

JUNE/JULY 2017



Voice of St. George

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



Inside this issue

THE DEFINITION OF WISDOM

Wisdom is *the knowledge of God*. To know Christ is to know God, for Christ is the knowledge of God in the flesh. The work of the Holy Spirit is to reveal Christ to us and to bring us to Christ through prayer.

St. Basil the Great states, "Can anyone fail to raise one's thoughts to the Supreme Nature? The Spirit is called 'God's Spirit, the Spirit of Truth,' proceeding from the Father...just as the Father is seen in the Son, so the Son is seen in the Spirit...By means of the illumination of the Spirit we behold the radiance of the glory of God." (On the Holy Spirit 9: 22 & 26: 63,64).

With Pentecost Sunday upon us on June 4th, we celebrate the fact that the Holy Spirit establishes the Church of Christ our God on earth, with the faithful partaking of God's wisdom from the Sacramental Life of the Church,

which guides us to live accordingly. The word "wisdom" is, therefore, a *verb*, rather than a *noun*. This is made clear by St. Paul: "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory." (1 Corinthians 2:7).

In his book, *The Mountain of Silence*, Kyriakos Markides tells about a monk at Mt. Athos, who inspired him with these words: "We can and must study God and we can reach God and get to know Him. Christ Himself revealed to us the method. He told us that not only are we capable of exploring God, but we can also live with God; become one with God. And the organ by which we can achieve that is neither our senses nor our logic, but our hearts." (pg. 43).

In that the Church is the "House of Prayer," it follows that personal and communal prayer is the means to experiencing the

wisdom of God, which is the only wisdom that truly exists. St. John of Kronstadt tells us about the need for prayer: "When you want to pray, watch over yourself so that not only your outward 'self' prays, but your inward one prays also. Though you be sinful beyond measure, still pray. Do not heed the devil's provocation, craftiness, and despair, but call to mind the words of Christ: 'Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden' - with temptations, iniquities, calamities, doubts - 'and I will give you rest.'" (St. Matthew 11:28)" (My Life in Christ, pg.162).

Sincere, self-reflecting prayer for knowing God's Will is key to acquiring wisdom in our lives. As such, our souls and minds are illuminated with the reality of God, which is, at the same time, the true reality of good (as opposed to evil). Knowledge of this reality and the ex-

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perience in this reality allow us to make *wise decisions*. Making wise decisions makes us co-workers with God, thereby finding peace within ourselves and giving blessings to others. In short, God's wisdom forms the basis of our personal well-being, as well as the ethics and moral codes by which we make our life-long decisions. Fr. Stanley Harakas points out: *"Orthokrisia: '...It means, 'correct judgment.' Orthodox Christianity sees all things as being subject to a higher criterion: the criterion of the Spirit...All values in life are finally ranked by their relationship with God, His Will for us and our growth as persons and as a people in His Image and Likeness."* (Contemporary Moral Issues, pg.17)

As we may seek such "correct judgment," through our own efforts in prayer, St. Theophan the Recluse advises that such judgment is itself God's gift, often independent of our own efforts, saying: *"The Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered. (Rom. 8:26). This means that the Spirit moves in us the prayer which comes by itself...The content of such prayer can seldom be clearly defined, but it is almost always inspired by surrender to the Divine Will, and by complete trust in the guidance of God [the Divine Wisdom] Who knows better than we do what is good for our inner and outer being and Who desires this for us more strongly than we do for ourselves and is ready to give us all that is good – as long as we ourselves do not put up resistance."* (The Art of Prayer, pg.71-72).

Prayer itself is a gift from the Holy Spirit – and, as previously noted, our lives depend on this Gift. With the Sacrament of Holy Chrismation (imparted to us at the time of Baptism), we receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit, Who inspires us to pray, keeping in mind that true prayer is to seek Christ – God's Wisdom in the flesh.

In a world of so much intellectualism, such as ours, there also seems to be so much sorrow. We "intellectuals" ourselves need to open our minds to Divine Illumination, which is the wisdom of God – or, in other words, the Light of Christ through the grace of the Holy Spirit.

+FR. THEODORE



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS
OF SAN FRANCISCO

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΦΡΑΓΚΙΣΚΟΥ

April 24, 2017

+Elizabeth the Wonderworker

Rev. Fr. Theodore Pantels, Proistamenos
Mr. Nick Krespis, President
Esteemed Members of the Parish Council
St. George Greek Orthodox Church
P.O. Box 4755
Palm Desert, CA 92216

Dearly Beloved,

Christ is Risen! Christos Anesti!

Having returned to San Francisco from my recent visit with you, on the occasion of the Patronal Feast of your parish, as well as celebrating the 20th Anniversary of your church edifice, permit me to express my gratitude for your warm hospitality and kind gift.

The community of St. George, the Great Martyr, in Palm Desert, stands as being a beacon of Greek Orthodoxy in the midst of the Desert, preaching the Word of God and serving those who are in need for healing and mercy.

I am certain that your future is bright, provided you continue to express in action the love of our God to all in your community.

I am praying for your growth and development in the powerful light of Christ's Resurrection.

With Love in the Risen Lord,

+METROPOLITAN GERASIMOS
+Metropolitan of San Francisco

AHEPA NEWS

AHEPA Sunday, May 21, 2017 was, as always, an inspiring day, as students bound for college and in college were awarded the scholarships from the **AHEPA 528 Fr. T. P. Theophilos Memorial Scholarship Fund**. The recipients are listed on page 4.

In addition, this year's **AHEPA Sunday** program included a Memorial Service for all the AHEPA Chapter 528 members who have departed this present life: **Fr. T. P. Theophilos, Steve Geotas, Stan Georgalakis, Steve Pisanos, George Tcharos, and Bob Maverick**.

In regards to the Fr Theophilos Theophilos Scholarship we established it with Fr. Theo's blessing and guidance in 2007. Fr. Theo would be very proud of our accomplishments, over the last 10 years. We have raised and awarded 34 scholarships amounting to over \$30,000 dollars. AHEPA 528, awards 3 to 4 scholarships a year, to deserving college students within our community.

Our program is very unique in that Fr Theo wanted it to encompass both the Hellenic AHEPA and the St George Orthodox church connection. Students either have to be family members of AHEPA 528 or current Stewards of St George, in good standing. If they are both, the applicants receive additional points. This year we awarded 4 scholarships as follows:

Christian Kontaxis, the 2017 AHEPA Stem recipient in the amount \$1,000 dollars.

Katrina Storton, the St. George Scholarship in the amount of \$1,000.

Cani Karalis, the first recipient of the George Tcharos Memorial Scholarship, in the amount of \$750. Dollars.

Stephanie Christopoulos, the Penelope award in the amount of \$500 dollars.

AHEPA 528 also recognized Fr Theodore for his

devotion to the Church and to AHEPA and he also received a proclamation from the city of Palm Desert for this day!

AHEPA District 20 gave **Katrina Storton** and **Elanie Karkaletsis** \$500 each for their Journey to Greece Trip. "Journey to Greece" is an AHEPA National Education Program."

Please consider joining AHEPA Chapter 528 and keep Hellenism strong in the desert through philanthropy and brotherhood, setting positive role models for the community.

On page 12 see Fr. Ted's "Acceptance Address" on receiving his AHEPA Appreciation Plaque.

– WYNN STORTON,
AHEPA Chapter 528 President



Fr. T. P. Theophilos Memoria Scholarship Award recipients are pictured above, from left-to-right: Stephanie Christopoulos (represented by her father, Jim Christopoulos) (Penelope Scholarship; \$500), Constantina Karalis (GeorgeTcharos Memorial Scholarship; \$750), Katrina Storton (St. George Educational Scholarship; \$1,000), Christian Kontaxis, (STEM Scholarship; \$1,000). Pictured with the recipients are: Wynn Storton, AHEPA 588 President, Harry Loukatos, AHEPA 528 Past President.



AHEPA Journey to Greece: Pictured with AHEPA President Wynn Storton are Elainie Karkaletsis and Katrina Storton, who receive certificates of participation in this summer's AHEPA "Journey to Greece" Program.

AHEPA NEWS, *continued*

Honored for many years of service—left to right: Gus Kurupas, Wynn Storton, Nick Krespis, Harry Loukatos and Nick Kyriakos.

FINDING TIME TO WORSHIP: *Arriving Late to and Departing Early from Church Services*

Scheduling many Church Services throughout the year can be challenging, considering the growing phenomenon of parishioners *arriving late to and departing early from* worship services.

Factors contributing to this phenomenon may be related to such things as extra programs (for example: Veterans Day, Sunday School "End-of-the Year," AHEPA Sunday, weekly announcements). This may be related to the attitudes of parishioners toward worship, in general. Or, this phenomenon may also be related to many physical limitations among our parishioners (for example, elderly health issues and /or transportation issues).

Throughout the summer months and into the fall, we must all do some soul-searching with a view of making prayer and worship a top priority in our lives and consider ways for all of us to *fully participate* from beginning to end of our Holy Church Services.

In any event, no one should be discouraged from at least making the *pilgrimage* to our Church for the purpose of participating in worship at some level. There is honor in making this effort, while, at the same time, there are many blessings to be acquired through *full participation* in the services. Let us keep in mind, however, that piety and respect during the course of our worship is a must!

PARISH COUNCIL REPORT



Nick Kaperonis presented the Treasurer's report. Currently the checking account has a balance of \$63K. However, between now and November we need to net \$10K -\$12K to cover outstanding obligations. It may be necessary to borrow from the savings account if we fall short. Nick suggested the possibility of having some kind of public fund raiser in November and will pursue that idea at a later time. The profit from and the Golf Tournament and the Festival was down \$10K from 2016.

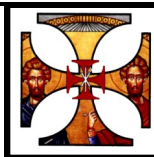
Philoptochos sponsored the coffee hour with a special Mother's Day cake. AHEPA provided individual flowers for all mothers.

Solar Energy: Father Ted presented drawings and specs provided by the Solar Co. outlining the requirements and costs of converting to a full 100% solar system. The total cost for implementing the new system in its entirety is approximately \$250K. It was suggested that we solicit donations to help defray the cost. The discussion has been temporarily tabled.

Regarding, our Parish By-Laws: The Board was joined by **Annette Lewis, Presvytera and Mike Vawter**. The consensus was that one individual Stewardship Card be issued to one individual at a time. Stewardship includes voting privileges (one vote per family, unless husband and wife submit separate Stewardship Cards and make Stewardship contributions separately). Stewardship also includes rights to church sacraments. Special dispensation is to be granted for *one year at a time* to those parishioners unable to meet the \$600 minimum contribution requirement. Parishioners who are unable to offer the minimum contribution, are to discuss their circumstances with Fr. Ted. Special dispensation would include all rights and privileges afforded to those who contribute.

It was also mentioned that an updated "How To" book for Festival events be included. The new revised by-laws will be presented to the General Assembly at the end of Aug. or early September.

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS



Board Meeting

Our newly elected Board of Directors met on May 1 to discuss the Presidents vision for the next year, job descriptions for each board member, membership and taking on a new charity.

General Meeting

We have a full Board of Directors now with the last two officers taking their oaths of office at the General Meeting on May 8. The officers are:

Athena Snarskis - Coffee Hour Coordinator

Pam Zaverdas - Speakers and Charities

It was announced at this meeting that the Board voted to take on a new charity called the Street Life Project. As you recall Rhonda Latkovic and Pam Zaverdas raised money for the homeless on March 25. They were very successful and the attending parishioners were generous. As we are the philanthropic arm of the Church, we wanted to have the Street Life Project in our budget. We continue to receive donations for this cause. We are interacting with Street Life and have recently fed the homeless at Sunrise Park. If you are interested in donating, make your check payable to Philoptochos and indicate on the memo line "Street Life Project".

We will resume our meetings again in the fall and look forward to having some guest speakers.

Membership

Our membership now is at 67. This matches our number from last year. We will be updating our Directory this summer and all members in good standing will be included. If you are considering renewing your membership or becoming a new member, please do so in the next few weeks. We want to include you in the Directory. Make your check payable to Philoptochos and indicate "membership" on the memo line and mail it to the office. If you have questions, see **Linda Kallis** or **Linda Petalas**.

Coffee Hour Changes

We have changed the way we do Coffee Hour with Philoptochos buying the snacks and the sponsor making a donation. We recognize the cost of food continues to go up. However, You may still bring snacks for your Sunday. See **Athena Snarskis** or **Linda Kallis** to sign up for a Sunday in July or August.

Adopt-a-Student

Our Adopt-a-Student Spencer Ramos has graduated from the Seminary with his Master's Degree on May 20. We have supported him through his undergraduate studies and the Master's Program. The Metropolitan will ordain him very soon and Spencer will be assigned as the second priest at the Las Vegas Church. He is married and has a little girl. We have already contacted the Metropolis Philoptochos asking for another seminary student to support. Did you know that our Metropolis has 100% of the Philoptochos chapters supporting a least one student and the bigger chapters are supporting two.

Visitors

On Sunday, May 21 we had a family of four visit our church. They didn't speak English, only French. **Emily Tcharos** speaks French and came out of church to translate for us. Their car broke down and they needed funds to finishing paying the bill so they could resume driving back to New York. They are Orthodox and they were looking for some help. They stayed for lunch (AHEPA Sunday) with parishioners giving them their tickets. Parishioners and Philoptochos provided funds for them so they could continue their trip. They were very grateful with prayers and tears. We wish them well. (See the photograph on the next page.)

Enjoy the summer and if your are traveling, please travel safely.

– LINDA KALLIS,
Philoptochos President

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS, Continued

Feeding the poor: An Orthodox Christian family from France pictured with Emily Tcharos (who served as translator) and members of the Ladies Philoptochos Chapter, on May 21, 2017

ENDOWMENT FUND REPORT: THE FUND REACHES THE \$300,000 MARK

The Saint George of the Desert Endowment Fund grew \$2,963.42 from March, 2017 to a stated balance of \$301,883.57 at month end April, 2017.

Our current Asset Allocation follows the Fund's by-laws as shown below:

Domestic Equities.....	\$152,254.17.....	51%
Domestic Fixed Income.....	\$124,575.02.....	41%
International Equities.....	\$ 22,122.61.....	7%
Cash & Equivalents	\$ 2,931.77.....	1%
Total.....	\$301,883.57.....	100%

The Endowment Fund had \$575.00 deposited in April, 2017. The fund grew .991% during the month. Benchmark comparisons are reported on a monthly basis, only quarterly. For an annualized return of 11.89%, I feel we are aligned well.

Parishioners are always welcome to donate by check to the Endowment Fund through the St George Parish Office with St George of the Desert Endowment Fund written on the Memo Line of the check. Remember the Church in your estate planning. To date, \$725 has been donated.

If you have any questions, thoughts, concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out.

–NICHOLAS LATKOVIC,
Chairman of the St. George Endowment Fund

SUNDAY SCHOOL

The 2017 Sunday School "End-of-the-Year" ceremony will take place following the conclusion of Church Services on Pentecost Sunday, June 4, 2017.

The ceremony will include presentations to the students and the teachers who have made the 2017 Sunday School Year a success. Along with study of the Bible Stories (for the little children), application of Christian moral principles is discussed with the older teenage students.

Also, at this year's "End-of-the-Year" ceremony, congratulations will be conveyed to the Sunday School students who have just graduated from high school. They will be presented with an Icon of the Holy Three Hierarchs (Sts. Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom), who themselves graduated from their studies of philosophy and rhetoric and went on to apply their learning to teaching the Truth of the Gospel in terms equal to the educated class of their society. It was St. Basil the Great who taught students to "be like honey-bees," learning that which is beneficial for living and teaching the Gospel to others, while debating philosophies that conflict with God's Commandments.

FR. TED'S SUMMER SCHEDULE

Fr. Ted will be away during the following weeks during the upcoming summer months. His schedule is as follows:

Monday to Saturday, June 5-June 10

Monday to Saturday, June 26-July 1

Monday to Saturday, July 10-July 15

Fr. Ted will be celebrating the Divine Liturgy on Sundays throughout the summer. In the event of emergency, feel free to contact Fr. David Kruse of St. Raphael Antiochian Orthodox Church in Thousand Palms (760) 408-6116) or Fr. Andrew Lesko of St. Nicholas Church in Temecula (909) 224-5046. My cell phone number is (760) 880-5869.

THE MEANING OF PENTECOST FOR EACH OF US

The Orthodox Christian Church year is dominated by Easter, i.e., the Resurrection of the Lord. The date of Easter, in other words, determines the dates when our Lord's Ascension into Heaven and the Day of Pentecost are celebrated. This year, Pentecost Sunday is **June 4, 2017**.

For Christians, the Day of Pentecost has been often looked upon as the "Birthday of the Church." The event itself is described in the Second Chapter of the Book of Acts, at which time the Holy Spirit descended upon the Holy Apostles in the form of "tongues of fire," giving them the gift to speak in foreign languages so as to proclaim the Gospel to all nations. However, we must not forget that the Church always existed throughout the Old Testament eras. The events and the Prophets of the Old Testament are honored as Feast Days of the Church.

Yet, for Christians, the Old Testament is a prelude to the realities of Christ's ministry and the subsequent mission of the Holy Apostles. The Apostles were comprised of the eleven faithful Disciples and Matthias, who was Judas' replacement. Also included as Apostles are Mary, the Mother of God, as well as the other women Disciples and the Brothers of our Lord (brothers through Joseph, who had been married prior to taking Mary as his betrothed). There were many believers and followers of Christ. Paul tells us in his First Epistle to the Corinthians (15:6) that 500 listened to the Risen Lord preaching on one occasion. On Pentecost, St. Luke tells us (Acts 2:1-6):

"And when the Day of Pentecost was fully come, they all were with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from Heaven as a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues of fire and sat upon each of them. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other languages, as their spirit gave them utterance. And there was dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together and were confounded, because everyone heard

them speaking in their own language."

When so many heard about Christ, there were added to them about three thousand souls. Peter stated that the Gospel was to be poured out to all believers from now on, both those of the Hebrew nation and the Gentiles, alike. So a tremendous gift was poured out on all who were present and it was clear that the Spirit was available to all.

In many ways, the Old Testament and the New Testament parallel each other. The "Feast of Weeks" was fulfilled with the Feast Day of "Passover" (Pascha), when the fullness of the Law of God was given. Pentecost is the celebration of the fact that, following the Resurrection of Christ our God, the Spirit of God is given to all the people of the Church.

Our own individual lives mirror the life of the Church. The Holy Spirit is given to us through the Sacrament of Holy Chrismation, following our personal participation in the death and Resurrection of Christ (Sacrament of Baptism). We are all able to live the life-style of God into which we were baptized. However, we all have different gifts—some have the gift of languages; others have the gift of teaching; others have the gift of healing, etc. We can all use our God-given gifts to serve God and others.

In the Orthodox Church, a special prayer service, known as the "Kneeling Service in Celebration of Pentecost" is performed on Pentecost Sunday. It shows our need and desire for the Holy Spirit. This can be a time for us to pray and seek what special gift of God each of us has been given in order to bring forth spiritual fruits as we live each day of our lives. Pentecost is a great feast. We are called to pray that our Lord grants us the comprehension of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in each of us and that we continue through life with a renewed attitude, knowing that we belong to God. With the grace of the Holy Spirit we can draw others to the comprehension of their value by God. For each of us, this is our prayer. God bless us at Pentecost!

—MATTHEW DAVIS

KNITTING PROJECT FOR THE CITY OF HOPE

On May 10th, 2017, three representatives from Philoptochos traveled to City of Hope in Duarte, CA. Upon arrival to the hospital on the campus of City of Hope, **Christina Kundanis, Jean Chronis-Kuhn, and Rhonda Latkovic** were met enthusiastically by Recreational Therapists, **Edwin Domingo** and **Laura Castillo**, who provided a decorated rolling cart to easily transport the large amount of knitted items made by the women from our church for the cancer patients.

City of Hope recreational therapist, Edwin, pre-arranged for the volunteers to visit selected patients, who are housed on the 5th and 6th floors of the hospital, who were well enough to receive visitors. However, anti-infection protocols were in effect, as seen in photos showing masks, gloves, and gowns being worn to protect the patients.

The Philoptochos volunteers spent around two and a half hours visiting patients, handing out knit items, and interacting with nursing staff. Volunteer Jean Chronis-Kuhn, a past cancer survivor, who is currently battling a new cancer and receiving treatment, remarked about the experience, "I have been a nurse for 40 years and now I am experiencing the patient side of life-threatening cancer. Today, when I visited with Christina and Rhonda and with the staff and patients at the City of Hope, I was overwhelmed by how Rhonda was able to meet the informational and support needs of bone marrow transplant patients that are experiencing the same challenges that she hurdled two years ago. They were amazed with her healthy energy and hair growth and relieved to hear that their concerns and experiences were normal with new and better tomorrows awaiting them. Rhonda delivered a powerful message with her presence and hopeful encouragement that better days are on their horizon. I was blessed to witness her genuine love and encouragement which provided them with a happier day."

On the drive back to the desert from City of

Hope, Christina, Jean, and Rhonda discussed and agreed that the day was a very emotional, spiritual, and rewarding experience for all and how wonderful it was to be a part of the St. George Ladies of Philoptochos "Knitting Project".

This was the second year of the project, with the first distribution being in May of 2016. About 8 women knit and/or crochet the 75-90 items made for the patients using yarn bought from a generous donation given annually by **Mike Carroll**. In addition, for their recent 2017 project, volunteer **Tina Veroulis** taught knitting classes at the church on Wednesday evenings which helped to gain more "knitters" for the group. The Philoptochos organization would like to thank everyone involved in "The Knitting Project" for their donation of time, talent, and resources.

If you would like to learn more about "the knitting project" or become a volunteer please, see Rhonda Latkovic.

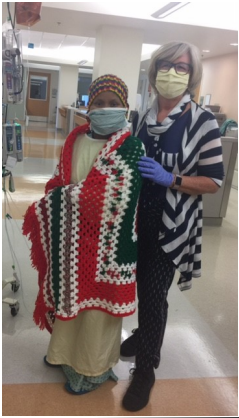


To the right, Rhonda Latkovic ministers to one City of Hope patient, suffering from Acute Myeloid leukemia - one of many cancer patients at the City of Hope.



Pictured above (left to right Edwin Domingo, Rhonda Latkovic, Jean Chronis-Kuhn and Christina Kundanis. Note the stack of knitted items set for delivery to City of Hope cancer patients.

KNITTING PROJECT FOR CITY OF HOPE, *cont.*



To the left, a female cancer patient is robed with one of the afghans that Rhonda Latkovic made. The afghan colors happen to be the national colors of her homeland.

STREET LIFE PROJECT: MINISTRY TO THE HOMELESS

In last months "Voice", we introduced "The Street Life Project" organization and what this small Christian-based organization are doing to help the homeless in our valley. In addition, we recapped the homeless situation, in particular the fact that the community would be losing the assistance of Roy's Resource Center in Palm Springs at the end of May due to lack of funding, displacing more than 100 homeless in our valley.

Since that article, we have been blessed to receive many generous donations from caring individuals to be used to help the homeless.

On May 15th, a small group of parishioners, including **Louise Dobbs-Barringer**, **Christina Kundanis**, **Emily Tcharos**, & **Rhonda Latkovic**, along with **Father Ted**, travelled to Sunrise Park in Palm Springs to meet "Street Life" volunteers **Christian Jelmberg** and **Blair Wagner** and other volunteers to feed the homeless.

We were blessed to have **George Argyros**, local restauranteur and parishioner, prepare food for around 100 homeless people. The meal consisted of meatballs, roasted potatoes, and green beans for 100 and were loaded into two large food warming containers that fit in the back of our SUV so the food could be served hot from the back of the car. We also offered bottled water and packaged snacks.

Talking to and feeding the homeless was an amazing experience for all the volunteers in attendance. So many of the homeless group were extremely hungry stating that they had not eaten in over 24 hours. Many came back for second helpings and even a few third helpings, showing how much in need they were.

During the hour and half we were there, The Street Life group interacted with the homeless individuals checking on their emotional and physical states, offering assistance and support. The founder of the organization, Christian, held a prayer circle and asked each person participating to say a small prayer about anything. Father Ted was amazed to hear one homeless man thank our group for feeding them and another asking God to help those people who were in greater need than himself!

Our group then travelled to a second location in Palm Springs, repeating what we had done at the first stop.

Our St. George group ended the evening around 8:30 pm, with all having a feeling of humility and thankfulness that we were able to make a difference, albeit temporary, in the lives of a few homeless in our valley that day.

We plan on helping to feed the homeless several more times in the coming year and we are coordinating our efforts with "The Street Life Project" group for upcoming dates. The group makes weekly outings on Tuesdays in Indio and Thursdays in Palm Springs starting at 6:00 PM.

If you would like to become more involved with this outreach project, including future outings to feed the homeless, please contact Rhonda Latkovic, Philotochos board Vice-President.

See photos on the next page.

Continued on the next page - - - ->

STREET LIFE PROJECT, *Continued*

Pictured above (left to right): Louise Dobbs Barringer, Christina Kundanis, Rhonda Latkovic, Emily Tcharos, Fr. Ted, and Christian Jelmberg (Street Life Project), posing after serving food to the homeless in Palm Springs on May 18th.

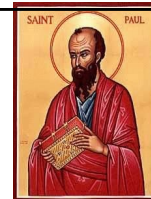


Pictured above (left to right): Louise Dobbs Barringer, Rhonda Latkovic, Emily Tcharos and Christina Kundanis preparing dishes to feed the homeless in Palm Springs on May 18th.



Pictured above: Emily Tcharos taking "keftedhakia" to one of the homeless in Palm Springs.

ST. PAUL – JUNE 29th



The name *was* Saul. He helped to murder the first Christian martyr. Let's read: "*Stephen, being fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, said, 'Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. Then they stopped their ears, crying with a loud voice, and ran at him in unison. Upon seizing him, they cast him out of their city and they stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.'*" (Acts 7: 55-58).

Saul then headed for the city of Damascus in order to arrest followers of Christ. As a top student of Hebrew history and law, he was zealous and passionate, proud of his accomplished understandings of Judaism. As such, he despised the followers of Jesus Christ.

In one of the great ironies of the Bible, the man who helped murder one who saw the glory of the Risen Christ in the heavens, himself encountered the same reality: the vision of the Risen Christ in the heavens. "*As he journeyed he came near Damascus and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. He fell down to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' Saul said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus Christ Whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' ...[Later,] Ananias entered his house and laid his hands on him, saying, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, Who appeared to you on the road...has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales and he received his sight at once and was baptized.'*" (Acts 9: 3-5 and 17-18).

By the time Saul began preaching with the Apostle Barnabas to the Christians of Cyprus, Saul had changed his name to Paul. St. Paul went on five missionary journeys, establishing Christian communities throughout—and beyond the Roman Empire.

The man who, within seconds turned from persecutor of Christ to Apostle of Christ, explain-
Continued on the next page — — — — —>

ST. PAUL, continued

ed the only reason for his radical conversion. He met the Risen Christ God, just as Stephen had seen the Risen Christ before being stoned: "I know a man in Christ, who fourteen years ago – whether I was in my body – I do not know; only God knows, who was caught up in a third heaven, caught up into Paradise and heard indescribable words, which is unlawful for a man to utter...For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth." (2 Corinthians 12: 2-6).

In his courageous proclamation of faith in Christ God, St. Paul went on to endure martyrdom at the hands of Nero on June 29, 67 A.D.

OUR 2017 COLLEGE GRADUATES:

Congratulations to the following college grads of our parish, listing their name, college, and degree:

- ◆ Tiffany Lauren Kosturos – Pepperdine University; M. A. in Clinical Family Counseling.
- ◆ Alec Steele– University of California, Berkeley; B.A. in Film Studies.
- ◆ Ellie Steele – Indiana University; Double Major: B.S. in Elementary Education/ B.S. in Special Needs Education.

OUR 2017 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES:

Congratulations to the following high school grads of our parish, listing their name and high school:

- ◆ Christian Kontaxis – Palm Desert High.
Valedictorian
- ◆ Constantina Karalis – Palm Desert High
- ◆ Tatiana Snyder – La Quinta High

SUMMER: THE SEASON OF SAINTS

The Sunday that follows Pentecost is known among Orthodox Christians as "All Saints Sunday." During every Orthros Service, as we prepare for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, there is a statement read through which the Saints of the day are listed. This "statement" of commemoration of the Saints of the day is called

the "Synaxarion" statement. The Synaxarion for the Sunday following Pentecost Sunday reads, "On this day, the Sunday after Pentecost, we celebrate the feast of All Saints, who are from every part of the world; those in Asia, Africa, Europe and America, from the North and from the South. Sing praises to all the Friends of my Lord and, those who are so destined, let their names be added to this day's celebration."

It seems that, with the Sunday of All Saints, our liturgical focus through the summer is on the lives of the Church's Saints, beginning with Sts. Peter and Paul (June 29th) and the Holy Apostles (June 30). In July, some of the Saints commemorated include St. Marina (July 17); Prophet St. Elijah (July 20); St. Paraskevi the Miracle-Worker (July 26); St. Panteleimon the Healer (July 27). On August 1, we begin a spiritual season dedicated to fasting and prayer in honor of the Dormition of the Mother of God. On August 29, we commemorate the Beheading of St. John the Baptist (a fasting day). With vacations during the summer, participation in the Divine Liturgies honoring these Saints may be limited for us.

The *formal canonization* of Sainthood for any particular person is made at the Patriarchal level. The process includes the informal proclamation by the faithful, bearing witness of one's saintly manner of life (following that person's departure for this present life). In response to this general recognition on the part of the faithful, the Patriarchate proceeds to formally recognize him or her as a Saint.

All Saints Sunday confirms the fact that our Risen Christ is the only One Who knows our individual spiritual lives. As such, many even today are Saints of whom people are unaware and are the unknown Saints of God (unknown to us, that is).

The "Season of Saints" is a season of family travel and a personal renewal away from the stress of a hustle-and-bustle society. Often lost, however, is the sense that everyone of us is destined to be a saint of God. This is a good season, then, to learn about the canonized Saints of the Church. The internet might serve as a convenient starting point at www.goarch.org. +FR. THEODORE

Brethren in Christ our Risen God and Savior,

I want to express my great gratitude for honoring me today, on AHEPA Sunday. I am most honored by this gesture on the part of our AHEPA Chapter 528. I need to, however, acknowledge the fact that I would not be a “good” priest without the good people of our St. George parish and my AHEPA brothers.

Therefore, let me take this opportunity to express my gratitude to one and all—and especially certain members of our parish and AHEPA family who work so diligently behind the scenes and rarely know that we truly appreciate them. I would like to thank and recognize the following individuals:

- To **Lula Valissarakos**, let me offer the Icon of St. George, in appreciation for her tireless work in maintaining our Altar coverings and preparing them as we enter each Ecclesiastical season throughout the year. She also provides the boiled wheat (kolyva) for Memorial Services, such as today’s Memorial for our departed AHEPA brothers.

-To **Annette Laskaris**, I also offer the Icon of St. George, for her great dedication in serving as our choir director. She has become the strength and inspiration of our choir members and, by extension, of all of us.

-To **Spiro Astmos**, I offer the Icon of St. George. (He is not able to be with us today.) Spiro is vigilant in maintaining utensils for our Altar (i.e., censers; candle holders; icon stands).

-To **Harry Loukatos**, let me give an Icon of Christ key chain, for his service to AHEPA as the Chapter President for 13 years. It was on his watch that the Fr. T. P. Theophilos Memorial Scholarship took its beginnings.

-To **Wynn Storton**, I also offer the Icon of Christ key chain, for his tireless efforts as Past District Governor of AHEPA District 20, while continuing to support our local Chapter. He is now the President of our AHEPA Chapter.

(Keep in mind, Harry and Wynn, these are only key chains—obtaining the *keys* to God’s Kingdom is up to you with God’s help.)

Likewise, let us thank God for **Deacon Euthym Kontaxis**. He desires no recognition, but we need to appreciate his service to our parish—a truly priestly service (may he become a priest some day): *Axios!* I thank God for his spiritual insights and his sincere care for the physical and spiritual wellbeing of all our parishioners.

I have no tangible gifts to offer to one who has always been there for me—and, above all, for the Church: my wife, **Presvytera Petula**. I appreciate her virtues of patience, understanding, and love. She brings God’s comfort to the lives of others, as well as to me personally. Without her, I could not fulfill many of my parish duties. Her Patron Saint is the Theotokos and my Presvytera provides a glimpse of Her kindness to me and to everyone else.

+FR. THEODORE



As the Pentecostal Season begins, Presvytera Petula photographed Fr. Ted holding his AHEPA Appreciation Plaque and Certificate from Mayer Jan Harnik

REFLECTIONS FROM THE HOLY AND GREAT COUNCIL OF THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH BY HIS BEATITUDE, METROPOLITAN SAWA OF WARWAW AND ALL POLAND (excerpts from His Address)

Our love for the Holy Orthodoxy demands that we bear witness to the fullness of our faith in order to be "everything to everyone" (1 Cor. 9,22). Therein lies the guarantee of our future. The martyrdom of our fathers and mothers throughout the ages obliges in a particular way. We are surrounded by a world in which we encounter many pathologies, abnormalities, inconsistent to the spirit of the Holy Church. Our Fathers gave their lives for the sane, unchanged teaching of Christ! The criterion of our unity is awareness in the spirit of the words of Saint Apostle Paul: "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12,10). We experience the unity of faith based on the "Christ's mind" and not on human, personal wisdom. This is the requirement of Holy and Great Council, that we begin today. It is the Holy and Great Council that is today a great opportunity toward helping to strengthen the unity and vitality of the Holy Orthodoxy.

The One and undivided Orthodox Church has the opportunity - in its local diversity - to work out, in the spirit of consensus, a common point of view on many problems that bother our faithful. Therein lies the reception of the achievements of the Council. And that will be our great conciliar gift for the Holy Church at the beginning of the third millennium.

The Orthodox Church in the contemporary world, which is filled with many disappointments and divisions, should be an example of love "not of this world". It's the Church that puts an end to human reasoning and facilitates the passage towards mutual understanding and unity. And this is exactly what everyone needs. Therefore we should rejoice at manifestation of the Orthodox Christian worship and way of life. And this manifestation is itself the Holy and Great Council.



ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL
ORTHODOX BISHOPS
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

(Given below is an excerpt from the "introduction" describing the results of the study of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of America regarding the issue of parish development in the context of evangelization and outreach.)

The study known as the "Go and Make Disciples: Evangelization and Outreach in US Orthodox Parishes" is the first ever national study on evangelization and outreach practices in US Orthodox Christian Churches. It examined the strategies and practices developed by some Orthodox parishes that can be viewed as "exemplary" in their evangelization and outreach efforts. The study summarizes the experiences of these "exemplary" parishes, so that they can be adopted by other - "normal" - parish communities. The act of determining, selecting and "labeling" both "exemplary" and "normal" parishes for the study was done by the seven jurisdictions participating in this study. "Go and Make Disciples: Evangelization and Outreach in US Orthodox Parishes" describes in detail the distinct features of the "exemplary" parishes that make them "stronger magnets" for new members and inquirers about the Orthodox Faith than the "normal" parishes...In the published document of the study, "Go and Make Disciples: Evangelization and Outreach in US Orthodox Parishes" are seventeen chapters as outlined in the Table of Contents. The entire study is available online at: www.assemblyofbishops.org. A "sample synopsis" of some of its findings is on the next page.

The Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America is one of thirteen bishops' assemblies that have been established in different geographical regions throughout the world. It is made up of all the active, canonical Orthodox bishops of the United States of America, of every jurisdiction. The purpose of the Assembly of Bishops of the United States of America is to preserve and contribute to the unity of the Orthodox Church in furthering her spiritual, theological, and philanthropic aims.

Major Distinct Features of the Parishes that Are "Exemplary" in their Evangelization and Outreach Efforts in Comparison with "Normal" Parishes

Area of church life	"Exemplary" parishes	"Normal" parishes
<p>MEMBERSHIP Demography of membership <i>Detailed discussion of this subject is on pp. 32-35 of the full study report</i></p> <hr/> <p>Other distinct features of membership <i>Detailed discussion of this subject is on pp. 36-39 of the full study report</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Much stronger presence of converts to Orthodoxy among parishioners; ❖ Significantly higher percentage of persons with college degrees among parishioners; ❖ Significantly higher percentage of persons who are new to the parish in the past 3 years among parishioners; ❖ Significantly smaller percentage of senior citizens (age 65+) among parishioners; ❖ Significantly higher percentage of households with children at home <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ High ethnic and cultural diversity among parishioners ❖ Steady growth in number of parishioners which is typically accompanied by increasing diversity among members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Much lower percentage of converts to Orthodoxy; ❖ Significantly lower percentage of persons with college degrees among parishioners; ❖ Significantly lower percentage of persons who are new to the parish in the past 3 years; ❖ Significantly higher percentage of senior citizens (age 65+); ❖ Significantly lower percentage of households with children at home <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ More homogenous social and ethnic-cultural composition of parishioners ❖ No significant changes in membership over period of time
<p>PRIESTHOOD Demography of priesthood <i>Detailed discussion of this subject is on pp. 41-44 of the full study report</i></p> <hr/> <p>Changes in priest's understanding of his role of a pastor and leader of a parish over period of time <i>Detailed discussion of this subject is on pp. 48-51 of the full study report</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ More converts to Orthodoxy ❖ Clergy have typically much longer "tenure:" i.e. they stay longer time with their churches <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The original focus on "running programs and administration" shifted towards being a good teacher, preacher and a "role model" for parishioners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Fewer converts to Orthodoxy ❖ Clergy have typically much shorter "tenure:" i.e. they stay shorter time with their churches <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ As the years go by, clergy are becoming increasingly involved in administration, management and fundraising tasks
<p>INVOLVEMENT of parishioners in the life of a parish and in evangelization and outreach <i>Detailed discussion of this subject is on pp. 52-54 of the full study report</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Typically, half or dominant majority of parishioners are actively involved in all aspects of a parish life ❖ Outreach efforts and evangelization are often perceived as the way the entire parish community lives and sees itself 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Relatively small "core" group of parishioners does everything in a parish ❖ "Program approach" to evangelization: outreach efforts are typically carried out by the designated groups of parishioners
<p>RELIGIOUS EDUCATION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Along with religious education for children strong emphasis is given on continuing faith formation of the adult church members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Religious education focuses primarily on children and is typically limited to Sunday school

**CALENDAR FOR
HOLY CHURCH SERVICES**

**For the months of
JUNE & JULY 2017**

Sunday, June 4th.....PENTECOST SUNDAY: Epistle – Acts 2:1-11; Gospel St. John 7:37-52; 8:12
Orthros-8:15 a.m. /Divine Liturgy - 9:15 a.m.
Pentecost Kneeling Service- 10:30 a.m.

Sunday, June 11th.....ALL SAINTS SUNDAY:
Epistle-Acts 11:19-30 / Gospel- St. Matthew 10:32-33,37-38; 19:27-30
Orthros-8:30 a.m./ Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

– Tuesday, June 13th...Bible Study – 10:00 a.m. (St. Matthew 4:18-23) / No Men's Bible Study

Sunday, June 18th2nd SUNDAY OF ST. MATTHEW (Father's Day)
Epistle-Romans 2:10-16/ Gospel-St. Matthew 4:18-23
Orthros-8:30 a.m./ Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

– Tuesday, June 20th...Bible Study -10:00 a.m. (Romans 5:1-10) Last Bible Study until September

Sunday, June 25th....3rd SUNDAY OF ST. MATTHEW
Epistle-Romans 5:1-10/ Gospel-St. Matthew 6:22-33
Orthros-8:30 a.m./ Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

Sunday, July 2nd....4th SUNDAY OF ST. MATTHEW
Epistle-Hebrews 9:1-7 /Gospel-St. Matthew 8:5-13
Orthros-8:30 a.m. / Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

Sunday, July 9th..... 5th SUNDAY OF ST. MATTHEW
Epistle-Romans 10:1-10 /Gospel-St. Matthew 8:28-34; 9:1
Orthros-8:30 a.m./ Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

Sunday, July 16th...SUNDAY OF THE HOLY FATHERS
Epistle-Titus 3:8-15/ Gospel-St. Matthew 5:14-19
Orthros-8:30 a.m. / Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

*– Wednesday, July 19th...Vespers at Prophet Elias Greek Orthodox Church, San Bernardino-6 pm
– Thursday, July 20th...ST. PROPHET ELIAS (ELIJAH)
Orthros-8:30 a.m. / Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.*

Sunday, July 23rd...7th SUNDAY OF ST. MATTHEW
Epistle-Romans 15:1-7/Gospel St. Matthew 9:27-35
Orthros-8:30 a.m./ Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

Sunday, July 30th...8th SUNDAY OF ST. MATTHEW
Epistle-1 Corinthians 1:10-17/ Gospel-St. Matthew 14:14-22
Orthros-8:30 a.m./ Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

August 1-15: The "15 Days of August" Season of Fasting & Prayer in honor of the Theotokos	<i>– Tuesday, August 1st – Paraklisis- 6:30 p.m. – Wednesday, August 2nd – Paraklisis-6:30 p.m. – Friday, August 4th – Paraklisis-6:30 p.m. – Saturday, August 5th – Vespers – 5:00 p.m.</i>
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