

JANUARY 2017

Voice of St. George



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

74-109 LARREA ST., PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA



Inside this issue

“WHO ARE YOU WEARING?”

While standing in front of fashion reporters at the Palm Springs Film Festival, a movie star was asked, “Who are you wearing?” The answer to the question had nothing to do with fabrics. It had everything to do with the person who designed the outfit. It’s an identity issue. “Who” we wear says much about who we are.

The things we wear do two things: 1) they remind us of our own identity and, 2) they project our identity to others. Regardless of whether one wears the robes of a priest; the lab coat of a physician; the uniform of a soldier; the overalls of a farmer—the message is the same: “This is who I am and this is how others are to know me.” We respect our apparel by “living up to what it represents.” At the same time, we seek acceptance from others based on what our apparel tells them about us.

Since we celebrate the **Baptism of Christ on January 6th**, it seems appropriate to talk about the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. In this, we remind ourselves that, upon baptism in Christ, we are given two things to wear: a baptismal garment and a cross.

Now the question of “Who are you wearing?” takes on a special kind of quality. St. Paul explained it clearly to the Galatians: “All who have been baptized unto Christ, they have put on Christ.” (3:27). The “special quality” involved in answering this question is in the fact that now we are not speaking about “dead” apparel, but about “living” apparel—apparel that carries with it the energies of God.

As a result, our human abilities are not limited by our natural traits; they are expanded to include the grace of God in our lives.

This means that we have Christ our God as a part of us. The things that Christ can do, we can do, also. As Christ fought temptations, we can fight temptations; as Christ healed others, we can also heal others (as is evident from the lives of Saints). As Christ arose from the dead, we, too, are arisen from the dead. We are not slaves to natural forces, but we are brothers and sisters in Christ. Who gives us the power to overcome natural forces. We are replicas of God in the world.

We still have Free Will, for without Free Will, we cannot love. If we choose to honor our baptismal garment and the cross that comes with it, we then choose to live out our lives consistent with the prayers of the Divine Liturgy. We do not seek to control *other people* in the world around us; we seek to control *ourselves* so

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**PATRIARCHAL CHRISTMAS EN-
CYCLICAL & "2017: THE YEAR OF
THE PROTECTION OF THE
SACREDNESS OF CHILDREN"**

that others can be inspired to love God. In this way, we are *replicas* of God's love and bearers of God's power through prayer. On the other hand, we can choose to cast away our baptismal garment and to take off our cross—in essence, we can choose to change our identity as one being apart from God. But, then we are down to simply "the fabrics" of life; not the essence of life.

In our choice to follow Christ, our way of life is intimately tied to our personal participation in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on Sundays and Feast Days. Through the Holy Sacrament, our minds, hands and feet become the minds, hands and feet of Christ our God.

In this way, the Sacrament of Holy Communion fulfills our baptismal calling—a calling that comes to us through the prayer by which the Baptismal Waters are blessed: *"Manifest Yourself in this water, O Lord, and grant that the one to be baptized may be transformed therein to the putting away of the old person, which has been made corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and the putting on of the new, which is renewed according to the Image of Him Who created him/her."*

This Image is that of God's Beautiful Light of glory. Through the Sacraments, we participate in this Light, as is proclaimed in the hymn chanted after Holy Communion: *"We have seen the True Light; we have received the Heavenly Spirit; we have found the True Faith, worshipping the Undivided Trinity..."*

This "True Light," by the way, being the Light of God, is why our baptismal garment is ideally white in color. He Who is clothed in the glory of Eternal Light came into the world as naked as Adam and Eve. His humble nakedness is the undoing of the tragic loss of Adam's innocence due to sin. While Adam and Eve clothed themselves with the fabric of plants in shame, our Lord clothes us in the Light of His fabulous glory and Wisdom—the garment of Holy Baptism.

+FR. THEODORE

Beloved brothers and sisters, dear children in the Lord,

We praise and glorify the God in Trinity, who deemed us worthy once again this year to reach the great feast of the Nativity in the flesh of the Son and Word of God the Father in "little Bethlehem."

The holy Church is celebrating with fullness of joy, for Christ "assumed flesh" through His incarnation and rendered the Church "an adornment for the world." Indeed, the entire human race, and even "all of creation," rejoices over this divine blessing. "All of creation is today filled with joy because Christ is born of a Virgin."

In contrast to the "unmoved mover" of the ancient Greeks, our God is the communion of love and lovingly moves in time toward humankind and the world. "In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us." (1 John 4.10)

The pre-eternal Word of the Father, who granted "being" to humankind, now grants us "well being" through His incarnation. "This is the reason behind the feast; this is why we celebrate today: namely, God's descent to us so that we might ascend—or return—to God . . . in order that, by laying aside the old man, we may assume the new man; and in order that, by dying to Adam, we might therefore live in Christ; in order that we might be with Christ, be crucified with Him, be buried with Him, and arise with Him." The way of deification through grace is henceforth open to everyone coming into the world. All of us are "capable of containing God." "There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free man, neither male nor female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3.28)

Unfortunately, the Gospel of Christmas is once again proclaimed to a world where the racket of weapons is heard, where unprovoked violence

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PATRIARCHAL ENCYCLICAL, continued

against individuals and peoples is enacted, and where inequality and social justice prevail. It is unbearable to witness the state of countless children, victims of military conflict, irregular situations, manifold exploitations, persecutions and discriminations, as well as hunger, poverty and painful dispossession.

Last April, we had the opportunity in Lesbos to witness with our own eyes – together with His Holiness Pope Francis of Rome and His Beatitude Archbishop Ieronymos of Athens and All Greece – the tragic circumstances of refugees and immigrants, and especially the acute problems of the suffering children, innocents and defenseless victims of military violence, as well as the racial and religious discrimination and injustice, all of which are constantly increasing.

The feast of God’s Word, who became an infant – the child Jesus, whose disappearance is pursued by worldly authority, according to the Evangelist Matthew (Matt 2.13) – is a reminder and invitation for us to care for children, to protect these vulnerable victims and to respect the sacredness of childhood.

Of course, children and sensitive souls are also threatened in economically developed and politically stable countries of the world, whether by the immense crisis of marriage and family, or by diverse interventions as well as the use of physical or spiritual force. A child’s soul is altered by the influential consumption of electronic media, especially television and the internet, and by the radical transformation of communication. Unbridled economics transfigures them from a young age into consumers, while the pursuit of pleasure rapidly vanishes their innocence.

In light of these dangers, the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church addressed children and young people “with particular love and affection” (Prov. 8) by including the following in its Encyclical:

Amid the medley of mutually contradictory definitions of childhood, our most holy Church presents the words of our Lord: “Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 18.3) and

shall not enter it (Luke 18.17), as well as what our Savior says about those who “prevent” (Luke 18.16) children from approaching Him and about those who “scandalize” them (Matt 18.6).

The mystery of Christmas is crystallized in the words of the festive Kontakion: “For us, a new child was born, God before all ages.” The divine Word as child and the child as God is revealed to the world with “the pure heart” and simplicity of a child. Children comprehend truths, which “wise and prudent” people are unable to approach. As Elytis observes in his poem *From One’s Neighbor*: “You can build Jerusalem out of children alone!”

Beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord, We appeal to all of you to respect the identity and sacredness of childhood. In light of the global refugee crisis that especially affects the rights of children; in light of the plague of child mortality, hunger and child labor, child abuse and psychological violence, as well as the dangers of altering children’s souls through their uncontrolled exposure to the influence of contemporary electronic means of communication and their subjection to consumerism, we declare 2017 as the Year of Protection of the Sacredness of Childhood, inviting everyone to recognize and respect the rights and integrity of children.

As underlined in another significant document of the Holy and Great Council, the Church of Christ does not look to “judging and condemning the world” with its word (John 3.17; 12.47), “but rather to offer to the world the guidance of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, namely, the hope and assurance that evil, no matter its form, does not have the last word in history and must not be allowed to dictate its course.”

Therefore, we venerate our Savior with humility and compunction, for He has visited us from on high; we praise with divine song the immensity of the sacred Incarnation; we kneel down before the All-Holy Theotokos, who holds the child Jesus; and we address from the sleepless Phanar the festive greeting to all children of the

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PATRIARCHAL ENCYCLICAL, continued

Church of Constantinople, both near and afar:

“Christ is born; glorify Him. Christ has come from heaven; come out to meet Him,” together with our paternal wishes and patriarchal prayer.

“Be strong in the grace of Christ Jesus.” (2 Tim. 2.1) Let us all strive together with faith and sincere love in the good struggle of new life in the Church, adhering to all that the Lord has commanded. For He is with us “all the days of our life, to the end of the ages.” (Matt 28.20)

Christmas 2016

✠ **BARTHOLOMEW** of Constantinople

Fervent supplicant of all before God

2017 GREEK FESTIVAL



Greek Festival on Facebook – All parishioners of St. George who use Facebook are asked to place announcements for our 2017 Greek Festival on **Facebook** and to allow people to “like” their message so that information about our Greek Festival can spread to others in our vicinity and beyond. Please contact Ana Storton and/or Jim Christopoulos for more information about advertising our Festival on Facebook.

Underwriters—We want to express gratitude to our Lord for those who have pledged to underwrite some of the expenses related to the success of our 2017. Underwriting costs serves greatly to help in terms of costs related to the Festival and it involves only **monetary donations** (not “donations in-kind”) toward the costs of items needed. Some items in need of being underwritten are:

1. Ground beef for dolmades
2. Chicken for “kabobs” and the dinner
3. Tzatziki sauce for the gyro
4. Dairy for the making of pastries
5. Costs related to set-up equipment
6. Costs related to advertising

To contribute a donation toward underwriting Festival costs, please contact **Festival Chairman, George Argyros**.

Hired Worker Sponsors—Manpower is critical need on the actual days of our Greek Festival.

Those parishioners who cannot commit to working for an entire 4-hour shift, are asked to sponsor a worker who will be hired to work such a shift. A contribution of **\$60** will help to hire a worker for a 4-hour shift to help with the running of our Festival booths and other areas of need.

Preparation Schedule—Preparations for the 2017 Greek Festival will officially begin at 9:00 a.m. on Monday, January 9, 2017. Stacey Argyros will be chairing many of the dinner-line preparations, while Lula Valissarakos will be chairing the many pastry preparations. Please contact **Presvytera Petula**, (760) 880-5869, to commit for the weekday preparation needs in the effort to insure that an adequate number of volunteers report to help on a daily basis.

Cooking areas—The decision was made that portable planks will be used this year to cover the grass courtyard where cooking will take place during the Festival. The cost includes the installation and removal of the planks and totals **\$2,700**.

January Festival Meeting—The next Festival meeting is scheduled for **Monday, January 2, 2017 at 7:00 p.m.** The agenda includes refining the preparation schedule and garnering commitments for parishioners to man the Festival booths and work the various functions regarding the total Festival event.

FUNERAL PLOTS / ORTHODOX SECTION

In a joint effort, Fr. Ted and Fr. David Kruse of the St. Raphael Antiochian Orthodox parish in Thousand Palms, California are looking into establishing an Orthodox Church Section at Desert Memorial Park Cemetery at the corner of Ramon and DeVall in Cathedral City. The first step in the process is to determine how much interest there is among the Orthodox Christian faithful in the Coachella Valley (Greek Orthodox, Antiochian Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox, Romanian Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, etc). We have the opportunity for burial plots to be purchased together in one area, blessing the ground, making

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FUNERAL/BURIAL PLOTS, continued

it an Orthodox area. We were given a price of **\$1585.00** per plot. Please let Fr. Ted know if you are interested so that he can work with Fr. David in making the appropriate arrangements.

ST. GEORGE ENDOWMENT FUND REPORT

The Saint George of the Desert Endowment Fund has seen a modest gain YTD bringing its total current balance to **\$285,595.87** from \$274,370.99 End of Year 2015. This is following current market results. There were total donations of \$350.00 YTD.

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

Domestic Equities.....	\$140,526.79	49%
Domestic Fixed Income-	\$121,907.21	43%
International Equities....	\$19,490.37	7%
Cash & Equivalents	\$ 3,671.50	1%

All Investments increased in value over the year and previous month. **The fund has increased in value \$13,673.79 YTD.** With the expected increase in interest rates, Equities will typically decrease in value and Bonds will increase in the upcoming period. As always, world and national events have an effect on investment outcomes. The markets are reaching new highs currently and a correction may be imminent. As always, the Fund has a long view which has worked well to date.

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.

The Resource Group, who manages the fund, assesses the Fund an Advisory Fee 1% or \$670/qr on the current balance which is considered low by industry standards which is 2%. In addition, the funds have no load. Although there are funds available in the Index Fund arenas, I feel our risk is better mitigated on inevitable downturns through our existing funds and their current Beta

or risk factors. It is the intent to grow the fund not only through prudent investment, but by donations and estate planned giving. An updated by-law proposal will be submitted to the Board in the 1st Quarter 2017 which will include a proposal for an Archdiocese designed "Eternal Light" Program. This is an exciting and worthwhile program which will help ensure the Parish's viability into the future by listing families who promise to include the church in their Estate Planning.

I will begin to include Executive Summaries of the fund's By-Laws monthly for the Parish's information below:

St George of the Desert Endowment Fund By-Laws EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Plan: Investment/Endowment

Current Assets: \$285,595.87

Time Horizon: Perpetuity

Risk Tolerance: Moderate

Spending Policy: Investment Assets must reach **\$500,000** prior to any spending. Once investment assets total \$500,000 or more, the Fund may be used only for capital improvements, natural disaster, if the church is unable to meet obligations as directed by the Parish Council and/or the General Assembly. The amount of withdrawals shall not exceed an amount that will bring the principal below \$400,000 to be replenished to maintain the \$500,000 reserve amount.

Asset Allocation: Per consultation with the Investment Counselor.

Present Recommendation: 50% to 60% equities, 40 Bonds (market conditions dependent) with some cash reserves as prudent. Structure to be determined in consultation with Investment Committee on periodic basis.

Liquidity: All investments must be highly liquid and able to be converted into cash within a three business day settlement period.

– NICHOLAS M. LATKOVIC,
Endowment Fund Chairman

MESSAGE FROM THE PARISH PRESIDENT



Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

We all get very excited about the Christmas season. We look forward to spending time with the family, giving gifts that others will appreciate and enjoying the good food and company of the day. As Orthodox Christians, we are sometimes concerned that the secularization of the season takes away from its true meaning. I recently came across an article written by His Grace Bishop John Abdalah of the Antiochian Orthodox faith, who explained how the now secular images can bring us deeper meaning. For example:

- Let every twinkling light on every bush and window remind us that Christ is the Light that brings us from darkness into light. Every light can bring us to him who is Light, just like that star that guided the Magi.
- Let every Santa on the street collecting money, or posing for photos with children, remind us of the gifts God has given us and the opportunities God gives us to share with others.
- Let every gift we present to one another remind us of the gift of life that Christ is for us. Christ gives us life as we are born anew with Him. Remember also that the Eucharist is life-giving and given in His name.
- Let every Christmas carol and seasonal song, remind us that we are called to praise God from the depths of our beings. Our soul wants to call out to Him who created us and who comes to us in this feast as a baby. Sing out and let God hear your voice.

Our successes and failures in life may often depend on how we understand our experiences. During this Christmas season, let's start looking for all of the opportunities that God has given us to glorify Him. It may take much work and effort, but is there any other goal that is more worthwhile?

– JIM CHRISTOPOULOS,
Parish Council President

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS



December Activities

1. **Our Annual Christmas Lunch** got rave reviews. We had lunch and entertainment at a new venue this year. We met at the Desert Horizons Country Club and had a delicious lunch with salad, an entree of steak or salmon and a yummy desert. We had a total of 46 members and guests enjoying the performance of Terry Gallagher and her fiancé Randy Roberts singing Christmas songs. Our members got up and danced forming a Conga line near the end of the performance. It was rocking! Our co-chairpersons Rhonda Latkovic, Linda Bozigian, Debbie Vawter, Carol Lyons and Tina Veroulis did a spectacular job. We had door prizes of gift certificates and baskets and we all had a lovely time. Our door prize donors were **Stacy Argyros** for a \$30 certificate to Town Center Cafe, **Calle and Yiannis Psalios** for a \$40 gift certificate for Koutouki Estatoria, **Nick and Rhonda Latkovic** for a Wine Basket, **Linda Bozigian** for a potted live Tree Basket, **JC Penney's** for a Salon Basket for Hair Service and Hair Products, and **Josie Desnoyers** for a Facial Treatment Gift Certificate. See pictures enclosed.

2. **We made 22 Christmas Baskets** chaired by Rhonda Latkovic for our shut-ins. The baskets included our Christmas Card, Christmas ornament, travel sized tissue, skin needs (lip balm, hand cream, sanitizer gel, emery board), word puzzles, gum, mints and chocolates, Christmas bread and koulourakia. Our volunteers were: Rhonda Latkovic, Becky Allen, Terry Ayanopolis, Linda Bozigian, Tony Dalkas, Bess Heinrich, Nick Kaperonis, Bess Manesis, Father Ted Pantels, Linda Petalas, Emily and George Tcharos, Lula Valissarakos, Tina Veroulis and Mary Zachariadou. See pictures enclosed.

3. **Our Christmas Bake Sale** was co-chaired by **Lula Valissarkos** and **Tina Veroulis**. Our Bake Sale was successful this year bringing in **\$2,770**. This will be used to support our charities and

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PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS, continued

projects. Thank you for purchasing our baked goods.

4. Monetary donations for December included:

- A. Christmas gift to our seminarian student:
Spencer Ramos and his family- \$500
- B. Light the Path- \$100
- C. St. Nicholas Memorial Fund (New York)
\$1,000
- D. Eisenhower Emergency Toys for Children-
\$300

January Activities

1. **Taverna Night** will be held on Saturday, January 7, 2017.
2. We will start food prepping for the Festival on Monday, January 9. See schedule.
3. **January Board Meeting - Monday, January 2, 2017 at 11:00 a.m.**
4. **January General Meeting - Thursday, January 12, 2017 at 11:30 a.m.**

February Activities

The Knitting Project items will be delivered around Valentine's Day, **February 14, 2017**. This will give us more time to make hats, headbands and afghans for the patients at City of Hope.

Total Monetary Donations for 2016 including National, Metropolis, our Church and local charities:

National Philoptochos	\$ 5,391
Metropolis Philoptochos	\$ 5,071
St. George Church	\$ 3,570
Local Charities	\$ 3,950
Total for 2016:	\$17,982

Total hours volunteered and monies donated from our members and parishioners of St. George to support our good works **IMMEASURABLE!**

Thank you all for your support and making 2016 a success for our Philoptochos chapter.

-LINDA KALLIS,

Philoptochos Chapter President

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

The **2017 Stewardship Pledge Cards** will be available beginning **Sunday, January 1st**. We will have a table set up in the church hall staffed by **Rhonda Latkovic**, Stewardship Chairperson, who will **distribute cards** between **Jan.1-8, 2017**. Any cards not picked up after the Sunday, January 8th church service will be mailed.

Then, on **Sunday, January 15th, 2017**, we will celebrate Stewardship Sunday with a special prayer service during Liturgy. We are asking all stewards to please return their 2017 Pledge cards by **January 15th**, if possible. Our 2017 Pledge Goal is **\$115,000**.

– RHONDA LATKOVIC,
Stewardship Chairperson

AHEPA NEWS

The AHEPA 528 Fr. T.P. Theophilos Scholarship is available for all high school graduates of 2017. For more information regarding the AHEPA Scholarship, visit the website : www.ahepa528.org, or contacting our AHEPA email contact@ahpepa528.org. Scholarships to be awarded on AHEPA Sunday, May 21st 2017.

December 14th we had fun and fellowship at annual AHEPA Christmas dinner 6pm at Spaghetti Factory in Rancho Mirage.

All AHEPANs, please help and support our Church and Philoptochos at the 2017 **Taverna Night** on January 7th. *Reservations are needed by January 1st.*

AHEPA 528 did a soft Christmas campaign for **Project Mexico** and raised \$700 which will be matched by a benefactor.

Please consider joining AHEPA Chapter 528 and keep Hellenism strong in the desert through philanthropy and brotherhood.

Next Chapter meeting is scheduled for **January 11, 2017 at 6:30 p.m. at St. George Church.**

– WYNN STORTON,
AHEPA Chapter 528 President

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Saint Nicholas, the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia is famed as a great saint pleasing unto God. He was born in the city of Patara in the region of Lycia (on the south coast of the Asia Minor peninsula), and was the only son of pious parents Theophanes and Nonna, who had vowed to dedicate him to God. Since Nicholas was a small child, he always studied Scripture; during the day, he would not leave church, and by night he prayed and read books, making himself truly a friend of God.

St. Nicholas was known for the many good things he did. One time, there was a man who had three daughters who needed money so he could buy food. The saint, learning of the man's poverty secretly visited him one night and threw a sack of gold through the window. Since there was so much money, the man was able to buy food and give his daughters the money they would need when they grew up. However, St. Nicholas always strove to keep his good acts a secret.

Another time, St. Nicholas was going to go on a long trip on a huge boat. But shortly after he left, he had a feeling that a storm would come and sink the ship, and sure enough, the sky grew dark and cloudy and the ocean waters began to crash against the sides of the boat. Everybody was very scared, but St. Nicholas prayed to God, and the waves stopped beating the boat, and the sun came out from behind the clouds. His prayer was so strong that even a certain sailor of the ship who had fallen during the storm and was very hurt, was made better.

St. Nicholas was a very gentle priest who was very caring to those who needed him. Soon, he was made a bishop of his area, Lycia, and did everything he could to correct those who held the wrong beliefs about the church. And while he was a bishop, he continued to help those he could. He worked many other miracles and struggled many long years at his work. Through the prayers of the saint, soldiers were helped, and

the city of Myra was rescued from a terrible food shortage.

Having reached old age, St. Nicholas peacefully fell asleep in the Lord. When he died, his body had a very sweet smell, and the myrrh which flowed from his body helped to heal sick people. The name of the great saint of God, the hierarch and wonderworker Nicholas, a quick helper for all who call on him, is famed in every corner of the earth, in many lands, and among many peoples. All over the world, there are many churches named after him. There is, perhaps, not a single city without a church named after him. St. Nicholas, the bishop of Lycia, is the patron of travelers, and we pray to him for help from floods, poverty, or any misfortunes. He has promised to help those who remember his parents, Theophanes and Nonna. Merry Christmas.

—JIM CHRISTOPOULOS

THEOPHANY & HOUSE BLESSINGS

The Feast Day of Theophany (Epiphany) is on **Friday, January 6, 2017**. The liturgical events surrounding this Feast Day are as follows:

Thursday, January 5th ..EVE OF THEOPHANY - Royal Hours-8:30 a.m., Vespers Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great-9:30 a.m., the Great Blessing of the Waters-10:45 a.m. (Strict Fasting Day)

Friday, January 6th..HOLY THEOPHANY—Orthros-8:30 a.m., Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m., the Great Blessing of the Waters-10:45 a.m.

Holy Water bottles are available. However, those who have Holy Water bottles from last year are encouraged to bring them from home when they come to participate in the Divine Church Services of Theophany.

House Blessings may be scheduled following Church Services on **Friday, January 6th** and may be scheduled throughout all of January, in accordance to the circumstances surrounding time availabilities of individual family households. Contact Fr. Ted by phone at (760) 880-5869, or through the email: frt.j.pantels@gmail.com.

COLORING BOOK GROUP

Our December coloring session and luncheon was held on Friday, December 16th. We had 17 attendees who enjoyed a lunch of Manhattan clam chowder soup, a mixed green salad, baked Brie en croute, and lots of Christmas cookies! Festive Christmas music was played & some of the attendees enthusiastically danced to the tunes! Thank you **Annette Lewis & Linda Bozigian** for livening up the room! Our coloring group keeps growing monthly and we welcome more to join our fun group! See enclosed pictures.

Our next coloring session & luncheon will be held on **Friday, January 13th**. Start time will be **12:00 pm**.

Coloring pages and pencils will be supplied. A \$5 minimum donation is requested. All donations will be given to the church.

Please RSVP your attendance to **Rhonda Latkovic**, Adult Coloring Group Leader, by **January 8th**.

PARISH BY-LAWS

Over the past year the Parish Council authorized a committee to convene in order to review needed recommendations for updating our Parish By-Laws. This committee, of course, is the **By-Law Committee**, with **Michael Vawter** serving as chairman of this committee, and **Annette Lewis, Nick Krespis, and Presvytera Petula Pantels** serving as members.

In October 2016, this committee presented to the Parish Council a draft containing recommendations for amending our by-laws through which the total ministry for our parish can continue to be fair and efficient, given new circumstances that present themselves with the passage of time. Throughout October, November and December the Parish Council has reviewed the Proposed New By-Laws of our parish.

Meetings with our parishioners will be held between now and March at which the recommended amendments to our By-Laws can be reviewed with our parishioners, in general. It is planned that all of us will be prepared to vote to ratify these By-

Laws at the Spring General Assembly Meeting in March 2017. We look forward to everyone's input and participation.

PARISH OUTREACH

In October, 2016 I informed Fr. Ted that I had decided to retire my position as the Outreach Coordinator. The journey in the past three-and-a-half years has been rewarding to me as St. George Greek Orthodox Church had no viable working Outreach Program.

The first mission was to gather a group that could assist in recruiting new parishioners to our parish, this was somewhat long and tedious, however on a medium scale successful in the end! Secondly, introducing a **Welcome Committee Program** whereby creating a **Parish Brochure** with a new **Mission and Vision Statement**, which also included a brief history of St. George. Pamphlets of information were sought out to include in a folder-like packet. All of this worked well, then we established the **Welcome Committee Greeters** who would serve to hand out the pamphlets to our visitors each Sunday. Moving forward, the Outreach Program was expanded with **40 Days of Life, The Baby Bottle Campaign, the Men's Day Rally**, and picked up **The Veteran Day Celebration**.

These are all wonderful projects and I believe that Fr. Ted at this time is discussing their continuation with some of St. Georges' Auxillary leaders. We are God's eyes, hands, and feet. Further we were all created to carry on His Works in the church. There will come a time at the end of our journey when we will all be asked, "now what work did you do to help in God's program?"

Thank you all for your support in helping me to be the very best that I can be working in the House of the Lord!

Many blessings,

—LOUISE DOBBS BARRINGER

THE THREE HIERARCHS: THEOLOGY THAT GUIDES THE CHURCH



On **January 30th** every year the Orthodox Church causes us to remember three outstanding theologians who shaped our Church. These three are: **St. John Chrysostom** (“Golden Mouthed”), **St. Basil of Caesarea** and **St. Gregory the Theologian** (also called St. Gregory Nazianzus). During later Byzantine times a story emerged about the view of these three saints. There was controversy over these saints to define which among them was the greatest. St. John Chrysostom was known as an outstanding preacher who even was exiled for preaching about the bad things committed by the royal family. St. Basil had outstanding use of the Greek Language, while St. Gregory the Theologian was outstanding for explaining the mystical theology of the Church. Who was the greatest among these?

One later Bishop, **St. John Mauropus**, had a dream that provided a forecast of the Feast of the Three Hierarchs. To him, all three teachers and bishops appeared to him and said that all three were together and had the same teaching about the Holy Trinity. They should all be celebrated together on the same date. And so it was: **January 30** was selected as the celebration of the Three Hierarchs. Later, there developed the mistaken tendency to over-emphasize ancient Greek culture as an important factor in the Church’s development. Yes, this is a mistake. It is true that all three were ancient-Greek educated and they knew Attic Greek. Yet, there is something more important that united them. All three were very important in defining Christianity through proper teaching on the Holy Trinity. All three defined the fact that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all equal Persons of the One God.

All of them could write Attic Greek. Yet, St. John Chrysostom was a popular preacher and nobody spoke Attic Greek in those days, any more than now. St. John challenged the political leadership, especially the Empress of the East. St. John

is tied to the main Divine Liturgy – the *Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, (although this service evolved over many centuries). St. Basil himself is associated with the Divine Liturgy that bears his name and which is celebrated mostly during Great Lent.

All three saints were strong defenders of the Trinitarian Faith and could explain the theology of the Trinity. All three lived in the fourth century and used the Greek Language to explain the glories of God. St. Gregory is known as the “Trinitarian Theologian.” Of all the Hierarchs, St. Gregory is the one that tried to use the good parts of Greek culture to gain converts to the Faith and promote the theology of the Church. He used the term “procession” to describe the existence of the Spirit from the Father and thus had a big role in the Second Ecumenical Synod. Finally, we can mention that St. Gregory composed *The Invective Against Julian*, the last pagan Emperor of Rome and, throughout his life, St. Gregory gave much of his estate to the needy.

St. Basil, for Greeks in Greece, has **January 1** as a Name Day and he is associated with the tradition of Christmas gift-giving in Greece, almost in the same way that in the West, St. Nicholas of Myra is associated with “Santa Claus.” St. Basil is remembered also every year for his annual “Vasilopita”, sometimes with an extra coin or “treat” inside. The thoughts of these Hierarchs can surprise us. St. Basil had lectures on *The Six Days of Creation*, where he points out that these “days” are not necessarily the 24 hour days that we think about. Finally, St. Basil is sometimes called “Revealer of Heavenly Mysteries.”

All three saints shared education in the Greek way of learning. In particular, St. Basil’s works are still used as a background for Attic Greek classes in the Greek University Theological School.

Summing up, the Three Hierarchs are not so much about showing how Greek culture impressed the Church, but more about teaching the common faith in the Trinity and in the great mysteries of humans knowing God.

– MATTHEW DAVIS

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN POSITION PERTAINING TO THE DONATION OF HUMAN ORGANS & MEDICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Although nothing in Orthodox Tradition requires the faithful to donate their organs to others, nevertheless, this practice may be considered an act of love and, as such, is encouraged. The decision to donate a duplicate organ, such as a kidney, while the donor is living, requires much consideration and should be made in consultation with medical professionals and one's Spiritual Father. The donation of an organ from a deceased person is also an act of love that offers the recipient a longer, fuller life. Such donations are acceptable if the deceased donor had willed such action, or if surviving relatives permit it, providing that it was in harmony with the desires of the deceased. Such actions can be approved as an expression of love and the self-determination of the donor. In all cases, respect for the body of the donor should be maintained.

Organ transplants should never be commercialized nor coerced nor take place without proper consent. In addition, organ transplants are not to place in jeopardy the identity of the donor or recipient...The death of the donor should never be hastened in order to harvest organs for transplantation to another person.

It is with high frequency that new developments in the area of the life sciences appear in our technologically advanced culture. The Church welcomes efforts and innovations that contribute to the healing of human diseases. Yet, many of these advances raise moral questions. Some of the Church's responses to these developments are based on older issues for which the Church has clear and unambiguous guidelines. Analysis of the impact of such developments on the life of the human soul and the ultimate salvation of one's soul is critical in making evaluations for any action. Such analysis should be provided by clergy, theologians and Orthodox Christian medical professionals.

(Taken in part from Greek Orthodox Archdiocese 2016 Yearbook, page 285)

PARISH COUNCIL UPDATE

We congratulate the newly elected members of the Parish Council for 2017: **Becky Allen, Spiro Astmos, Tony Dalkas and Lula Valissarakos**. We are grateful to the services of those who served as members of the Election Committee: **Matushka Gloria Lehman, Michael Long and Presvytera Petula Pantels**.

At the December 2016 Parish Council meeting, the following agenda items were discussed:

1. Solar Panels: Options are still open to proceed with plans to install solar panels for our church. An informal proposal was presented to install a fully functioning solar panel system, which would include solar panels on a parking structure in our parking lot. This will require money acquired from grants made by corporations. It was decided to look into the means of acquiring such a grant for our parish.
2. Scrip: A full presentation by Presvytera Petula Pantels of the Scrip Program will be presented to St. George parishioners throughout the month of January 2017, explaining how the program works and the ways in which parishioners can participate. Details will be provided in *The Ladder*.
3. A decision was made to pay \$2,700 for the installation of temporary panels to serve as a "washable surface" for areas on which grills and burners are used to prepare food during our Greek Festival.
4. The Proposed Parish By-laws were reviewed in order to schedule dates and times for presentation of the new proposals to parish members into the New Year, 2017.

Finally, special thanks and honors were offered to **Tillie Lockshire and Jim Christopoulos** who have served faithfully as Parish Council members over the years, but who will not be returning to the Council in 2017.

PHOTO ALBUM OF ST. GEORGE PARISH CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

THE LADIES PHILOPTOCHOS CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON - Saturday, December 10, 2016
at: Desert Horizons Country Club



On the left: Philoptochos President, Linda Kallis, introduces the Philoptochos Christmas Luncheon Program to all in attendance.



Left: Singer Terry Gallager sings a Christmas Carol with Spiro Astmos.

Center: J.J. Richards represented the AHEPA 528 Chapter.

To the Right: Terry Gallager and fiancé Randy Roberts entertained with a genuine Christmas spirit.



Philoptochos Ladies started to dance to the music of Christmas carols.

PHILOPTOCHOS CHRISTMAS BASKETS OUTREACH - Tuesday, December 13, 2016
at: St. George Parish Hall



Pictured above: The many Christmas baskets that were given to home-bound parishioners by our Philoptochos members this year. George Tcharos, Fr. Ted and Nick Kaperonis helped to distribute Christmas baskets. They represented the men of our parish who support the Ladies Philptochos Society.



The Christmas Basket Outreach Project this year was organized with the help of Emily Tcharos (left), Rhonda Latkovic, chairperson (center) and Linda Bozigian (right).



AHEPA CHAPTER 528 CHRISTMAS DINNER -
Wednesday, December 14, 2016
at: The Old Spaghetti Factory



Good times at the AHEPA 528 Annual Christmas Dinner. Clockwise from the upper left: Posing for a picture are: Linda Kallis, Mr. and Mrs. Angelo Veroulis, J.J. Richards and Matushka Gloria Lehman. Above: Posing for a picture are: Nick Krespis, Fotini Krespic, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Loukatos, Lula Valis-sarkos. Left: Becky Allen and Mr. and Mrs. Gus Kurupas.

THE ST. GEORGE PARISH CHRISTMAS PROGRAM - Sunday, December 11, 2016
at: St. George Parish Hall



Top Left: Santa Claus visit the Sunday School students of St. George this year.

Above: Jennifer and Jon Nassos singing a Christmas Carol as a duet.

To the left: The St. George Choir led by Annette Laskaris, with accompaniment by MargeGuerecki

Lower Left: Christie Maletis sings a Christmas Carol



MOVIE DAY: CHRISTMAS WITH THE
KAROUNTZOSES
Saturday, December 17, 2016

Pictured below are those who came to our parish hall on Saturday, December 17, 2016 to enjoy the comedy movie: *Christmas With the Karountzoses*.



COLORING BOOK GROUP CHRISTMAS GATHERING - Friday, December 17, 2016
at: St. George Parish Hall



Upper Left: Linda Bozigian and Rhonda Latkovic give preliminary comments at the beginning of the December 2016 Coloring Book Group meeting.



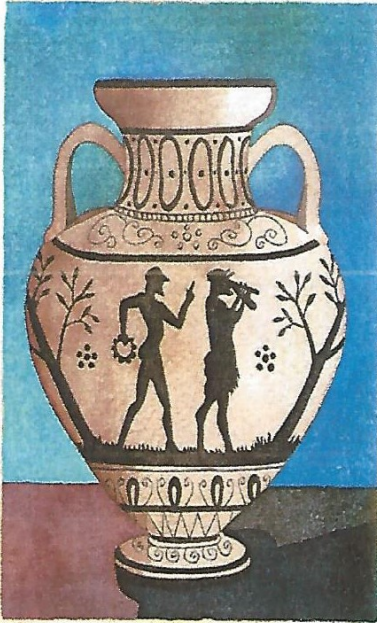
Above: Photograph showing the many colors used, along with the set-up of each table where the Coloring Book participants color in their intricately-designed patterns.

To the Left: With Christmas Carols as background music, Rhonda Latkovic, Tina Veroulis, Linda Bozigian and Terry Ayanopolis get into the Christmas spirit by dancing to the music in between coloring their designs.



To the Left: Tillie Lockshire, Eve Meek, and Debbie Vawter pause for a picture while enjoying the spirited Christmas Coloring Book Group gathering.

ST. GEORGE PHILOPTOCHOS



INVITES YOU TO ATTEND
TAVERNA NIGHT
JANUARY 7, 2017

AT 6 P.M.

\$40.00 PER PERSON

GREEK DINNER

MUSIC & DANCING

PAID RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE

IN ADVANCE BY JANUARY 1, 2017
TAKEN AT THE PHILOPTOCHOS TABLE

NO UNPAID RESERVATIONS AT DOOR
OR MAIL THE FORM BELOW TO: ST. GEORGE

PHILOPTOCHOS, P.O. BOX 4755, PALM DESERT, CA 92261

AND NOTE TAVERNA NIGHT

NAME: -----

NUMBER OF PERSONS ATTENDING: -----

AMOUNT ENCLOSED -----

PHONE # -----



SAVE THE DATE!

Sunday, April 23, 2017

FEAST DAY OF ST. GEORGE

HOSTING:

HIS EMINENCE,

METROPOLITAN GERASIMOS

of

SAN FRANCISCO

On the occasion of the:

**20th ANNIVERSARY OF CELEBRATING OUR PATRON SAINT IN OUR
ST. GEORGE PARISH CHURCH EDIFACE!**

THIS CELEBRATION INCLUDES:

St. George Golf Tournament at Desert Willow

Golf Resort in Palm Desert: Friday and Saturday, April 21-22.

**April 21, 2017: Friday afternoon golf followed by steak dinner
at the church.**

**April 22, 2017: Saturday morning golf followed by Greek-style
dinner at the church...live music, dancing and fun!**

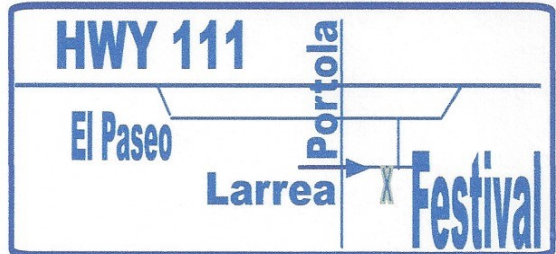
More details and information to follow in the months ahead.

JOIN US!

GREEK CHICKEN · MOUSAKA · SPANAKOPITA · DOLMADE · PASTICHIO · SOULVAKI · BAKLAVA · DOLMADES · GYROS · GREEK LAMB · BAKLAVA · LOUKOUMADES · GREEK CHICKEN · MOUSAKA · SPANAKOPITA · DOLMADE · PASTICHIO · SOULVAKI · BAKLAVA · DOLMADES · GYROS · GREEK LAMB · BAKLAVA · LOUKOUMADES



AUTHENTIC GREEK FOOD
 HEAVENLY PASTRIES
 GREEK FOLK DANCERS
 OUZO · RETSINA · METAXA
 ART & SOUVENIRS
 RELIGIOUS ITEMS
 CHURCH TOURS
 KIDZ ZONE
 FUN FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY



www.PDGreekFest.org


 PDGreekFest

**Saint George
 Greek Orthodox Church**

Palm Desert, CA

Proudly presents the

21ST ANNUAL

**GREEK
 FESTIVAL**

*Experience Authentic Greek Food
 Devour Heavenly Pastries
 Dance to live Greek music, and
Be Greek for a Day!*

February 25th & 26th 2017

**Saturday & Sunday
 11am to 8pm**

on the Church Grounds
 74-109 Larrea, Palm Desert, CA
(760) 568-9901

Admission \$3 (Children 12 & under free)

Active Duty Military, Police, Fire & EMT Free w. ID



"We are pleased to provide assistance to anyone
 requesting it. If you need help, please ask"

St. George Greek Orthodox Church of the Desert

74-109 Larrea St. / P.O. Box 4755

Palm Desert, California 92261 web: www.go-stgeorge.org/ email: pdsaintgeorge@gmail.com

Telephone: (760)568-9901 / FAX: 9760) 568-9492

JANUARY, 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1- CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD FEAST DAY OF ST. BASIL THE GREAT Ep. Col. 2:8-12 Gos. St. Luke 2:20,40-52 Vasilopita Celebraton	2 Philoptochos Board Meeting—11:00 a.m. FESTIVAL MEETING-7:00pm	3 Bible Study- 10:00 a.m.	4	5-EVE OF THEOPHANY Royal Hours—8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m. Great Blessing of The Waters-11:00 a.m.	6-HOLY THEOPHANY Orthros-8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m. Great Blessing of The Waters- 10:45 a.m.	7-ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST Orthros-8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m. Vespers- 5:00 p.m.
8-Sunday After Theophany Ep. Eph. 4:7-13 Gos. St. Matth.4:12-17	9 FESTIVAL PREPARATIONS BEGIN—8:30 a.m.	10 Bible Study-10:00 a.m.	11 AHEPA Meeting-6:30 p.m.	12 Choir Practice-1:00 p.m.	13 Coloring Group-12:00 noon	14 Vespers-5:00 p.m.
15 12th Sunday of St. Luke Ep.- Col. 3: 4-11 Gos.- St. Luke 17:12-19	16	17-ST. ANTHONY THE GREAT Orthros-8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m. Bible Study- 11:00 a.m.	18-ST. ATHANASIOS Orthros-8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.	19	20- ST. EUTHYMIOS Orthros-8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.	21 Vespers-5:00 p.m.
22 15th Sunday of St. Luke Ep. 1 Tim. 4:9-15 Gos. St. Luke 19:1-10	23	24 Bible Study-10:00 a.m.	25-ST. GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN Orthros-8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.	26 Choir Practice-1:00 p.m.	27	28 Vespers-5:00 p.m.
29 Sunday of the Canaanite Woman Ep.- 2 Cor. 6:16-18;7:1 Gos.-St. Matth. 15:21-28	30 THE THREE HIERARCHS Orthros-8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.	31	<u>FEBRUARY 1</u>	<u>FEBRUARY 2</u> PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD IN THE TEMPLE Orthros-8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.		Sunday Schedule of Services: Orthros-8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m. Sunday School—10:30 a.m. No Sunday School on Christmas & New Year