

MARCH 2018



Voice of St. George

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



Inside this issue

“YOUR BODY IS THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT”

“Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, Who is in you, Whom you have from God and you are not your own!” (1 Corinthians 6: 19). This stands contrary to the popular notion today, which is verbalized as, *“It’s my life and I will do what I want.”* What St. Paul states, in effect, is that it isn’t “my life” at all. Our lives belong to God. *“It is God’s life and I will do what God wants.”* St. Paul goes on to point out the intertwining relationship between the body and the soul. *“Glorify God in your body and in your soul, which belong to God.”* (vs. 20).

On the Second Sunday of Great Lent (this year: March 4th), we honor **St. Gregory Palamas**, because, through his preaching, we come to understand clearly the herein noted words of St. Paul and the Holy Apostolic Tradition of our Saints.

In addressing the errant

doctrines of his time, many of which are echoed in our own time (only with different names), St. Gregory reaffirmed the teaching of the Bible regarding the spiritual nature of the human being and the reality of the Incarnation of the Only-Begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ. Calling to our minds the Name of Jesus in prayer sanctifies our souls and bodies. Metropolitan Kallistos Ware states succinctly, *“The human being is a single, united whole; not only the human mind, but the whole person was created in the image of God...Christ, by taking a human body at the Incarnation, has ‘made the flesh an inexhaustible source of sanctification.”* (The Orthodox Church, pg. 67). That the human being can be sanctified in God is what is depicted in Orthodoxy through Holy Icons, which are seen in procession on the First Sunday of Great Lent, Orthodox Sunday.

In the Resurrection of Christ, His resurrected Body is evident to the Apostles. Hence, in participating in His Resurrection from the dead, we, as *whole persons* are raised to eternal life—body and soul.

Participation in the Resurrection of Christ is made possible through living the life of the Holy Sacraments of the Church. Baptism is our personal union with Christ in His death and Resurrection. Holy Communion is our union with Christ through His Body and Blood. Prayer is the element that we offer in worship, for our Lord said, where two or three are gathered in His Name, He is present with us. His presence is accomplished by the Holy Spirit, Who is of the same essence with the Father and the Son. Worship, then, is the co-mingling of our prayers with the energies of God, which makes us co-

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workers with God in *action*, which can be translated into the Greek word meaning *liturgy*. Worship provides the template for our personal prayers. The Communion Prayer associated with the Divine Liturgy is an example of personal prayer in the context of Church worship: *"Loving Master, Jesus Christ my God, let...these Holy Gifts be...for the cleansing and sanctification of my soul and body and the pledge of the future life and Kingdom..."* We pray for the "sanctification" of our souls and bodies based on that which Christ said, *"The Kingdom of God is within you."* (St. Luke 17:21).

The Sacraments and our personal life of prayer address the world within us, which is composed of our souls and the very marrow of our bones. We find Christ our God through prayer and worship. Through prayer, as St. Theophan the Recluse would say, we move out of our selfish "self," only to move from "self" to Christ, Who is both God *and* our neighbor. (Taken from: *The Way of the Ascetics*, by Tito Colliander, pgs.26-37).

Beholding the Light of Christ in us and seeing Christ in our neighbor is a reality acknowledged during the Divine Liturgy as the Cherubic Hymn is sung, while the priest censes the icons *and the individuals in attendance*. Metropolitan Kallistos Ware explains the reason for this, *"The priest censes not only the icons, but the members of the congregation, saluting the image of God in each person."* (*The Orthodox Church*, pg.221).

This theological/liturgical practice factors out into Godly action. St. Maximos the Confessor considers this practice as an expression of *our working theory [theoria]*, saying in effect, *"There is no safe action without theoria, nor true theoria without action."* (*The Mind of the Orthodox Church*, by Metropolitan Ierotheos of Nafpaktos, pg. 155). Knowing "theologically" that God redeemed us in body and soul, we are required in our *actions* to heal souls *and* bodies - our own, as well as others'. By "healing," we ultimately mean *salvation*. In our healing efforts, salvation also involves taking good care of the world God has given us.

+FR. THEODORE

ENCYCLICAL FOR GREAT LENT 2018

Dearly Beloved,

"Where shall I begin the work of my salvation?" cries out a hymn of Clean Monday.

The Lenten Season, now upon us, calls us into a time of reflection on the state of our lives and our souls. We are invited by the Church to observe the Great Fast, to devote more time to prayer and worship, to engage in study, and to offer charity and serve the world around us. The hymns of the next forty days will instruct us in the fast, will encourage us in philanthropy, and will call us to renew our souls and lives through repentance. Your parish will offer many opportunities for you to participate in worship, in opportunities for study, and in philanthropic acts, and many other activities with your fellow parishioners and to carry the lessons into your homes and families.

These Lenten practices are not ends unto themselves. Rather, these disciplines serve as potent correctives to the way the world tells us we are to live all the days of our lives and not just for the next forty days. They are meant to focus our energies on improving the condition of our souls. The world says to be happy we must follow paths that lead to the accumulation of wealth, power, and status. And when we achieve all these, we are not satisfied. We become anxious, desiring to keep them, and then acquire even more.

Our Lenten disciplines remind us that we do not need all these "things" and, in fact, we can live quite well without them. The Lord says, "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15). Our Lenten disciplines challenge us to break the cycle of acquisition and anxiety and to be free of "things" that instead burden us and our souls. The Great Fast teaches us that we can live simply and with less. Our time in prayer and worship of God teaches that power belongs to Him. Our charity and

Continued on the next page - - - - >



ENCYCLICAL FOR GREAT LENT, Continued

study teaches us that our status is fleeting. The work of our Lenten journey is an accumulation of the fruits of the Spirit. For the next forty days we will be challenged to put aside what the world values and acquire something greater. What we are to accumulate during Great Lent is a spirit of "love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control" (Galatians 5:22). These next weeks are a time for cultivating these virtues in our lives and souls so, as a hymn states, "may be counted worthy to see the solemn Passion of Christ our God, and with great spiritual gladness to behold His Holy Pascha."

Beloved brothers and sisters, the work of salvation begins very soon. Do not despair at the task at hand. Rather, as the hymn of Clean Monday states, "Let us joyfully begin the all-hallowed season of abstinence; and let us shine with the bright radiance of the Holy Commandments of Christ our God".

May this spirit of the anticipated joy of Holy Pascha at the end of our Lenten journey, be your guide during this most Holy Season of the Great Fast.

With Love in Christ,
++METROPOLITAN GERASIMOS,
Metropolitan of San Francisco

**IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE
FLORIDA SCHOOL SHOOTING**

The debate continues over issues of increased gun control and increased efforts toward improving mental health services. I come down more on the side of mental health service, while emphasizing that the right to own anything is to be weighed with the responsibility and ability to cherish life. Beyond mental health, however, lies the issue of the *spiritual* health of our nation.

Ironically, one key word in any discussion about freedom is *control*. Otherwise, there is *chaos*. As Orthodox Christians, we are called to live a life-

style of *freely* wanting to have a controlling power over our anger; our ambitions; our fantasies; our lusts; our appetites; our attitudes; our passions.

Where today's mental health formulas often fail is in the matter of *who* is in control. For Orthodox Christians, each person is in control of his or her choices. Hopefully, we all individually choose to allow *Jesus Christ our God* to be in control. This calls us to humble ourselves and sacrifice *our will* so that *God's Will* is done. **And God's Will is pro-life!**

It is truly a humbling experience to contemplate the fact that every stage of human life is a gift from God so that we can share in His glory. Humility is the *denial* of self-importance in favor of the greater importance of God. In the aftermath of so many shootings and crimes, it is time to show others *by our example* the great virtue of humility before God and the image of God's divine love for all people in all places.

In contrast to this, it is *arrogance* that devalues human life. This very devaluation of human life contributes greatly to the psychopathological spirit that destroys the lives of both criminals and their victims.

With the passing of Billy Graham last week and with the beginning of Great Lent, we can find the inspiration to evaluate *our souls as Americans*-- that is, the collective *soul of our nation* -- against the standard of the Love of Jesus Christ our God, Who is the only true Savior of the world.

+FR. THEODORE

COLORING BOOK MEETING

The next **Coloring Book** meeting will take place on **Friday, March 16, 2018** at our parish hall at 12:00 noon. The theme is one of the **Lenten Season**, and the luncheon itself will be a Lenten meal. A minimum donation of \$5 is requested for joining in the luncheon.

RSVP is to be given to **Rhonda Latkovic** by **March 11th** so that adequate preparations can be made.

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS



February

February 4 was a busy day for Philoptochos. It was GO RED Day bringing attention to Heart Disease. The Metropolis Philoptochos asked us to wear red to support this day. See our photo showing some of our members who participated.

Also on February 4, we had our first Bake Sale with homemade desserts made by our members. The Bake Sale was Co-Chaired by Pam Zaverdas and Athena Snarskis and by team members Linda Bozigian and Mary Zachariadou. The Bake Sale brought in \$611.00 and will be used towards the purchase of an AED machine for our Church. Members making the desserts were Linda Bozigian, Pat Dalkas, Bess Heinrich, Evelyn Karas, Christine Kundanis, Pauline Latkovic, Rhonda Latkovic, Carol Lyons, Tommi Maverick, Linda Petalas, Alice Pulos, Athena Snarskis, Emily Tcharos, Lula Valissarakos, Tina Veroulis, Mary Zachariadou and Pam Zaverdas. Others dropped off additional items. Thank you to the Co-Chairs and team members and all who participated.

Donations -We donated to National Philoptochos for Unicef, the Church for the Festival Ad and we



sent a box of goodies for the winter season to our adopt a student Devon.

Thank you to all our members for volunteering many hours toward the success of our Festival.

March

Our **Membership Luncheon** will be on Saturday, March 10 at 11:30 a.m. at **Susan Clark's home**. See flyer and R.S.V.P. to **Linda Petalas** and **Pam Zaverdas**, our Co-Chairs this year.

— LINDA KALLIS,
Philoptochos President



GO RED:
(Left to right):
Pam Zaverdas
and Athena
Snarskis
(organizers),
Linda Bozigian,
Lula
Valissarakos
(team mem-
bers)



GO RED FOR WOMEN Special Philoptochos Fundraiser Event:
Some of the "ladies in red" posed for a group picture

<—At the left: GO RED FOR WOMEN lay-out featuring the baked goods that were for sale. Proceeds from the sale went to Philoptochos charities.

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS



Highlights of the February 8th Parish Council Meeting include the financial report going into this year's Festival.

As of January 31, 2018 the balance in the Checking account is \$23,471.03; the Savings is \$77,720.12. We have seen some great increases in the J. P. Morgan stock from \$89 per share to \$109.86 per share. Our 1896 shares are worth \$208,294.56 as of January 31, 2018. The Endowment Fund has increased from \$250,000 to \$344,147.29. Stewardship Chairperson, Rhonda Latkovic reported that at the present time we have 76 stewards, but the number is increasing daily. We are 40% ahead of our plan and 15% ahead of last year.

Discussion centered on updates and making the final preparations regarding the 2018 St. George Greek Festival. The Council entertained a suggestion that the dates of the Festival be permanently set to be held on President's Day Weekend every year. More discussion will follow.

The Golf Tournament Committee announced that a **one day** tournament will be held **April 14 at the Desert Willows Golf Resort with a 12:30 p.m. shotgun start** and followed by a Greek lamb dinner with music at the church. **Tina Veroulis** reported that "Save the Date" cards have been mailed out.

Linda Kallis reported that Father Ted called Metropolis to see if a **Dispute Resolution Procedure** existed and if it would be necessary for our church to have one. Father distributed the procedure that is in place at the Metropolis. Linda informed the Board that the Executive Board from both the Parish Council and Philoptochos met to go over the procedure and how it can be handled by our parish.

Maintenance Chairperson, **Spiro Astmos** recommended the following plan for action regarding maintenance needs:

--Parking Lot Lights (\$2,000.00) - should be fixed before the festival.

--Sidewalk Replacement (\$5,200) Safety Issue - Should be done before Easter.

--Flagstone in front of the church should be replaced (\$5,100)

--Parking Lot Resurfacing (a bid will be needed)

--Dome (\$50,000)

Regarding our **Parish By-Laws**, it was noted that we need to look into the By-laws that were not passed at the General Assembly. It was suggested that **Mike Vawter** be contacted since he is the chairman of the By-Laws Committee.

At the Parish Council meeting in March, agenda items will be set for the Spring General Assembly meeting.

AHEPA NEWS

Members of AHEPA Chapter 528 participated in the **AHEPA District 20 Mid-Winter Conference** which was held in **San Bernardino, California on Saturday, January 27, 2018**. Plans were crystallized in preparation for the AHEPA Family Western Regional Convention, which is scheduled to take place in Reno, Nevada from June 21 to June 24, 2018. Nationally, AHEPA launched a fundraising initiative in support of the rebuilding of the Saint Nicholas shrine at the World Trade Center collecting over \$816,780.

February 4, 2018 was our first annual **Super Bowl Party**. It was a tremendous success. Thank you all for participating. The scholarship won all pool squares that day, benefitting the students.

Our AHEPA Chapter would greatly appreciate special donations toward the AHEPA Fr. T. P. Theophilos Memorial Scholarship Fund, since scholarships are due to be given on AHEPA Sunday this May 20th. Donation link and applications can be found online at: www.ahepa528.org. **Now is the time to encourage students to apply! Note the application policy, deadline and the scholarships available.**

The next **AHEPA 528 meeting** will be on **Wednesday, March 14th, 6:30 p.m.** at **Spaghetti**

AHEPA NEWS, Continued

Factory. This will be an important meeting in planning for AHEPA members' participation in upcoming events. We have 2 new members to initiate, participation would be appreciated.

Our Greek Festival AHEPA Booth was a great success in funding this year's scholarships. AHEPA members were helpful in assuring the general success of this year's St. George Greek Festival.

– WYNN STORTON,
AHEPA 528 President



Above: A scene from our 1st Annual AHEPA Super Bowl party on Sunday, February 4th. Proceeds from this Super Bowl party were sent to the Fr. T. P. Theophilos Memorial Scholarship Fund.

CONFESSION & THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

The Second of the Ten Commandments says: *"You shall not make for yourself an idol or a likeness of anything in heaven above or in the earth beneath. You shall not bow down to them or serve them."*

1. Have I made an idol of any person or thing?
2. Have I given to anyone or anything the worship that is due to God alone?
3. Have I set before myself the holy life of Jesus Christ and have I sincerely tried to imitate Him, or have I fallen into self-worship?
4. Have I persecuted anyone who cherishes the Holy Bible or have I regarded books of other religions as more important than the Bible?
5. Have I involved myself in fortune-telling, palm reading, gambling, or witchcraft?

SUNDAY SCHOOL NOTES

Many of our children and their families volunteered in the church festival, helping us, along with God's grace, to have another successful

event! On **Saturday, March 24th**, the **Sunday school** is planning a trip to visit the **Shields Date Garden** to view the stations of the cross. **Deacon Euthym** will act as our tour guide and lead us through the Grounds explaining to our children (and us adults) about Christ's final journey on earth. As well as touring the grounds, there is a cafe that is available for us to have a meal at following the tour. Our plan is to start the tour in the late morning (around 10 or 11).

Now we are in the midst of the Great Lent and should be completing our first week of fasting. As Theodore Stylianopoulos explains in *A Year of the Lord: Liturgical Bible Studies*, each family must prayerfully choose and commit themselves to a fasting discipline that is suitable to their circumstances and that *they can keep!* Some fast strictly – no meat or dairy products throughout Lent. Many choose to fast strictly only during the first week of lent and during Holy Week. Others choose to fast from meat throughout Lent but from meat, fish, and dairy products only on Wednesdays and Fridays. Still others follow other forms of fasting disciplines. Children usually fast with moderation and care in order to receive the necessary nutrients for their growing bodies. Fasting entails not only the *quality* of foods, but the *quantity* of consumption. Being a little hungry during the day becomes a constant reminder of God, of our dependence on Him, and of the fact that the Lord alone can give us "food that lasts for eternal life (Jn. 6:27).

Remember, God doesn't need our fasting. We don't fast as a kind of personal punishment for our sins. We cannot pay God back for our sins, but we can only confess them to Him to receive forgiveness. Fasting with a willing spirit and not just with an attitude of fulfilling a religious obligation means that we keep the purposes of fasting always before us, which is to develop self-control and to remember God and His Kingdom. In fasting and prayer, He reveals Himself to us as our true food and drink. God bless!

-JIM CHRISTOPOULOS,
Sunday School Superintendent

2018 ST. GEORGE GREEK FESTIVAL



If a picture is worth a thousand words, the pictures below say that this year's St. George Greek Festival held on February 17-18 was a resounding success. Space does not allow for all of the pictures from this year's Festival to be depicted.

Pictures from upper right, counter-clockwise: Chairman George Argyros being interviewed by Lauren Day of KMIR T.V. News; The Greek Band that provided the musical entertainment; Deacon Euthym leading one of our Church Tours; The Church Booth manned by our sister parish, St. Raphael Antiochian Orthodox Church in Thousand Palms; the main "plaza" filled to capacity; Dancing Greek into the night; the parish courtyard at peak times.



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2018 ST. GEORGE GREEK FESTIVAL, Continued

More pictures showing individual and group poses involving the special Festival stations are available by contacting **Angelo Veroulis**, who did a marvelous job in photographing this event. As they say in Greek: "Ke tou chronou!" Which means, may we enjoy next year's Festival, also.

In a letter to all 2018 Festival Volunteers, **George Argyros**, the Festival Chairperson; **Nicholas Krespis**, the Parish Council President, and **Fr. Ted** extended heartfelt thanks and gratitude to all members of the parish and their friends for their unselfish volunteer work in preparing the Festival food and the long hours of work during the weekend of the Festival. Special thanks were expressed to **Doug Lyons, John Petalas and Peter Snarskis** for their endless hours of work on site—from early morning to late at night—for managing the equipment set-up and operations.

MARCH 25th MEMORIAL AND DEDICATION TO CHILDREN'S HEALTH

On **Sunday, March 25, 2018**, there will be a **six month memorial** service for **Argyro Krespis**, the beloved mother of our Parish Council President, **Nick Krespis**. Nick Krespis and his family will be hosting a Memorial Lenten luncheon immediately following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

As this day is also the **Feast Day of the Annunciation** and **Greek Independence Day**, the Philoptochos will be offering a special project to raise money for the needy in honor of our sister in the Lord, **Argyro**. **Argyro** dedicated her life in the work of providing needs to children's hospitals in Greece. This work was especially dear to her heart. Therefore, in honor of **Argyro Krespis**, it will be our honor to raise money for needy children in our local area, dedicating our work to the memory and honor of **Argyro Krespis**.

Details pertaining to this project will be announced in upcoming weekly Sunday editions of *The Ladder*. We look forward to everyone's participation in this effort.

NICHOLAS KONTAXIS' ART EXHIBIT

On **Saturday, March 17, 2018**, plan to join in celebrating **Nicholas Kontaxis' Art Exhibit** at the **Heather James Fine Art Studio**, located at 45188 Portola Avenue in Palm Desert (almost around the corner from our church of St. George). The Exhibit will open at **4:30 p.m.**, with the Artist Reception beginning at 5:30 p.m. The Exhibit will continue into the evening, **until 8:30 p.m.** Please see the enclosed flier, which shows the website link to view Nicholas Kontaxis' art. Fliers are also available in our parish hall.

For more information and to make reservations, contact **Krisann Kontaxis** following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on **Sunday, March 4th and Sunday, March 11th**.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Plan on participating in our St. George parish **Spring General Assembly** on **Sunday, March 18, 2018**, following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Pertinent information and agenda items will be mailed out to St. George parish members following the March 8th Parish Council meeting.

SATURDAY OF LAZARUS - MARCH 31st

March 31, 2018 is the **Saturday of Lazarus**. Following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, everyone is asked to help **prepare palm crosses** for Palm Sunday. Those who can bring palm branches from their homes are encouraged to do so.

During the preparation of the palm crosses, a presentation will be given by Fr. Ted regarding the weekend **theme of our Savior's Entrance into Jerusalem**. Those in attendance will be encouraged to engage in a topic-related **"question and answer"** session with **Fr. Ted and Deacon Euthym**. Beginning with the Saturday of Lazarus, Fr. Ted will be available for the **Sacrament of Holy Confession** throughout the remainder of the day. Also, the **Sacrament of Confession** will be available on **Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday & Holy Wednesday** afternoons (April 2-4th) from 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Otherwise, Fr. Ted will be available by appointment.

ENDOWMENT FUND REPORT

*****Note - The recent Market Correction Results is not included in this report since it occurred in February. Results will be posted in next month's report. Forward looking I would expect an approximate 10% decrease in value for the month. Our fund has a long-term hold strategy and these corrections are included in the investment diversification plan. The Chairman feels it was a good run and the correction was expected.**

The Saint George of the Desert Endowment Fund grew from \$334,610.17 at month end December 2017 to \$344,147.29 at the month end January 2018. This represents a \$10,373.65 increase in value of the fund. There were no donations for the month. The Resource Group charge for the quarter was -\$836.53 which is the 1.0% yearly administrative fee charged quarterly.

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

Domestic Equities	\$190,929.04	55%
Domestic Fixed Income	\$125,998.77	37%
International Equities	\$ 26,453.76	8%
Cash & Equivalents	\$ 765.72	0%
Total	\$344,147.29	100%

Our Advisor shares my "crystal-ball looking" thoughts on 2018:

Clearly, we have had a very fast and furious start to the year and it ended abruptly a few weeks ago, and we have since rallied back. The price action makes sense. More importantly, things are starting to play out pretty much in line as to how we are thinking about 2018.

As we know, the last couple of years have been pretty good. 2016 & '17 were big rebound years from the global recession. It was very much a beta trade meaning that virtually every market in the world was up last year. Virtually every sector and a large majority of stocks and bonds did quite well too. It means that it's going to get harder. The biggest thing to focus on are valuations. Our view was that equity valuations would contract - we believe they peaked in De-

ember, the day the tax bill was passed.

Bull market is not over - we are going to get narrower returns, so fewer sectors are going to participate. We may even start to see a more defensive rotation. We're starting to see it in the price action - specifically, fewer sectors and stocks participating in the rally back. It will be much more about individual stock performance and sector rotations.

Another point about their outlook - we thought that equity volatility will pick up - currency rate volatility picked up and now equity volatility is picking up. Credit spreads are starting to widen as real interest rates move up and people decide how much risk they want to take in their credit (Bonds) portfolios.

What to expect from here? We had a big correction of almost 12%. We've rallied back 60-65%. Still choppy. VIX is close to 20 after running at 9-10 last year. They don't expect to go back to 9-10. Get used to higher volatility. Starting to see defensive rotation. We do think that rates will go higher but will settle in. **This will support some of the more defensive areas of the market which is how our portfolio was wisely set up by the Founders of the Endowment Fund in October of 2007.**

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.

–NICHOLAS LATKOVIC,
Endowment Fund Chairman

PALM SUNDAY LUNCHEON

Everyone is invited to join us at this year's annual **Palm Sunday Luncheon**, following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on **Sunday, April 1, 2018.**

As always, the menu will include a delicious fish plate with dessert for **\$15.** The Palm Sunday Luncheon is sponsored by the Parish Council every year. Deadline for RSVP is **March 26th.**

THE HOLY CROSS AS THE TREE OF LIFE

The Sunday of the Veneration of the Holy Cross is always celebrated on the third Sunday of Holy Lent and we are reminded that the Cross is at the very center of the meaning of Lent. But, it is also a fact that the Cross has a deep personal meaning for every one of us and that our very redemption is connected with Christ's Cross.

The Lenten feast of the Cross is sometimes confused with the Fall feast of the discovery of the Holy Cross by St. Helen, the mother of the Emperor Constantine. This feast takes place on September 14 and it has similar hymns and the Cross is displayed for veneration by Orthodox Christians.

It is important to know that in the wording of these hymns, the Cross is sometimes described as a tree. A good example of this is the Kontakion Hymn for the day, which shows that the Cross is a good thing: *"No longer does the flaming sword guard the gate of Eden, for a marvelous quenching is come upon it, even the Tree of the Cross. The sting has been taken from death and the victory from Hades and You, My Savior, appeared to those in Hades saying, 'Enter into Paradise.'"* We see that the Cross is shown as the opposite of the tree, the fruit from which Adam and Eve were forbidden to eat and which stood as an element in their expulsion from Paradise. The Cross is the new Tree which offers the occasion for the redemption of humanity. It is the offering of Jesus Christ Himself in obedience to God, undoing the disobedience of Adam.

So, we see that this Tree of the Cross, seen in the right way, is indeed the passage that bring us to a new life. To see this, we need to look at the Gospel reading from St. Mark 8:34-38, 9:1. This passage reveals to us what the Lord is telling us about the role of the Cross in our sanctification and salvation. The Lord directs His disciples, *"Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."* What a follower of the Lord must do is the opposite of

what is considered to be *normal* behavior based on the *self*. A Christian is to deny himself/herself and forgo self-centeredness. This plays out in marriage, for example, in that the man is to *sacrifice* for his wife and the woman is to *sacrifice* for her husband. Paul makes this clear when he talks about marriage in his Epistle to the Ephesians. The way of the Cross leads to sacrifice - examples of such are the Christian martyrs. Martyrs gave up their lives so as not to deny their deep faith in Jesus Christ.

We re-visit the Garden of Eden. But, now we have two trees. The forbidden tree, showing the reality of good and evil from which human innocence is robbed and more temptations grow toward greater disobedience, now stands in contrast to the Cross, which is the forgiveness of the original disobedience and the pathway to undoing evil with the goodness of God. The Cross is the way to undo the knowledge of evil by taking measures to go against our selfishness in the form of self-denial.

The Cross is the knowledge of Christ's desire to rescue us from evil. This rescue is through us knowing the power of the Cross for ourselves. It is the knowledge and the faith in the Lord. It is the knowledge that we must follow Christ to His Cross, which is in reality - and mysteriously - our Cross, as well.

This is how we overcome evil that comes from disobedience of God's Will for all of us. **May Christ's Cross bless and sanctify us all, as we look forward to His glorious Resurrection.**

--MATTHEW DAVIS


CHOIR NOTES --Choir Practice is held **every Thursday at 1:00 p.m.** as we prepare for the celebration of our Lord's Holy Resurrection from the dead on Sunday, April 8th. Choir members are asked to make every effort to attend practice sessions, since **special hymns will need to be sung on the Sundays of Great Lent, Holy Friday and Easter Sunday.** Those wishing to join with the choir at this point are urged to contact our Choir Director, Annette Laskaris.

St. George Greek Orthodox Church of the Desert
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Telephone: (760)568-9901 / FAX: 9760) 568-9492

Schedule of Sunday Services: Orthros-8:30 a.m.
Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.
Sunday School-10:30 a.m.

MARCH 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Schedule of Sunday Services: Orthros-8:30 a.m. D. Liturgy-9:30 a.m. Sunday School-10:30 a.m.				1	2 Presanctified Divine Liturgy-9:00 a.m. 2nd Salutations-7:00 p.m.	3 Vespers-5:00 pm.
4-St. Gregory Palamas Ep. Heb.1:10-14;2:1-3 Gos. Mark 2: 1-12	5 Philoptochos Board Meeting-11:00 am	6 Bible Study-10:00 a.m.	7 Presanctified Divine Liturgy-6:30 p.m.	8 Choir Practice-1:00 p.m. Parish Council Meeting- 2:30 p.m.	9 Presanctified Divine Liturgy-9:00 a.m. 3rd Salutations 7:00 p.m.	10 Philoptochos Membership Tea-11:30 a.m. Vespers-5:00 pm.
11- Veneration of the Holy Cross Ep. Heb.4:14-16;5:1-6 Gos. Mark 8:34-38:9:1	12	13 No Bible Study	14 No Presanctified Divine Liturgy	15 Choir Practice-1:00 pm.m	16 Presanctified Divine Liturgy-9:00 a.m. 4th Salutations 7:00 p.m.	17 Nicholas Kontaxis Art Exhibit At: Heather James-4:30 - 9:30 p.m.
18- St. John Climacos Ep. Heb. 6:13-20 Gos. Mark 9: 17-31 General Assembly	19	20 Bible Study-10:00 a.m.	21 Presanctified Divine Liturgy-6:30 p.m.	22 Great Canon Service of Prayer-9:00 a.m. Choir Practice-1:00 p.m.	23 Presanctified Divine Liturgy-9:00 a.m. Akathist Hymn-7:00 p.m.	24 Sunday School Retreat at Date Farm in Indio, CA. Vespers-5:00 p.m.
25- Annunciation to The Holy Theotokos Ep. Heb. 2: 11-18 Gos. Luke 1:24-38 Luncheon to benefit local children's needs	26	27 Bible Study-10:00 a.m.	28 Presanctified Divine Liturgy-6:30 p.m.	29 Choir Practice-1:00 p.m.	30 Presanctified Divine Liturgy-9:00 a.m.	31-LAZARUS SAT. Orthros-8:30 a.m. <u>D. Liturgy-9:30 a.m.</u> Palm Crosses & Spiritual Discussion (Question/Answers)- <u>10:30 a.m.</u> Vespers-5:00 p.m.



*You are cordially invited
to attend the
St. George Philoptochos
Membership Luncheon
March 10, 2018*

11:30 a.m.

*At The Home of Susan Clark
38398 Red Cedar Drive,
Palm Desert, CA 92211*

Please R.S.V.P. to

Pam Laverdas 847-814-0299 pamzav@yahoo.com

Linda Petalas 219-765-6979 jlpet@att.net

*Directions to Susan's Home: Go to
Sun City off of Washington St. to gate.
Turn left at the first street after passing
the gate.*

Susan's phone: 760-668-1329



ADULT COLORING SESSION & LUNCHEON

When: Friday, MARCH 16th @ 12 PM-2 PM

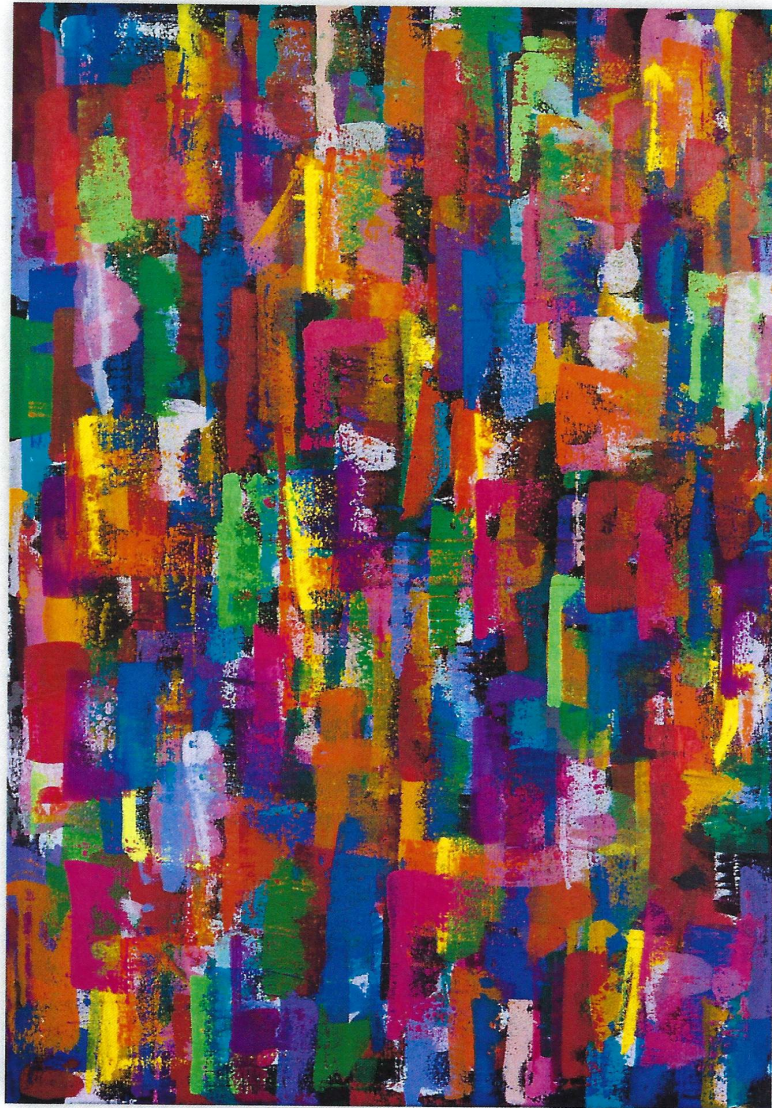
Where: St. George Church Hall

RSVP: By MARCH 11th to Rhonda Latkovic

We will have a Lenten Theme for our luncheon & coloring session!

Lunch will be served at 12:00 PM with coloring to follow. A special gift will be provided for all attendees. \$5.00 minimum donation is requested.

Coloring supplied provided. Please join us!



NICHOLAS KONTAXIS

HEATHER JAMES
FINE ART

MARCH 17, 2018

4:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.

To view some of Nicholas Kontaxis' Art Exhibit, click here: <https://nichalaskontaxis.com/>