

AUGUST 2018

# Voice of St. George

SAINT GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH  
OF THE DESERT

74-109 LARREA ST., PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA



## MOTHER OF GOD: HER SPOKEN SILENCE

Among the many traits that can be attributed to the Holy Mother of God is that of Her relative silence. Throughout the Gospels, She is depicted as One Who says very few words. In truth, Her relative silence was a true personality trait that makes Her the Chief among all the Saints of Christendom.

Far from being a token of inactivity, silence is, in fact, the energizer of great wisdom, given its proper spiritual context. Silence is not simply "lack of noise." In the spiritual Tradition of the Saints, silence is *contemplation* - and spiritual contemplation is devoid of fantasy, emotion and anxiety. It is focus on the love of God.

The few words attributed to the Mother of God in the Gospels all have one thing in common: obedience to God's Will and God's love in the welfare of others - a keen sense of

Her responsibility for whatever is right before God and His people.

Her words of blessedness is the joy that She expresses in being God's servant. Her concern over the welfare of Her Child Jesus in Jerusalem is that of One responsible to God for Her calling. Her care for the couple at Cana of Galilee is Her concern for their joy in love. Aside from these few occasions, the Mother of God is silent - the silence of "keeping all these things in Her heart."

Keeping the things of God in our hearts requires near super-human effort in our current era of endless distractions. Let us be clear: there is a difference between *events* and *distractions*. *Events* are the activities of daily life. *Distraction* is the anxiety over these events. Anxiety can make the happiest of events a nightmare with worry over "maintaining the happiness," "not blowing

the opportunity," "planning for the perfect celebration," etc. Anxiety can turn unpleasant events into episodes of unparalleled misery, making them ever worse than they need be.

Silence in God is the anecdote against worrisome, anxious fantasies. In our silence with God, we are given the strength and wisdom to deal with the events in our lives. For example, it was silence that ruled in the heart of the Mother of God while watching Her Son upon the Cross.

Contemplation of God's Will is, in fact, prayerful silence. True prayer is not a "wish-list" for material benefits and individual bliss. It is *peace with God* - and peace with God is the ultimate cure to every form of emotional and spiritual human misery. It is literally our salvation.

This kind of silent prayer that the Saints speak of

### Inside this issue

*Mother of God: Her Spoken Silence....pg. 1*

Decisions of the Clergy-Laity Congress.....pg. 2

Philoptochos News; AHEPA News.....pg. 3

Church & Mental Wellness: Mindfulness v. Prayer.....pg. 4

*Who is the Lord? The Feast of the Transfiguration...pg. 5*

Parish Announcements.pg.6

Names for the Paraklisis Services.....pg. 7

*Insert: August 2018 Parish Calendar*

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requires resolve in the effort to rise above our perceptions of things and comprehend the real meaning of things. For example, such prayer works in distinguishing the search for meaning in one's life through wealth and fame, versus the search for meaning in one's life through truth and love. Those who survive are those who live despite the loss of wealth and fame and who have found self-worth in their relationship with God and their fellow human beings.

In his book, *The Illness and Cure of the Soul in the Orthodox Tradition*, Metropolitan Hierotheos of Naptaktos shares the insights of St. Gregory Palamas regarding the life-style of the Mother of God. According to Palamas, says Hierotheos, the Holy Mother of God is "the boundary between the uncreated God and the created world." Absent from the thoughts expressed by the Mother of God were: Her personal ambitions and fantasies and Her opinions about any issue. Her last recorded words comprise a very short sermon: "Do whatever He [Christ] tells you!" (St. John 2:5). Says, Metropolitan Hierotheos, "[The Mother of God] was disengaged from the bondage of matter. She was even raised above attachment to the body, and united to Her soul." (pg. 120). She applied to Herself Her own words: "Do whatever He tells you!"

We learn what Christ is telling us from Holy Bible and the life of the Church. We hear His voice through inner prayer. He speaks to our hearts; it is up to us to listen and obey - and, to "keep these things in our hearts," as did the Holy Mother of God. "What happened to the Mother of God is what happens to every Saint," says Metropolitan Hierotheos. "Only through this Orthodox method...can a person be cleansed and attain a vision of God; and certainly this vision of God is one's theosis." The word "theosis" means unity in body and soul with the love of Christ our God. It is to *experience* God's Kingdom while still living in this present world. It is the reality of the Mother of God, Who, while living in this life, upon "falling asleep," (*Koimisis*), She was translated into Life Eternal.

+FR. THEODORE

## DECISIONS OF THE 2018 ARCHDIOCESE CLERGY-LAITY CONGRESS

The business proceedings of the 2018 Archdiocese Clergy-Laity Congress led to the final decisions and results:

Vice-President of the Archdiocesan Council George Tsandikos set a positive tone in his introductory remarks and expressed the belief of the Executive Committee in the theme of the 44th Clergy Laity Congress that all things are possible to those who believe.

The treasurer of the Archdiocesan Council, Michael Psaros made a 50-minute long presentation, *an overarching view of the finances of the Archdiocese* and the efforts of the Executive Committee to correct the course and restore trust. Addressing some media reports he said, "stop the lies and join us build the Church," and a little later addressing unfounded misinformation in the Press said: "the lies about the parishes not supporting the Archdiocese have to stop."

The Plenary discussed at length the Archdiocese budget for 2019 and 2020 **amendments were offered and modifications were voted requesting additional line items for funding the clergy pension plan and Hellenic College/Holy Cross**. Mr. Psaros expressed his dismay for an unbalanced budget. At the end the budget was approved with the stipulation the Archdiocesan Council will have to make the necessary adjustments to bring it into balance.

The plenary also heard and approved several amendments to the Archdiocese and Metropolis regulations. The *Youth Protection Manual* was also presented to the delegates and approved. Also approved were several resolutions, including resolutions of thanks, which will be compiled and published in the Archdiocese website. Similarly, due to severe time restrictions, the National Philoptochos, the Archons, Leadership 100, and the Archdiocesan Presbyters Council made short presentations.

--Taken from [www.goarch.org](http://www.goarch.org)

## PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS



## July

We had a baking day to replenish our supply of Koulourakia for our memorial inventory. We made, baked and packaged the cookies, ate lunch and finished by 11:30 a.m. Thank you to **Pat Dalkas** and those who came to help. The women were **Eva Canakis, Doris Elmo, Bess Heinrich, Christina Kundanis, Crystal Maganas, Emily Tcharos and Linda Kallis**. Pat provided us with a make-your-own sandwich buffet with veggies and chips and caramel popcorn for dessert.

## Donations in July

Our summer donations included:

1. \$500.00- Coachella Valley Rescue Mission Bottled Water Project. CVRM drives out into the desert to the homeless sites giving out bottled water.
2. \$500.00- Coachella Valley Rescue Mission Backpacks Project for students returning to school.
3. \$500.00- Salvation Army feeds and shelters the homeless.
4. \$300.00- Shelter from the Storm. They help abused women.
5. \$300.00- Ophelia Project. They mentor high school girls to help them graduate from high school.
6. \$300.00- Visiting Nurses Fan Project. They distribute fans to home bound seniors who do not have air conditioning.
7. \$500 in aid to victims of the fires in Greece.

Our meetings for 2018-2019 are tentatively scheduled as follows: Board Meetings: Sept. 3; Oct. 1; Nov. 5; Dec.3; Jan. 4; Mar. 4; Apr. 1; May 6. General Meetings: Sept. 10; Oct. 8; Nov. 12; Dec. 8; Jan. 11; Mar. 9; Apr. 8; May 13.

--LINDA KALLIS,  
Philoptochos President

## AHEPA NEWS



The AHEPA Family Western Regional District Convention took place in Reno, Nevada in June. The AHEPA National Supreme Convention took place in Atlantic City, New Jersey this past month in July.

Once again, the entire National AHEPA Family stood united in calling for religious freedom in Turkey, allowing our Holy Patriarchate to function without fear of oppression. In addition, the National AHEPA donated **\$240,000** to **"Service Dogs to Warriors"** in support of our U.S. military personnel and an initial **\$50,000** in aid to **victims of the recent wildfires in Greece**.

At the recent Western Regional District Convention, the AHEPA had its district lodge elections. Our own AHEPA Chapter 528 is part of the El Camino AHEPA District 20 and the following were elected to serve as District 20 officers for 2018-2019:

James De Dakis - Governor  
James Rigopoulos - Lt Governor  
Nondas Drastiotis - Secretary  
Dayv Marlow - Treasurer  
Dean Argeros - Marshall  
Art Boujotas - Warden

At this convention, the following recognitions were made:

Tasos Papas received the Lifetime Achievement Award and our own **Wynn Storton** received the **District 20 AHEPAN of the Year Award**. Brother **Wynn Storton** will also be stepping up as this year's **Supreme Governor**, and was elected to be a delegate at the AHEPA Family National Supreme Convention a few weeks ago in New Jersey.

Our regular monthly AHEPA Chapter 528 meetings will begin in September. The schedule of our Chapter AHEPA meetings will be posted in the September *Voice of St. George*, as well as in the weekly parish bulletins (*The Ladder*).

## THE CHURCH & MENTAL WELLNESS: MINDFULNESS vs. PRAYER

During the first 15 Days of August every year we are called to participate in the Small and Great Paraklisis Services to the Holy Mother of God. The opening stanzas of the Small Paraklisis Service, set the pace for correct thinking regarding prayer for our general human condition: *"With many temptations surrounding me, Searching for salvation, I have hastened unto You; O Mother of the Word, and ever-Virgin; From all distresses and dangers deliver me. / Assaults of the passions have shaken me; my soul to its limits Has been filled with much despair; Bring peace, O Maiden, in the calmness, of Your own Son and Your God, all-blameless One. /Diseased is the body and the soul. Deem me truly worthy of divine guidance and Your care. For You alone are God's Mother..."*

With these stanzas we acknowledge that the Holy Mother of God, Who is Chief among the Saints, intercedes on our behalf to Her Son and our God Jesus Christ. We thus acknowledge the power of intercessory prayer, i.e., prayer that is offered for the welfare of others. As we pray for others, we find that those things for which we pray for ourselves become the things that are also beneficial to others, in which case, the spiritual strength, peace, comfort, and guidance that God gives to each of us has as its purpose for us to *give* to others.

*Mindfulness* is becoming a popular practice now days. It is being touted as "good business" and "good therapy." It is not totally bad. But, only prayer is truly good. *Mindfulness* is, at best, an "incomplete" form of prayer, and, at worst, a counterfeit version of prayer. It mimics inner prayer, involving mental focus and even breathing exercises, with very positive benefits. According to a recent online edition of *Greater Good Magazine* (<https://greatergood.berkeley.edu>), "*Mindfulness* means maintaining moment-to-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment through a gentle, nurturing lens. It also involves acceptance, meaning that we pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judging them, without believing that there is a 'right' or 'wrong' way to think or feel in a given moment." The benefits involve improved interpersonal relationships; im-

proved emotional health; improved memory and a stronger sense of self, among other benefits.

Yet, *Mindfulness* is clothed in a politically correct garb, being promoted as a genuinely *non-religious* (and especially *non-Christian*) practice, having nothing to do with invoking the power and wisdom of Christ our God. Prayer -- both inner prayer, as well as intercessory prayer -- connects us to the Grace of God, making us more *selfless* as God's servants. Surely, if one is open to *mindfulness*, prayer to Christ our God shouldn't be an issue, unless one simply does not believe in God. It is through inner prayer that the Saints could write words of Divine wisdom guiding us to salvation. The *Philokalia*, for example, is a book containing advice to us from Saints who overcame temptations, delusions, passions and evil through prayer. Their *Spirit of intercessory* prayer has propelled them to offer help and intercession to us.

Intercessory prayer is the expression of Christ's commandment: *"Love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself."* To the extent that we *want* and need comfort, guidance and care, we *give* comfort, guidance and care. It is not even ours to give; it is God Who gives to us so that we can give to others. This is why we must love God *first* - and *then* ourselves and our neighbor. Loving God begins with prayer. While *mindfulness* seeks "not to judge" our thoughts, prayer forces us to *discern* our thoughts whether they be of *temptations* or *passions* -- or, of thoughts about God's Wisdom and Will. The gift of discernment does not come from us; it is of the Holy Spirit through prayer, to save us *and* our neighbor. St. Maximos the Confessor, wrote, *"Love for God always aspires to give wings to the intellect in its communion with God; love for one's neighbor makes one always think good thoughts about the other person."* ("On Love," *Philokalia*, Vol. 2, pg. 105).

The Holy Mother of God is the Chief Saint Who has such *"good thoughts about the other person,"* -- and this is why we offer the Paraklisis Service.

+FR. THEODORE

## WHO IS THE LORD? THE FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

For Orthodox Christians, the Feast of the **Transfiguration of our Lord (August 6th)** is one of the 12 Great Feast Days of our Savior. While it lacks the obvious impact of the Resurrection of Christ or His Birth, it is the event of the Transfiguration that best defines who Christ really is, as well as His relationship to us.

The Gospels of Sts. Matthew, Mark and Luke give an account of this event in our Lord's life (St. Matthew 17:1-8; St. Mark 9:2-19; St. Luke 9:28-36). It is also mentioned in the Second Epistle of St. Peter (1:16-19). This Feast Day falls in the middle of the fasting period dedicated to the Mother of God.

This event took place on Mt. Tabor, where Jesus took His Disciples Peter, James and John. Before them He was transfigured in appearance, as they watched the glorious brilliant Light of Christ in His Divinity. Along with our Lord during His Transfiguration, the Disciples saw Elijah and Moses speaking with Jesus. This event showed the Divinity of Christ so that the Disciples would understand, especially after His Resurrection and Ascension, that He was the True radiant splendor of the Father and the whole Trinity was present. The Transfiguration of our Lord indicates that His passion, crucifixion, death on the Cross and His Third-Day Resurrection from the dead were all a combined *voluntary act of love* by Christ our Savior.

It also says something about ourselves. Just as Christ was glorified on Mt. Tabor, we also can follow and share in the Lord's glory. Some important theologians, especially St. Gregory Palamas, explained that the Disciples were given grace to perceive the real, "uncreated Light of God." The same promise is made to all true believers in Jesus Christ. As humans, we cannot know God or the Trinity in *essence*; yet, we can see and know God's *energies* as He reveals Himself.

Clearly, the Transfiguration revealed important

revelations about the Divine nature of Jesus Christ. For the three Disciples, it as a somewhat painful and striking revelation. The great theologian, St. Gregory Palamas, pointed out that it is a way believers could share in knowing the Divinity of Christ and, on a deeper level, just as Christ as God and Man could show Himself to us, we can participate in knowing Christ better in our own heart and mind. Just as many Christians showed their faith by sacrificing their own lives for Christ, so we can ourselves show Christ in our love and sacrifice, just as Christ showed His love for all of us. The Transfiguration showed the nature of the Lord. But, we can show our love and faith in the Lord by knowing His revelation and giving our all for our Lord and our fellow human beings.

The icons of the Church make this clear. The Divine Light comes from Christ Himself. Our efforts of fasting in honor of the Ever-Virgin Mary are relaxed on this Feast Day, because the entire Trinity is glorified in our Lord's Transfiguration. Just like the baptism of Christ, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all present and share in this glory and in the Transfiguration of Christ.

The Divine Light of Christ is again recorded in the event of St. Paul's conversion from persecutor of Christians to that of being an Apostle for Christ. It was the Light of Christ that blinded St. Paul on his journey to Damascus to persecute Christians -- a truly life-changing experience for St. Paul.

The Transfiguration is the indisputable explanation of those feelings of inspiration that come to us when we pray to our Lord, feeling God's energies in terms of His loving care; His warmth; His wisdom and His enlightenment.

Indeed, all of the Apostles saw and participated in this new supernatural Light from God, centered upon the Savior, Jesus Christ. May God bless all of us and accept each and every one of us in His Kingdom!

--MATTHEW DAVIS

## PARISH ANNOUNCEMENTS

MASTER CALENDAR--The Parish Master Calendar for the Fall of 2018 through the Spring of 2019 is now being prepared. Those interested in reserving dates for weddings, baptisms and special events are asked to consider making their reservations as August dawns upon us so as to avoid conflicts in scheduling. Dates already reserved are:

Saturday, October 27th - Hall Rental.

Saturday, November 3rd - Fundraiser - Fire Victims

Sunday, November TBA - Fall General Assembly

Sunday, November 11th - Veterans' Day Program

Saturday, December 8th - Philoptochos Christmas Luncheon

Sunday, December 9th - Parish Elections

Sunday, Dec. 16 & 23 - Philoptochos Bake Sale

Sunday, December 23rd - Christmas Program

Sunday, January 6th - Vasilopita (Epiphany)

Saturday, February 9th - Wedding

Saturday-Sunday, February 16-17 - Greek Festival

Sunday, March TBA - Spring General Assembly

Saturday, Mar. 9th - Phil. Membership Luncheon

Monday, April 8th - Philoptochos Elections

Sunday, April 21 - Sunday, April 28th - Holy Week and Pascha

Saturday, July 6th - Wedding.

NAMES FOR PARAKLISIS- Note the enclosed form for listing names of family and friends in our prayers for health, which will be read during the Paraklisis Services during the first 15 days of August in honor of the Most Holy Mother of God.

COACHELLA VALLEY--BACK TO SCHOOL--

The Coachella Valley Rescue Mission is once again counting on us to offer our support in helping children to prepare for the new school year. For many, school begins in August and, as is always the case, children need back-to-school supplies and backpacks. As always, our Philoptochos has been involved in this yearly back-to-school need. More information will be provided in the weekly bulletins - *The Ladder*.

ALTAR FLOWER BOUQUETS--People have already committed themselves to provide Altar

Flower Bouquets to grace our Holy Altar on Sundays, beginning in October 2018 and continuing to May 2019. Altar Flower Bouquets are offered by many parishioners as a prayer in memory of friends and loved ones or in honor (or the well-being) of friends and family. Please see **Louise Dobbs Barringer** for more information and to sign up for offering Altar Flower Bouquets for the glory of our Lord.

STEWARDSHIP--Stewardship is a very important part of supporting our St. George parish. Those who are behind in bringing their 2018 Stewardship Contribution up to date, or who have yet to offer any Stewardship contribution, are reminded to offer their Stewardship support to our parish at this time. Stewardship contributions are truly a blessing for our entire parish.

## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS:

### COMMANDMENT #7

The Sixth of God's Ten Commandments is this: *"Thou shalt not commit adultery."* Questions to ask of one's self when preparing for Holy Confession:

1. Have I given way to impure thoughts, words or deeds?
2. Have I given myself over to lewd behavior; to sexually suggestive appearances; to sex-change procedures or self mutilation?
3. Have I engaged in any form of pornography?
4. Have I verbally or physically abused anyone through sexual dialogue or actions, or committed forms of sexual misconduct?
5. Have I engaged in intimate or flirtatious behavior outside the sanctity of Holy Matrimony? (The Sacrament of marital union is between one man and one woman.) This would involve pre-marital sex, adultery, orgies, or spousal "swapping," with people of the same or opposite sex.
6. Have I resented a pregnancy; frustrated the development of an un-born child; pressured or advised anyone to have an abortion? (Abortion is a transgression of the 6th Commandment.)

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# AUGUST 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>Vespers: Due to the summer schedule of both clergy and chanters, Saturday Vesper Services will be announced week-to-week. Call Fr. Ted if planning to attend Sat. Vespers.</b>			1- Beginning of the Fasting Season in Honor of the Mother of God Paraklisis- 6:00 p.m.	2	3  Paraklisis- 6:00 p.m.	4
<b>5-10th Sunday of St. Matthew</b> <b>Ep.-1 Cor. 4:9-16</b> <b>Gos.-Matt.17-14-23</b>  <b>Vespers-5:00 p.m.</b>	6 <b>TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD</b> Orthros-8:30 a.m. D.Liturgy- 9:30 a.m. Paraklisis-6:00pm	7  Bible Study- 10:00 a.m.	8  Paraklisis- 6:00 p.m.	9	10  Paraklisis- 6:00 p.m.	11
<b>12-11th Sunday of St. Matthew</b> <b>Ep.-1 Cor.9:2-12</b> <b>Gos.-Matt.18:23-35</b>	13  Paraklisis- 6:00 p.m.	14  Bible Study- 10:00 a.m.  Vespers- 6:00 p.m.	15 <b>DORMITION OF THE MOST HOLY MOTHER OF GOD</b> Orthros-8:30 am D. Liturgy- 9:30 a.m.	16	17	18
<b>19-12 Sunday of St. Matthew</b> <b>Ep.-1 Cor. 15:1-11</b> <b>Gos.-Matt.19:16-26</b>	20	21  Bible Study- 10:00 a.m.	22	23	24	25
<b>26-13th Sunday of St. Matthew</b> <b>Ep.-1Cor. 16:13-24</b> <b>Gos.-Matt.21:33-42</b>	27	28  Bible Study- 10:00 a.m.	29-BEHEADING OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST Orthros-8:30 am D. Liturgy- 9:30 a.m. (Fasting Day)	30	31	

NAMES OF THOSE FOR WHOM PRAYERS  
ARE OFFERED FOR HEALTH OF SOUL AND  
BODY

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**SAVE-THE-DATES**

**IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH  
AND  
ENVIRONMENT**

You are cordially invited (please bring a friend)

**When: Saturday, October 27, 2018**

10:00 a.m. and again at 1:00 p.m. (choose time that is convenient for you)

**Where: St. George Greek Orthodox Church parish hall**

74-109 Larrea St.  
Palm Desert, California 92260

The event is FREE, the information is priceless! Products will not be sold at the event.

**Special guest: Sheila Backus,**  
Health & Wellness Advocate

Refreshments will be served

Please **RSVP by October 22, 2018** by calling (760) 238-7185

**Hosted by: Ann Dixon**

A donation will be made to the St. George Church/Philoptochos

**A SPECIAL FUNDRAISER DINNER**

**for the victims of the Wildfires in Greece and locally, as well our fellow Coachella Valley residents in need of food and clothing**

**WHEN?**

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2018**





GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF SAN FRANCISCO  
ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΦΡΑΓΚΙΣΚΟΥ

Beloved in the Lord,

We have all heard the devastating accounts of the tragic wildfires in Greece which have claimed over 70 lives over the past 24 hours. The images in our minds of nearly 30 people embracing on a beach only to succumb to the flames as they tried to escape are heartbreaking. Our thoughts and prayers are with all those who are suffering, and for the eternal rest of the victims of this devastation.

I share with you the statement from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and join with His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, Geron of America, asking that all our parishes offer a Memorial Service this Sunday, July 29, 2018 for the repose of the souls of those who lost their lives in these fires. **I also ask that each parish in our Metropolis offer a special collection to aid the fire victims in rebuilding their homes and livelihoods. Checks should be made payable to: Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco, MEMO: Attica Fires Relief Fund, 245 Valencia Street, San Francisco, CA 94103.** We will gather all the funds contributed from our Metropolis and send them directly to provide assistance.

Praying that the Lord's mighty hand may bring peace to this ravaged land, and that His grace and mercy will comfort all those who are suffering, I remain,

With Love in Christ,

Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco

P.S.: His Eminence would like us all to pray for those effected by the local wildfires in Northern and Southern California and to offer assistance to local organizations involved in providing aid to victims and to the firefighters themselves. [Fr. Ted]