

MARCH 2016



Voice of St. George

**SAINT GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
OF THE DESERT**

74-109 LARREA ST., PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA



OUR SOULS & PHILANTHROPY

"In as much as you did this to the least of these My brethren, You did it unto Me." (St. Matthew 25:40). This is the message from the Gospel passage that is read at the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on the third Sunday of the Triodion according to the Orthodox Church, which is known as "Judgment Sunday" (a.k.a. "Meatfare Sunday").

Liturgically, we note here an interesting phenomenon: on the Sundays following "Judgment Sunday" the Divine Liturgy is celebrated with the reading of Gospel passages that have nothing to do with "visiting the sick or prisoners; feeding the hungry, etc." Instead, they deal with issues of 1) *forgiveness* (Forgiveness Sunday); 2) *faith in Christ our God* (Sunday of Orthodoxy and Sundays of St. Gregory Palamas and the Adoration of the Holy Cross); 3. *spiritual & phy-*

sical healing, fasting and repentance (Sundays of St. John of the Ladder and St. Mary of Egypt). In other words, the Lenten "Sunday themes" deal more about our *inner spiritual life* than about our *outward* efforts in doing good deeds.

Indeed, the passage read at the celebration of the Liturgy on "Judgment Sunday" serves as a basis for much of the Church's ministry to the world—Christian philanthropy. There is a difference, however, between today's popular quest for the implementation of the so-called "social Gospel and the *overall mentality* of the Church, which dictates that good works and sincere faith in Christ as our True God go hand-in-hand. That is, without Christ, it is impossible to do that which is truly good. Good deeds come from a good soul.

The Saints have always lived and taught that *philanthropy* is the duty of every follower of Christ. Indeed, what we do for others is as though we do it for Christ Himself. That means that *from within our souls*, we see our fellow human being as the Image of Christ. Philanthropy has nothing to do with "feeling good" or "being thanked with accolades." Philanthropy has everything to do with loving others as God loves us. We radiate God's love not necessarily by giving "hand-outs" or "making the rounds" as we visit others, but by truly praying and caring for our fellow human being with as much energy as we want God to care for us. But this first requires that we want Christ our God to dwell within our souls. Philanthropy is a *duty of love for God*, not a "check-list of accomplishments," nor an *entitlement*.

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Fine examples of Orthodox Christian philanthropy are found in the persons of our Saints. From his own wealth, St. Basil the Great built hospitals, monasteries and orphanages for the poor; for the protection of children and for the spiritual development of those seeking God's wisdom. Another fine example is the Grand Duchess Elizabeth of Russia—sister of the Empress Alexandra—who gave her wealth for the poor in the last century in the fight against Communism. Mother Theresa serves as a more recent example of Christian-spiritual philanthropy. We see, then, how love for others comes from within our souls through our love for God! This is the true path that leads to salvation for our own souls and well as for the salvation of others.

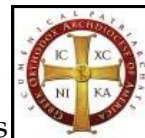
This brings us to the entire journey of Great Lent: to be with Christ our God in all things that we do; to love others as Christ loves us—and to love others, *because* Christ loves them and considers Himself as being *one* with them...even the "least" among us.

Nothing else expresses the relationship between our *inner self* and the needs of others in service to God than the Orthodox mentality regarding fasting: "[The ancient Christian theologian] *Origen* writes in the third century: 'Let the poor man be provided with food from the self-denial of him who fasts.' Also, according to historian Michel Riquet, 'It has been calculated that at Rome in 250, under Pope Cornelius, ten thousand Christians obliged to fast could provide, from a hundred days' fasting, a million rations a year.'" ("Pagans, Christianity and Charity", by Layman, "Christian Colligation of Apologetics, Debate, Research and Evangelism – website at: www.christiancadre.org).

Hence, the very purpose of the recommended increased prayer - life and fasting efforts during Lent is for us to be less "self-involved" and more involved with Christ, by which we can truly give of ourselves to our neighbor. This means that **Christian Stewardship**, in turn, has the purpose of allowing the Church to give spiritual and physical nourishment and strength to people in the world around us.

+FR. THEODORE

METROPOLIS OF SAN FRANCISCO STRATEGIC PLAN



It is with great joy that the goals of the **Metropolis of San Francisco's Strategic Plan** that have been set over the past few years are now becoming reality. The following programs and ministries are now available on both the parish and Metropolis levels:

1. A Pan-Orthodox Communication format has been designed and is now being used.
2. A program for clergy education and parish council development is now available.
3. Financial reporting has now become standardized for all parishes.
4. New parishes are being established in our Metropolis (Arizona, So. Cal., Oregon).
5. Parish Outreach efforts now exist in all parishes.
6. New stewardship information and structures are now in place.
7. Marriage Preparation and "Divorce Care" are now standardized and available.
8. Youth ministries now have the availability of online discussion groups. "Moms and Tots" programs exist in larger parishes.

For details and information regarding the Strategic Plan and/or to offer your support please contact **Fr. Ted or Presvytera Petula** at any time. Also, information regarding the Metropolis Strategic Plan is available at: www.sanfran.goarch.org.

SPRING GENERAL ASSEMBLY—The **Spring General Assembly Meeting** for the St. George parish will take place immediately following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on **Sunday, March 13, 2016**. As always, participation in the proceedings of the General Assembly meeting requires that one be a **Stewardship member of the parish for 2016**. Please contact **Fr. Ted** for more information.

PHILOTOCHOS NEWS



Our **Membership Lunch** will be **Saturday, March 12, 2016** at the home of **Kalitsa Xitco**. This is the time where we get together for fellowship, to renew our memberships for another year and welcome new members to our chapter. Please RSVP to **Carol Lyons**. The new Directories are now available. If you haven't received yours yet, stop by the Philotochos table in the Church hall and a Board Member will give you one.

The **Knitting Project** is well underway. We have a goal of 30 hats, 30 headbands and 20 children's blankets to be presented to **City of Hope** by Mother's Day in May. We have 12 hats and 12 headbands completed so far. If you are interested in this project, see **Rhonda Latkovic**.

—LINDA KALLIS,
Philtochos Chapter President

2016 GREEK FESTIVAL — was a great success! We express our sincere gratitude to our Festival Chairman, **George Argyros**, along with his wife, **Anastasia Argyros** for their great dedication and leadership in making the **20th Anniversary** of consecutive St. George Greek Festivals a joyous and rewarding event.



We thank God for all of our parishioners in working together for the Festival. We are grateful for the help of Greek Orthodox faithful coming from far away: Seattle, Portland, Chicago, Los Angeles. Every contribution is a great blessing.

At the St. George **2016 Greek Festival Appreciation banquet**, held on **Monday evening, February 29th**, it was noted that the **Festival gross income** for this year is **approximately \$180,000**. These are preliminary numbers.

YIAYIA'S ATTIC—My profound thanks and gratitude to each of you who made the effort and took the time to support **Yiayia's Attic** with your many contributions. Because of you, we were able to enrich the church's coffers by approximately **\$2,200**. Thank You!

—"Yiayia" BECKY ALLEN

ST. GEORGE GREETERS — offered valuable assistance during the 20th Annual Festival and Parish Tours! From the people on our tours there was nothing but happiness, and expressions of love and joy, which is the way that we should strive to carry ourselves so that others will see the God in us.

MEN'S DAY RALLY- MAY 14, 2016

We have the honor of hosting a community **Christian Men's Rally on Saturday, May 14, 2016**, a spiritual retreat for the men of our community. The theme is: *"Once You Are Right With God, You Are Right With the World."* Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant clergy will come together to share their inspirational thoughts with young adult and adult men who are seeking to make their homes and livelihoods Christ-centered. Topics will include: *Responsibility to worship God at Church and in the home; Health care, disabilities and stress (dealing with pain, suffering, temptations, drugs and alcohol); Raising children in today's world.*

As a keynote speaker, **Mr. Blaine Mack**, a World War II veteran will present inspiring thoughts dealing with veterans' mental health conditions and how they can be helped. The Men's Day schedule of speakers and discussions will be posted in the very near future. For more information at this time **contact Fr. Ted or Louise Dobbs Barringer.**

SACRAMENTS—On **Sunday, February 14, 2016** the servants of God **Debbie and Paul Ciros** participated in the Sacrament of Holy Marriage according to the Rites of the Orthodox Christian Church. **Debbie Ciros** received the Sacrament of Holy Chrismation during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Her Patron Saint is **St. Catherine the Great Martyr**. **Rhonda Latkovic** served as her Godmother and as the sponsor for the performance of their Sacrament of Holy Marriage. We join together as a community in sharing our joy and prayers with Debbie and Paul.



COLORING BOOK SESSION

The February Adult Coloring Session was held on Friday, February 12th. Over sixteen attendees enjoyed a Valentine Theme lunch prepared by **Rhonda Latkovic, Lula Valissarakos & Carol Lyons**. We wish to thank these ladies for their efforts, along with **Tillie Lockshire**, who prepared the coffee. The menu consisted of two appetizers, hummus and spinach avocado dips with crackers; salmon canapés prepared with dill & cream cheese, capers, & red onion in addition to canapés prepared with olive tapenade, cucumber, & green onion; and three desserts of homemade vanilla and chocolate ice cream, white and dark chocolate dipped strawberries and "bundtini" cupcakes in assorted flavors.

After enjoying the sumptuous lunch, attendees began their color project for the session. This is the fifth consecutive month of these coloring book sessions. Several attendees have

voiced their enjoyment of getting together each month and how the coloring book activity is a stress reliever for them! In fact, most regular attendees have purchased their own coloring books and artist pencils & markers

and are even coloring at home! \$100 was collected and donated to the church by the ladies & gentlemen attending this event. Before the session ended, a raffle was held with ten lucky winners tak-



Pictured above: Matushka Gloria Lehman with the refreshments served at the February 2016 Coloring Book Session. The Session featured a "Valentine's Day Theme" as noted in the assortment of "goodies"

home a prize!

The next adult coloring session will be on Friday, March 11th at noon in the church hall. We will have a St. Patrick's Day theme!
—RHONDA LATKOVIC

AHEPA NEWS



AHEPA Chapter 528 participated in the effort on behalf of our entire parish to raise funds in support of the construction of the St. Nicholas National Shrine in New York City at ground zero. Over the past two years, St. George parishioners contributed \$1,025 to this effort.

Members of our AHEPA Chapter participated in this year's Greek Festival – the 20th Anniversary of consecutive Greek Festivals held in support of our St. George Greek Orthodox Church of the Desert.

Scholarship applications are available for the annual 2016 **Fr. T. P. Theophilos Memorial Scholarship**, please go to our website: www.ahepa528.org, or see any AHEPA member at the church. **The deadline is May 1st**. Please allow time to procure transcripts and reference letters. *Application forms are now emailed, and are in our parish hall.* The Scholarships will be presented on **AHEPA Sunday, May 15, 2016**. Since its inception in 2008, AHEPA 528 has contributed over \$21,000 in scholarships for children of AHEPA 528 and Saint George Palm Desert members. Contributions in support of the AHEPA 528 Fr. T. P. Theophilos Memorial Scholarship Fund are always appreciated. Contact our AHEPA 528 website.

May 14th is Men's Day Rally and AHEPA plans to be there in full support, the next day is AHEPA Sunday, commemorating 94 years of supporting Hellenic values and heritage. Please consider joining AHEPA and help keep the values we have as Americans and fathers of our future.

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The Summer of 2016 features an opportunity for study at a fully accredited **US University in Greece**; learn about modern and ancient Greece. See and experience the beauty of the country and its people and earn transferable University credits. Information at the website: <http://ahepa.org/Journey-to-Greece/JTG.htm>.

We are planning to have representation at the **2016 AHEPA Western Regional District Convention** hosted by District 20 on **June 23-26, 2016**. The following month the **Supreme convention** will be held in **Las Vegas NV, July 24-30**.

– WYNN STORTON

AHEPA District 20 Governor &
Chapter 528 Secretary

SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY

Please join us in commemorating the **Sunday of Orthodoxy** with a Pan-Orthodox Vesper Service hosted at our St. George parish on **Sunday, March 20, 2016 at 6:00 p.m.**, followed by a sermon by **Fr. David Kruse of the St. Rafael Antiochian Orthodox Church**, with a reception to follow. We look forward to welcoming parishioners from the St. Rafael parish as well as from the Archangels Michael and **Gabriel Romanian Orthodox Church** in Palm Springs.

40 DAYS FOR LIFE—For yet the third year in a row, we ask our parishioners to pray for the end of abortion and for the repentance of those who have promoted and who now continue to promote the sinful practice of abortion under the guise of “free choice.”

On **Wednesdays and Fridays between 9:00 a.m and 10:00 a.m.** Orthodox faithful are invited to join sincere Christians throughout our community in prayer at the **Planned Parenthood facility in Rancho Mirage, California** – 71777 San Jacinto Drive, Rancho Mirage, California. **Contact Fr. Ted** to join him in this effort and to receive more information, including plans for the annual Christian prayer service of community churches hosted this year at **St. Garabed Armenian Apostolic Church** in Rancho Mirage.

ST. GEORGE BOOK STORE

In preparation for our Greek Festival and our approaching Lenten season, we have stocked our Bookstore with some new items.

The *Orthodox Lenten Cookbook*, price **\$10.00**, provides countless recipe ideas for those who wish to maintain healthful eating habits and have delicious meals while keeping the fast. A must for every Orthodox Christian.

We have received new brass censors, incense, and charcoal for those needing a small censer in the family altar in your home. **A set of one brass censor, one roll of charcoal, and two types of incense is priced at \$20.00**, offering you a savings of 10% off the regular price.

Our popular wooden **icon bracelet**, imported from Greece, is back and priced at **\$6.00** and it makes an affordable gift.

We have produced a set of **notecards with envelopes**, picturing our **beautiful church**, **\$5.00** for a set of **8 in a box**. We would like to thank **Anne-Marie Olympios** for donating the boxes for this project!

As always, we have many interesting books on Orthodoxy, the lives of the saints, spirituality, Greek language, and much more in our bookstore. Stop by and take a look!

– RHONDA LATKOVIC



Photo of cook books in our book store.



Specialty aprons for a limited time only.

MESSAGE FROM THE PARISH COUNCIL PRESIDENT



As of the printing of this edition of the Voice, we will have just completed our 20th annual festival. Whereas the festival is our primary fundraiser, it has a much deeper meaning. The festival represents so many things about us as people and as a church.

The focus of the festival is food, the fuel for our bodies and the sustenance of our physical existence. However, food is far more than something necessary for survival. It is an offering of friendship, of welcoming, of brother- and sister-hood. By breaking bread with others, we are building relationships that may last a lifetime. By feeding our guests, we welcomed them to our home and introduced them to our family.

Our theme is the Greek culture. We showcase Greek foods, Greek dancing and Greek music. This allows our guests (as well as our non-Greek members) to expand their horizons by learning more about an ancient and proud culture that offered much to our present way of life. In sharing the culture of another people, we make the world that much smaller and make everyone more understanding so that differences can be embraced!

Finally, our festival allowed us to share our Orthodox beliefs. Through the church tours and explanation of Orthodoxy, people can gain knowledge of the ancient beauty and simplicity of our religion. However, and more importantly, through the love, kindness and fellowship that we showed to each and every one of our guests, we shared with them the very nature of being Orthodox. Upon leaving, each and every guest experienced the best of us all, including our gift of delicious food, our strong and deep heritage and the one true Christian faith.

Thank you to **George Argyros** and everyone else who worked for many hours, weeks and months in preparation for the festival. I would love to individually list all of those who contributed to our festival, but space (and my memory) does not allow for a complete list at present. Thanks be

to God for everyone's time, effort and dedication!

God Bless

- JIM CHRISTOPOULOS,
Parish Council President

SUNDAY SCHOOL NOTES

We are swiftly approaching Great Lent. Whereas this is a yearly journey, it is never repetitive, nor does its importance wane with time. We are always working to be more spiritual and less worldly and the Lenten season is there to remind us of this goal. In fact, our goals should be three-fold; 1. Renewal through Repentance, 2. Reordering of our Priorities according to Christ's Teaching, and 3. Developing a stable, growing life in Union with Christ. In addition, our provisions for this Lenten journey are also three; 1. Prayer/Sacramental life, 2. Fasting, and 3. Good Deeds.

You may want to review for yourselves and then with your children, the three following questions:

-Of the three provisions of the Lenten journey, which is most meaningful to you and why?

-Which of the three do you need to practice more? Why?

-How will you do this? By what Lenten strategy?

We often get caught up in the pressures and stresses of life and do not know how to turn our attentions to our spiritual growth. If that is the case, you may want to start with the three questions above and see where they take you. God Bless!

- JIM CHRISTOPOULOS,
Sunday School Superintendent

STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY

Sunday, March 6, 2016 is Stewardship Sunday.

We look forward to everyone's Stewardship support for our St. George parish for **2016**. Stewardship Cards will be available on Sunday as everyone is invited to join in our parish hall for a wonderful Stewardship reception.

ST. GEORGE GOLF TOURNAMENT

The St. George Golf Tournament will take place this year on **Friday, May 6th and Saturday, May 7th, 2016** at **Desert Willow Golf Course**. The program is as follows:

– Friday, May 6th

2:00 p.m. shotgun start (stroke play)

6:00 p.m. – social hour

7:00 p.m. – steak dinner at the parish hall

– Saturday, May 7th

8:00 a.m. Shotgun start (scramble format)

6:00 p.m.- social hour

7:00 p.m. - Traditional Greek-style dinner at the parish hall.



Cost: **\$175** (includes golf & dinner; dinner only: \$35). Tee sponsorship: **\$100**.