways that are of a specific benefit to the individual so that the individual can reflect God’s love to others in general. We notice this in the way that the individual lives of our saints serve to inspire all of us in general. Collectively, each of us can participate in performing Christ’s ministry in the world in the same way that Christ Himself performed His ministry. Therefore, Orthodox Christianity is not a philosophy or an "organized religion." It is not "law of the land," "code of conduct," or an idealistic "social theology." It is life in the love of Christ.

Life in the grace of our Lord allows us to live with Christ abiding in us, as we abide in Christ. It is life in the Holy Spirit, Who transforms bread and wine into the actual Body and Blood of Christ, Who, in turn *transfigures* us.

We must be vigilant against thinking that God does not love us enough for us to join Him in His power. Let us remember that God has given us His divine spiritual gifts so that we can recover from the pain that sin causes. These gifts include, love, patience, endurance, faith and hope. If God were not to forgive each of us and to cure us of suffering, He would not have made such spiritual gifts available for us to use.

+FR. THEODORE

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Insert: Philoptochos "Sock-tober" Flyer

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REFLECTION FOR THE DORMITION FAST by His Eminence, Metropolitan Gerasimos

Today, we begin the 15 day journey to the Dormition of the Most-Holy Theotokos - Το Πάσχα του Καλοκαιριού - the Summer Pascha. This feast which we will celebrate in 15 days encapsulates the profound mysteries and paradoxes of our faith. We begin the celebration of the life, death, and beauty of the Holy Mother of God, who remains a beacon of divine grace and wonder. In her, we find a paradox so divine: in giving birth, she remained a virgin, and in dying, she was translated into life.

The first paradox of the Theotokos is the miracle of the virgin birth. Our Panagia, a pure and humble maiden, was chosen by God to bear His Son while remaining a virgin. This mystery defies human understanding and reveals the profound ways of God. The angel Gabriel announced to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Mary's willing acceptance of God's will brought the Savior into the world, fulfilling the prophecy and bridging heaven and earth.

The second paradox is found in her Dormition, where her death became a passage to eternal life. While death is commonly seen as the end, in the case of Panagia, it is a translation into greater glory. The Church teaches that her body did not see corruption but was assumed into heaven, a sign of her unique role in the history of our salvation. As the Kontakion of the feast proclaims, "Neither the grave nor death could contain the Theotokos, the unshakable hope, ever vigilant in intercession and protection."

Because of these divine mysteries, the Theotokos is revered throughout all generations. Mary herself foretold this in her Magnificat: "For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed" (Luke 1:48). Her life of purity, her willing acceptance of God's will, and her transition to eternal life make her a perpetual source of inspiration and veneration. She is the ultimate ex-

ample of faith and obedience to God's word.

As we reflect on these paradoxes over the hymns we will chant these next two weeks during the beautiful Paraklesis services, we are invited to deepen our understanding of God's mysterious ways. Here are practical ways we can apply these lessons in our daily lives.

Like Panagia, who accepted the virgin birth, we too can trust in God's plans, even when they seem impossible. This might mean stepping out in faith in our careers, relationships, or personal missions, believing that with God, all things are possible.

The life of the Theotokos was characterized by purity and obedience. In our lives, we can strive to live with integrity, making choices that align with our faith and values, and being obedient to God's calling in our lives.

The Dormition of Panagia teaches us to view death not as an end, but as a transition to eternal life. We can live with an eternal perspective, focusing on what truly matters and investing in our spiritual growth and relationships with God and others. As generations call Mary blessed, we too can honor her by participating in her feasts, prayers, and devotions dedicated to her. We can learn how to chant the Paraklesis as a family, take time from our normal busy routines to attend the services of these 15 days, and find opportunities for almsgiving. All of these can deepen our spiritual lives and bring us closer to understanding her unique role in God's plan.

Let us rejoice in the miraculous and paradoxical life of the Most-Holy Theotokos. Through her, we see the fulfillment of God's promises and the profound mysteries of our faith. May her example of purity, obedience, and enduring faith inspire us to live lives that honor our Lord, embracing the paradoxes that come with our journey of faith.

To all those who will celebrate their Feast Day on August 15, I wish you Χρόνια Πολλά. May the intercessions of the Theotokos be with you all always! God bless you and give you good strength during this Dormition Fast!

SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

by

Rev. Deacon Euthym

"Man can be spiritually healed, enlightened and deified only by the Living God—the Holy Trinity. However, God does not do this without man's participation, and this mystical synergy is the essence of Orthodox life in the Church." ...Elder Thaddeus

This is the "surrender" we need to experience God's love fully. An awareness of our helplessness and our desire to allow God to direct our lives is how we participate. It is not a "giving up" of who we are as a person, but finding our authentic true selves in Christ. Often we allow those around us (family, friends, acquaintances) to define us...either through our behavior towards them or for how we see ourselves through their behavior toward us. Either way we are eliminating God from the equation. What if we trust God to "reveal" our authentic selves through a trusting relationship with Him and then are interactions with others puts Christ in our midst and allows for authentic relationships.

"A marriage which does not constantly crucify its own selfishness and self-sufficiency, which does not "die to itself" that it may point beyond itself, is not a Christian marriage. The real sin of marriage today is not adultery or lack of "adjustment" or "mental cruelty." It is the idolization of the family itself, the refusal to understand marriage as directed toward the Kingdom of God. This is expressed in the sentiment that one would "do anything" for his family, even steal. The family has here ceased to be for the glory of God; it has ceased to be a sacramental entrance into his presence. It is not the lack of respect for the family, it is the idolization of the family that breaks the modern family so easily, making divorce its almost natural shadow. It is the identification of marriage with happiness and the refusal to accept the cross in it. In a Christian marriage, in fact, three are married; and the united loyalty of the two toward the third, who is God, keeps the two in an active unity with each other as well as with God. Yet it is the presence of God which is the death of the

marriage as something only "natural." It is the cross of Christ that brings the self-sufficiency of nature to its end. But "by the cross, joy entered the whole world." Its presence is thus the real joy of marriage. It is the joyful certitude that the marriage vow, in the perspective of the eternal Kingdom, is not taken "until death parts," but until death unites us completely." -Alexander Schmemmann, For the Life of the World

This is a beautiful quote about marriage and family life as being a sacramental grace that leads us to the Kingdom of God, and any other approaches are bound to fail at some essential level. But this applies to all of our relationships. If they are not centered on salvation and the Kingdom of God, they are merely transactional at best or self-serving at the worst. Idolizing individuals including our own family, separates us from God and ultimately results in a fracturing of the relationship with the other person, especially when it becomes a challenge or we see our natural state of brokenness in each other. When we see relationships as opportunities to reach the Kingdom of God together, we allow for brokenness in them and ourselves, and invite Christ in to heal and unite us in Him for eternity.

"We do not control our mouth because our nous is not on heavenly things. If our nous was at the feet of our Panagia and the throne of God, then we would not speak carelessly. Those who do not seal their mouth do not seal their soul, neither can they seal the throne of God in their mind." ...Gerondissa Makrina

Deep prayer and continuous prayer is our connection to God. A monk once said that we should tirelessly try to pray all day, whatever we are doing. This idea of prayer without ceasing as St Paul reminds us, seems impossible. But if we pursue it doggedly and diligently, the same monk said that after 6 months or so, the prayer will become automatic. (The prayer of the heart), and it will be effortless and joyful to be in constant communication with God and the saints. Gerondissa Makrina reminds us that if our focus

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SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS, Continued

is on God, the rest of our behavior falls in line, we don't gossip, we don't speak ill, we don't judge, we confess our own shortcomings and not those of others and we have joy in our heart.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

September is only a month away and we are already looking forward to welcoming back our Sunday School students for the new Sunday School year, 2024-2025. The **first day** of Sunday School is scheduled for **Sunday, September 22, 2024.**

Check out our Archdiocese Christian Education productions, entitled "**Be the Bee.**" This series of Youtube videos can help prepare parents and their children for embracing the importance of Sunday School education for the entire family: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLbyQMR-r8bJTrcWpWxSUPdJHdZJsq_zG. Parents are welcome to supplement Sunday School lessons and presentations from our Holy Archdiocese from the "Be the Bee" videos and to seek further information and spiritual direction from Fr. Ted.

PHILOTOCHOS

1)The Narrow Door Food Bank in Indio, CA is requesting our Philoptochos Chapter to assist them again to prepare food bags for food insecure families on **Saturday, August 17th starting at 8:45 AM to approximate finish at 11:00 AM.** Both men and women are needed. If interested in volunteering, please contact **Rhonda or Nick Latkovic at (714) 875-4661.** A sign-up sheet is located on the bar area in the church hall. We can arrange for transportation for volunteers if needed.

2)Philoptochos is repeating our successful "**NO-SEW Blanket Outreach Project**" from last year to benefit two non-profits; **The SafeHouse of the Desert** and **Birth Choice of the Desert.** Our goal is to make a total of forty blankets that will be donated to benefit the children being assisted at each agency. We are supplying the blankets and need volunteers to actually make them. It takes

about two hours of your time to make one blanket. No sewing involved! Please see President Rhonda Latkovic if you wish to help.

3) Our popular "**Sock-tober Outreach Project**" will be starting in September and we will be collecting socks to benefit the homeless and those being housed in shelters at the **Coachella Valley Rescue Mission.** Collection bins will be set up in the church hall for NEW socks to be deposited by gender. We can also accept your monetary donation and do the sock shopping for you. Please support this worthwhile project.

4) Coming **October 19th...Paint El Paseo Pink Walk** to benefit **cancer patients** through Desert Cancer Foundation. Save the date and plan to be a part of our walk team this year!

AHEPA

We are most grateful that our AHEPA 528 President, **Wynn Storton** is representing our local AHEPA Chapter at the **National AHEPA Family Convention** has convened in **Larnaca, Cyprus.** The members of the National AHEPA Family, led by **His Eminence, Archbishop Elpidophoros of America,** pledged to be counted in support of Cyprus and its freedom, noting that 50 years ago in 1974, Cyprus was illegally invaded by Turkish troops. We pray for safe travels for our AHEPA President, **Wynn Storton,** and his lovely wife, **Ana Storton.**

ARCHDIOCESE CLERGY-LAITY ASSEMBLY REPORT

As pastor and as a delegate representing our St. George parish, I want to inform you that the reports of the Archdiocese Audit and Finance Committee includes an analysis of the Treasurer's Report; Audited Financial Statements and Rules of Procedure Reports and the proposed Archdiocese Budget for the next two years. Copies of these reports can be found in our parish office and are available to our members in good standing.

Much of the agenda was filled with Archdiocese
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ARCHDIOCESE CLERGY-LAITY ASSEMBLY
REPORT, *Continued*

Ministry Reports, copies of which are also available in our parish office. Reports of Archdiocese Ministries included the following ministries:

1. Center for Family Care
2. Clergy Family Initiative
3. Communications
4. FREEDOM Ministry
5. Greek Education
6. Hellenic College/Holy Cross
7. Information Technology
8. Inter-Orthodox Ecumenical and Interfaith Re-

- lations
9. Ionian Village
 10. Registry
 11. Religious Education
 12. Stewardship Outreach and Evangelism
 13. Youth and Youth Adult Ministries
 14. Youth Safety

Among the workshops, there were at least two ministries that can be worked in conjunction with our National and local Philoptochos: 1) Stopping the Spread of Human Trafficking, and, 2) Ministries directed to wellbeing and treatment from addiction.

Ουσιαστικά, ο Ελληνο-Ορθόδοξος Χριστιανός δεν είναι απλώς μέλος μιάς «οργανωμένης θρησκείας», αλλά κληρονόμος από ό,τι έχει ο Θεός, αποκτώντας τη χάρη του Αγίου Πνεύματος, η οποία περιλαμβάνει την «μεταμόρφωσή» της ζωής του σε μια που αντανακλά την αγάπη του Χριστού.

Με τη **Μεταμόρφωση του Κυρίου στις 6 Αυγούστου**, το θέμα της προσωπικής μας εν Χριστώ μεταμορφώσεως έρχεται μπροστά μας. Στο βιβλίο, *Ο Έρωτας της Μετανοίας*, με ομιλίες του Αρχιεπισκόπου Γεωργίου Καψάνη, Ηγουμένου της Μονής Οσίου Γρηγορίου, διαβάζουμε ότι ο Άγιος Γρηγόριος ο Παλαμάς ομιλούσε ορθώς περί της πραγματικότητας της εμπειρίας του «Φωτός Χριστού» για την οποίαν ομιλούσαν πολλοί άγιοι. Συνεπώς, ο πιστός, αφού καθαριστεί από τα πάθη και τα ελαττώματά του, συμμετέχοντας στα Άγια Μυστήρια, μπορεί να λάβει μια άμεση εμπειρία του Θεού, γνωρίζοντας το άκτιστο Φως της Αγίας Τριάδος - το ίδιο Φως του Χριστού όπως αυτό που είδαν οι Απόστολοι στο Όρος Θαβώρ.

Η δική μας «μεταμόρφωσις» εν Χριστώ μας οδηγεί προς την εμπειρία της μετάνοιας που είναι η βάση της πρόθυμης συμμετοχής μας στη θεία χάρη Του και αυτό είναι το θεμελιώδες στοιχείο *του γνησίου* Ελληνο-Ορθόδοξου τρόπου ζωής. Επομένως, η Ελληνο-Ορθοδοξία δεν είναι μια φιλοσοφία ή μια «οργανωμένη θρησκεία». Δεν είναι «νόμος της χώρας», «κώδικας συμπεριφοράς», ή μια ιδεαλιστική «κοινωνική θεολογία.»

Με την χάρη του Αγίου Πνεύματος, που *μεταμορφώνει* το ψωμί και το κρασί στο πραγματικό Σώμα και Αίμα του Χριστού, είμεθα σε θέση να ζούμε εν Χριστώ και να ζει ο Χριστός εν υμίν, ώστε να δοκιμάσουμε από σήμερα την Αιώνιον Ζωήν.

+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

PARISH CALENDAR – AUGUST 2024

Sunday Services: August 4th, 11th, 18th and 25th – Orthros: 8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy: 9:30 a.m.

Today, Monday, August 5th – GREAT VESPER SERVICE – 6:00 p.m.

Tuesday, August 6th – THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR
Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m. (No Bible Study)

Wednesday, August 7th – PARAKLISIS SERVICE-6:00 p.m.
(Orthodox Christian Catechism Class...See Saturday, August 10th)

Friday, August 9th – PARAKLISIS SERVICE – 6:00 p.m.

Saturday, August 10th-Orthodox Christian Catechism Class (online)-5:00 p.m.

Monday, August 12th – PARAKLISIS SERVICE – 6:00 p.m.

Tuesday, August 13th – Bible Study – 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday, August 14th – GREAT VESPER SERVICE – 6:00 p.m.
(No online Orthodox Christian Catechism class)

Thursday, August 15th – THE DORMITION OF THE MOST HOLY MOTHER OF GOD
Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

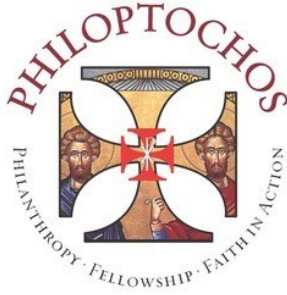
Tuesday, August 20th – Bible Study – 10 :00 a.m.

Wednesday, August 21st – Orthodox Christian Catechism (online) - 6:30 p.m.

Tuesday, August 27th – Bible Study – 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday, August 28th – Orthodox Christian Catechism (online) - 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, August 29th – THE BEHEADING OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST
Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.



“SOCK-TOBER”

DONATION EVENT for the HOMELESS

September 15th-October 15th

- o Did you know that the number 1 needed clothing item for a homeless person is a pair of socks?
- o Please help the St. George Ladies Philoptochos provide new socks to Coachella Valley Rescue Mission for the in-program residents & homeless population in the east valley.
- o Deposit socks in the bins provided that are located in the church hall. Monetary donations can be made & we will do the shopping if you are not able.
- o Men's, women's, & children's socks are needed in Casual styles. Please note that: **ONLY NEW SOCKS WILL BE ACCEPTED!**

Thank you!