

OCTOBER 2019



# Voice of St. George

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

**74-109 LARREA ST., PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA**



**Inside this issue**

## THE PURPOSE OF FREE WILL

One of the most precious attributes of the human soul is that of our Free Will. It is that quality of human life that allows us to claim our identity as being in the Image and Likeness of God. Claiming this identity provides the genuine meaning to our lives. Anything that interferes with our ability to exercise our Free Will causes us to be less than what God created us to be, which is perhaps the biggest reason why people in general decry slavery in all of its forms -- from human trafficking to drug addiction.

Sin is also something that interferes with our ability to exercise our Free Will as God intended, because the tragedy of sin is that it separates us from God's love. Even as a single occurrence, sin works to ensnare us into a way of life that keeps us apart from God, and, in this way, our very identity as being in the image of our Creator

is compromised. As Fr. Stanley Harakas points out, *"Adam and Eve 'chose' to disobey God...[our] thoughts and desires and will and actions are not anymore united with those of God... [and we] are really less than human."* (*Living the Liturgy*, pg. 14).

Sin is a tragedy that each person who commits sin must own for him/herself, because sin is caused by our own misuse of Free Will. To the point, Free Will makes us responsible for what we do, be it good or evil. Accepting our responsibility for what we do in life is the major quality of Orthodox Christian spiritual life. *"Being rational, we lead nature rather than nature leading us, and so when we desire anything we have the power to curb our appetites or to indulge in them, as we please. Hence we are subject to both praise and blame."* (*Exact Exposition of the Christian Faith*, by St. John of Damascus, pg. 245).

Another term for Free Will, which is used widely by the Saints of the Church, is the Greek word, *autexousion*, which carries with it the sense of exercising authority over ourselves. *"[We] received from the Creator the 'self-determining drive'...the proper use of freedom [is for] the ethical development and perfection of man and the development of the 'image' into the achievement of the divine 'likeness', by which humanity would overcome corruption and achieve incorruptibility. On the other hand, from the improper use of freedom, there would come the fall of humanity from communion with God."* (*Toward Transfigured Life*, by Fr. Stanley Harakas, pg. 102).

The freedom to choose wisely is a matter of clear thinking. The use of our Free Will as God intended begins with our choice to retain a clear-thinking thought process. According to St. John of Damas-

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cus, we are free to decide whether to remain engaged in a sensation that either inspires us for good deeds, or that tempts us to perform evil. Our freedom in the use of thought is critical. *"It is sensation that causes a passion...Our [thought process] weighs the truth or falseness of the notion and determines what is true."* (*Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, pg. 219).

Things that adversely affect our clear thinking include drugs and alcohol, as well as our emotions, such as anger or excess exuberance. In addition, our attitudes such as hatred and pride influence our thinking. These are some of the "things" that take away our clear thinking and, subsequently, the proper exercise of our Free Will. It is a sin to choose to engage in anything that can darken the clear thinking needed to exercise our Free Will to love and act responsibly.

The proper use of our Free Will is to seek the Wisdom of God in all things. Study of the Bible, prayer, participation in the Sacraments and counseling (if and when needed) provide guidance. Baptism in Christ begins by exercising our Free Will in choosing to *reject* evil and to *join* Christ.

Finally, efforts to control our Free Will through legislation are not lasting. The law does not save humanity; Christ God is our Savior. *"...Baptism and Chrismation [make] the righteousness of God gained by faith real in one's life."* (*Orthodox Study Bible*, pg. 1524). The righteousness of Christ fulfills the law. For St. Paul, our justification before God is a gift of grace through faith in Christ *"and not by works of the Law (Rom 3:37-30)."* (See *Apostolic Gospel*, Fr. Theodore Stylianopoulos, pg. 67)

Because God has graced us with Free Will, we can freely choose to love. Unlike robots, we can find meaning in life. We can at any time re-claim our dignity as being *loving, responsible* people of our Lord as His co-workers, thereby finding genuine fulfillment in our lives.

+FR. THEODORE

Interesting note: Greek word for clear-thinking is to freely "go through (thi-a) the mind (nous)"-διανοια.

## ST. NICHOLAS RANCH AND RETREAT CENTER: "A NICKEL AND A NAIL" HAS GONE A LONG WAY OVER 40 YEARS!



*"The dream of Saint Nicholas Ranch 40 years ago became a reality, and since that time, the thousands of people who have visited the Ranch, participated in programs and benefitted from the serene beauty of the surrounding, have been enriched in countless ways, indelibly etching the Ranch on their hearts,"* stated **His Eminence, Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco**. *"The Ranch is home to many of our Metropolis ministries, and it has been a place of spiritual renewal for those who have come to know the beauty of this sacred space."*

The 40-Year Anniversary event will be held on **Saturday, October 26, 2019** at the **Ascension Greek Orthodox Cathedral** in Oakland, CA, with a reception beginning at 6:00 p.m., followed by dinner, entertainment and a program at 7:00 p.m. This gathering will celebrate the many accomplishments of the Ranch, especially recognizing those whose vision brought forth this wonderful ministry 40 years ago, as well as provide us with the opportunity to look to the next 40 years and beyond so that the Ranch may continue to flourish for the spiritual edification of our faithful.

**Theofanis Economidis**, Ranch Board President, said, *"We will forever be grateful to Metropolitan Anthony, of blessed memory, and to Nick and Sandy Kossaras and Father John Bakas, for envisioning the benefits of a retreat center for our parishes, our youth and all our ministries. These past 40 years have exceeded everyone's expectations, and the next 40 year present many exciting opportunities for Saint Nicholas Ranch."*

Information on sponsorships and ticket sales are available at [www.stnicholasranch.org/](http://www.stnicholasranch.org/), or contact the Metropolis office at: **415-753-3075**. Sponsorship packages range from \$2,500 to \$25,000 and individual tickets are \$75 each for adults, \$45 for youth, ages 18 and under. Let us all celebrate the rich history of the Ranch, and create an even more vibrant future for this cornerstone ministry.

## CHURCH & WELLNESS

### How Gossip Hurts Us

One of the popular best sellers over the past few years has been Don Miguel Ruiz' book, *The Four Agreements*, according to which, one of the best agreements that we can make with ourselves is to *be impeccable with our words*. While people today may be mesmerized by such "self-help" literature, in truth, it is nothing new from an Orthodox Christian stand-point. The Saints of our Church have written volumes about the need for vigilance regarding our words, not for the sake of our own reputation only, but for the sake of our very life with God.

Fr. Nikon of Mt. Athos delivered a sermon on the topic of condemning other people and how condemnation of others is regularly involved in gossip. One of the members of our Bible Study group shared the following You Tube video of a talk given by Fr. Nikon: (click here ->) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMVTbyf0mal&t=79s>.

Most of the time, gossip deals with the reputation of others -- and the information that is errantly passed on is always incomplete and grossly inaccurate. Here's a word of warning: *those to whom you gossip are all too willing to gossip about you!*

Fr. Nikon's reminds us that all it takes for us to go to hell is for us to condemn our fellow human being. Take a look at the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee (St. Luke 9-14). The Publican was doing a great job in saying his prayer to God...He was speaking the truth about how he observed God's Commandments. He was doing okay with his expressions of gratitude to God, saying, "I thank You that I am not like others." But, when he said, "Not even like that Publican over there..." he lost Paradise. God condemned him. That's how easy we can find ourselves in the world of hell both in this life and in the next one.

Let me share more of Fr. Nikon's thoughts. He asks, "What gives us the right to condemn others? Do we see what goes on in their hearts?" The answer is "No." Only God knows who they are. We can see individuals committing a sin, but we do not see their tears of repentance afterwards.

We do not see the efforts that they make in the future to correct their words or actions. While they repent, God forgives them. We become enemies of God, because, while God forgives them we still have them condemned!

The biggest problem with the sin of gossip is that it is difficult to correct our fault. For example, we might tell someone, "There is this person who committed a particular sin. How terrible! What a bad person!" It never fails...we make a mistakes. Perhaps it was not the person we thought it was who committed the sin, or we misinterpreted his or her deed. Now, we want to correct our mistake. But, how do we find all those people who heard our words to begin with? And how can we even find the many people with whom they in turn shared our words? What is worse: this mistake of ours undoes the mercy that Christ our God is inclined to show the sinner whom He wants to forgive.

Let's consider a living example of how feeble our perceptions of reality can be. If we were alive at the time, we would at first think that Judas is a saint, because he follows Christ - actually being a guest at His Supper. We think: "What a great guy! Look! He is close to God!" At the same time, we would see the thief on his cross, crucified with our Lord. We would think: "What a bad guy! He's a thief! He deserves to die!" But, look at how inaccurate our judgment would be in reality. Overnight everything changed. Judas betrayed Christ and then hanged himself, in essence committing the sin of murder; the thief on his cross confessed his sins, saying, "I deserve my punishment." Then, upon hearing Christ our God forgiving humanity from His Cross, the same thief asked Him for forgiveness, saying, "Remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." The thief became a saint and the "saint" became a sinner. Who would have thought?

Our eternal life depends on our willingness to be careful with our souls. Let's love one another, seeking each other's salvation, rather than condemning one another so that we can look good.

+FR. THEODORE



## PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS



Our September General Members Meeting was held on Monday, Sept. 16th. We had 23 members present. Highlights of our meeting included an update on our initiatives: our **Homeless Outreach** through September 16th has provided **1,102 meals** year-to-date; our **Anti-Human Trafficking** update carried the announcement of the preparation of 35 toiletry kits for at-risk children who are located at the Safe House of the Desert. We introduced our **"Giving Tree" Outreach** for the holidays. We also announced our **Assistance for our Troops & Veteran's** with a donation towards the **Wounded Warriors Service Dog Program** in conjunction with **AHEPA**. Our **Childhood Literacy** update included the announcement of a school reader program for those interested in volunteering as classroom readers. The membership also discussed and voted for an increase in the **price of Koulourakia and Paximathia** to **\$7.00 per dozen**. The **Philoptochos Christmas Party** date and venue was announced. The party will be held **Saturday, Dec. 7th** at the **Palm Valley Country Club**. More details to follow but please **"Save the Date"**!

The month of October promises to be a busy month filled with lots of Philoptochos activities. The **"Paint El Paseo Pink Walk"** in support of Desert Cancer Foundation kicks off on **Saturday, October 12th**. Please join our Philoptochos **"TEAM SAINT GEORGE"** and sign up by October 6th. It's a great event that gives you the opportunity to walk in support of your loved ones who are cancer survivors or in memory of those who are no longer with us.

Our **October General Members Meeting** will be held on **Monday, Oct. 14th at 11:30 AM** in the church hall. **Nelly Zambrano** will be our speaker, who will discuss the importance of having a plan in place for your future care should the unforeseen occur.

The 2nd **"Movie Matinee Afternoon"** will be held on **Thursday, Oct. 17th at 2:30 PM**. Our movie will be **"Biggest Little Farm"**, a Sundance Film Award Winner.

Our **Homeless Outreach** is scheduled for **Tuesday, October 22nd in Indio**. We are currently not able to provide meals to the homeless in Palm Springs due to code enforcement by the city at Sunrise Park. The city council is currently in discussions with our partners from The Street Life Project to determine how and where future outreach will be executed.

If you are interested in having a memorial or sponsoring a coffee hour for a Sunday in November or December, you are encouraged to contact **Pat Dalkas** or me, **Rhonda Latkovic**, as soon as possible as dates are quickly filling up.

*"No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted."*

– RHONDA LATKOVIC,  
Philoptochos President

## NEW ICONS

The final phase of our recent parish iconography plan is completed. The Icons of **St. Anastasia the Martyr** and **St. Nicholas of Myra** are now installed in the Narthex area of our church and they are most visible upon going forth from the church.

This latest installment will include lighting to specifically and individually illumine each Icon. In addition, the final plan includes the inclusion of a small ledge at the foot of each Icon should anyone want to light a candle in prayer for loved ones or friends.

The current Icon Project, which began in May 2018, funded by private donations, the main donation coming from **Nicholas Demetropoulos**, has now been completed. A list of all donors toward this project is housed at our parish office, to be shared in the near future.

## AHEPA NEWS



"WIN for WYNN" is the current campaign of our AHEPA Chapter 528 in the effort to garner financial support for providing *guide dogs* to our military veterans who suffer from PTSD and related handicaps.

Topics discussed at our AHEPA September 5th meeting included planning the Chapter events for the 2019-2020 season:

Our **October Chapter 528 meeting** will be a dinner meeting at **Stuff Pizza Restaurant** (Westfield Mall) on **Friday, October 11th at 6:00 p.m.**

In step with tradition, our AHEPA Chapter will sponsor this year's parish **Veterans Day Commemoration on Sunday, November 10th**. We look forward to the superb assistance that is offered by our choir, since part of the commemoration includes the singing of the hymns of each branch of our nations Armed Forces.

We ask one and all to reserve Sunday, **November 24th** for our annual **Thanksgiving Luncheon**, which, like last year, is planned to be held at the Towne Center Cafe. More details will follow.

The AHEPA Christmas dinner party is in the planning stage, with details to be released soon.

**Sunday, February 2nd** is scheduled to be **Super Bowl Sunday**. Consistent with tradition, our AHEPA 528 Chapter will sponsor the **Annual Super Bowl Party** at our parish hall. February will also be the month in which AHEPA members will participate in the Annual **St. George Greek Festival -- February 22-23, 2020**.

Of course, throughout March and April 2020, attention will be given to applications for awarding the Annual **AHEPA 528 Fr. T. P. Theophilos Memorial Scholarship** to our youth who are attending college.

Over the next several months, details will be published with regard to these various events and programs of our parish AHEPA Chapter.

## CHOIR

New Members are always welcome. At the same time, the entire congregation is invited to sing along with the choir throughout the celebration of the Divine Liturgy every Sunday.

Mark **December 8, 2019 at 6:00 p.m.** on your calendars. Our parish choir has been invited to singing Christmas Carols at the **Esmaralda Hotel** as part of the hotel's Christmas program.

For more information about our parish choir, feel free to contact our St. George Choir Director, **Annette Laskaris**.

## ANNUAL GREEK FESTIVAL



The first Festival meeting of our 2019 - 2020 season was held at our parish hall on **Wednesday, September 18th**.

**George Argyros** announced that cooking for this year's Festival will begin on **January 8, 2020**. Proposed menu items were passed out to those in attendance.

Station chairpersons will be asked to plan ahead to reserve needed supplies for their respective stations in order to avoid stock-piling supplies in some areas, causing a shortage of supplies for other areas.

The **Parish Council** will be responsible for publishing this year's **Festival Program/Ad Book** and publicizing the Festival.

Also, over-all security for the weekend of the Festival will be improved.

Finally, it was emphasized that the best way to maintain good and **accurate communication between Festival volunteers and the Festival Committee members is for all** who plan to volunteer for the Festival to **attend all** (or almost all) of the Festival meetings between now and the dates when the Festival will be held.

The next Festival meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, November 6, 2019 at 6:00 p.m.** at our **parish hall**.

## MEMORIAL WALL

Another nameplate order has been received and installed on our wall. There is one more nameplate order in production and should be completed in November.

## STREET LIFE

On Tuesday, September 17th Philoptochos served 65 meals to the homeless in Indio. Year-to-date, Philoptochos has now given 1,102 meals to the homeless! The next outreach to the homeless will be in October. Donations of clothing, back-packs, socks & head gear will be much appreciated!

## SUNDAY SCHOOL



Sunday School began on **Sunday, September 22nd**. Those who have not yet registered their children are asked to contact **Fr. Ted or Jim Christopoulos** so that their registration forms can be completed. A special Agiasmo Service was conducted following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, asking our Lord and Savior to bless the staff, parents and children of our Sunday School.

Teaching our students this year are:

- Melissa Hawkins** - the primary age students
- Athena Snarskis** - elementary school students
- Deacon Euthym -Jr.** High/High School students

Substitute teachers include:

**Margarita Pagoulatos, Christina Karcher, and Irene Stambolos.**

The 2019-2020 Sunday School Calendar includes the following:

- October 20, 2019--Pumpkin "religious" painting
- December 15, 2019--Christmas Program
- December 24, 2019 --Christmas Caroling
- March 8, 2020--Icon Procession
- March 21, 2020-Date Farm Garden (Life of Jesus)
- May 31, 2020- "End-of-the-Year" celebration.

This year the Sunday School students will have the opportunity to participate in a few of the practical functions of our Sacred Church Services:

- Each month: cleaning of Communion Cloths
- Decorating Festal Liturgical Icons of the year
- .Icon of the Nativity (Christmas)

.Icon for the Sunday of the Veneration of the Holy Cross

.Icon for Palm Sunday

.Decorating the Church on Holy Saturday

--Baking Prosforo

--Baking of the "Five Loaves" (Artoklasia)

Other events in the planning stage for this year include: "God-parent Sunday (Date to be determined); St. George Specific Oratorical Festival (Date to be determined).

The theme for Sunday School this year is "*The Old Testament and the Prophecies of Jesus Christ.*"

## ALTAR FLOWER SEASON- OPEN!

Please sign up now to sponsor **Altar Flower bouquets** throughout our season of **October 2019 - May 2020**. Write your checks to: St. George Greek Orthodox Church. In the Memo Section, write: Altar Flowers/(Sunday date for display). Credit cards are accepted; (see parish office). Also notify our Altar Flower Coordinator, Louise Dobbs Barringer, regarding the purpose for dedication the Altar Flower bouquets that are being sponsored -- ("in memory of \_\_\_\_\_"; "in celebration for \_\_\_\_\_"). Also, include the names of those being honored or memorialized. Altar Flower bouquets may be offered for memorials, anniversaries, birthdays, etc. The dedication will appear in The Ladder on the Sunday when the one's Altar Flower bouquets are sponsored.

## PINK WALK

The 13th **Annual Paint El Paseo Pink Walk** will take place on El Paseo on morning of Saturday, October 12, 2019. Plan to register today and join us for this most important community event.

The purpose of the *Pink Walk* is for one to sponsor him/her self and to encourage others to sponsor him/her in the effort to raise money to fight breast cancer. A registration form for this year's *Pink Walk* is included in this month's *Voice*.

The *Pink Walk* is the project of the Desert Cancer Foundation, located next door to our church facilities. Let's all support this most worth-while event.

## PARISH COUNCIL NOTES



The first meeting of the Parish Council, following the summer break, was held on Thursday, September 12, 2019 at the parish hall.

Topics discussed were as follows:

1. Stewardship Statements were mailed to our parish stewards during the first week of September. This year there is a slight increase in stewardship compared to last year.
2. The Endowment Fund's value was increased in July from \$358,696 in June to \$360,538 at the end of July.
3. Sunday School is ready to begin. New classroom equipment will be bought in the near future in order to up-grade the Sunday School lessons with activities that involve the religious items used for Church services.
4. Youth Protection- Sunday School teachers, along with clergy and those working with youth will be undergoing a background check in the near future. Please refer to last month's *Voice of St. George* regarding particulars as to how *all of us* are to be vigilant in protecting our children and youth from harm on every level. Those who will be participating in the required "background check" will be working directly with our office.
5. Our parish alarm company will be contacted in order to provide information for us to acquire security cameras. Donations from parishioners to help cover the costs of installing security cameras have already started coming in. In addition, it was suggested that, while we will have surveillance camera around our church, we should contact the security company that helps for our parish festival. A security guard would help protect us more on Sundays, as they patrol our facilities. Security Guard service would be sought for a 4 hour time frame on Sundays— from 8:00 am—12 noon.

6. It was decided to re-introduce the Golden Raffle to raise funds for our parish at this time. A committee is formed to work on the details for this event.
7. The report regarding the possibilities of renting our parish hall to various organizations around us was given. Further discussions will be entertained at the October meeting.
8. Finally, **Fall General Assembly** will be held on Sunday, November 17th and Parish Elections will be held on December 8th

## GREEK SCHOOL

Classes for adult students interested in learning the Modern Greek Language will begin on **Tuesday, October 22, 2019** from **6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.** at our parish hall.

The class title is "Survival Greek." Students are asked to pay a fee of \$75.00 per semester, payable to the St. George Greek Orthodox Church. This fee covers the costs of in-house printing of supplementary materials for class instruction. In addition, students will be purchasing their own text books, as well as CDs providing students with the opportunity to hear Greek words as they are intoned and spoken in authentic Modern Greek.

The "first semester" of the adult Greek class, "Survival Greek" is a 9-week course, beginning on October 22nd and ending December 17th. The "second semester" will begin after Christmas and the New Year.

The classes will be held under the "overseership" of **Margarita Pagoulatos**. Providing "back-up" instruction will be other teachers, including Fr. Ted.

For more information regarding our Adult Greek School class, "Survival Greek," please contact our parish office.



## SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS FOR THE MONTH by Deacon Euthym

**Watch every movement of your heart; consider whether it is pleasing to the Holy Trinity, or if it is not, on the contrary, the will of your old passionate man.** Righteous John, Wonderworker of Kronstadt

This idea of constant watchfulness is important to our spiritual lives. We can't "dabble" in God. "I go to church once a week." "I am a good person" "I give to the church (poor, charities, others)" are not substitutes for this watchfulness of the heart. This is a constant relationship with God, a desire to live a life glorifying the one true God who created everything. This vigilance and constant desire to please God with our thoughts and our lives then blossoms into the fruit of an authentic spiritual life. Our participation in services, prayer, reading of scripture, stewardship, love of neighbor, service etc is then a fruit of this authentic relationship with God. As the Lord said, "**...First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean**".

**Whether it's a mirror or a cover from a tin can, unless the rays of the sun fall upon it, it won't shine. The Saints were enlightened by the rays of the Grace of God, just as the stars receive light from the sun.** *Saint Paisios of Mount Athos*

No matter our talent, our beauty, our skills, our effort, our intellect, our physical prowess ( which are created in us by God in the first place) without the light of Christ, the Grace of God it is like hammering a nail in the dark. We may be the best carpenter, but in this scenario a lot of damage is done. Ability and purpose can be destructive since they generally tend toward pride, self aggrandizement and ego. With the light of Christ (Grace) whatever we do with our gifts has purpose and meaning, and ultimately glorifies God. A person with meager ability and minimal gifts who humbly accept the Grace of God can do miracles if they have purpose. Serving as examples in this respect are the Holy Apostles and the Saints. ( take the Apostles, the saints. Let us allow God's grace to shine through us, through humility and a

desire to glorify Him.

**Those who have by God's Grace realized the vanity of this life have actually received the greatest gift.** *Saint Paisios of Mount Athos*

When we live this way, the "little things" really don't bother us. The problem is we are filled with pride and ego, and do not think that this life is vanity. We think that EVERYTHING matters. It does, but only in the sense that our approach and priorities matter in what we do, say or focus on. If we see the vanity in the world, humble ourselves and put God in the center of our life, then as we approach the everyday cares of the world we become witnesses and lights to others and we glorify God. If our ego and pride enter in, then we become competitors for things that don't matter and leave the one good thing (God) on the back burner. We treat God as an afterthought. Let us realign our priorities and our focus, and receive the greatest gift, God's peace.

### ST.NICHOLAS GREEK FESTIVAL: MURRIETTA, CALIFORNIA

Enclosed, is the flier announcing the Annual **Greek Festival** sponsored by the **St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church of Murrietta, California** (a.k.a.: Temecula).

St. Nicholas' Festival will be held on the weekend of **October 12-13, 2019** at the Old Town Temecula Civic Center. On Saturday, **October 12th**, the Festival will begin at **10:00 a.m. and continue until 9:00 p.m.** On **Sunday, October 13th**, the Festival will begin at **11:00 a.m and continue until 7:00 p.m.**

Admission is **\$3.00 for adults; \$2.00 for senior citizens** and only **\$1.00 for children under 12 years old.**

Free parking is available at the Old Town Garage, located at 28690 Mercedes Street in Temecula.

For more information, contact the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church Festival website at: [www.TemeculaGreekFest.Com](http://www.TemeculaGreekFest.Com).



## THE SECOND ECUMENICAL COUNCIL IN NICAIA: THE VICTORY OF ICONS

The decision to use icons for prayer and worship was made at the Seventh Ecumenical Council in the year 787, which was convened by the Empress Irene. Unfortunately, although this council was held in 787, the controversy surrounding the use of icons did not come to an end until Empress Theodora proclaimed that icons be used for prayer by Orthodox faithful on the first Sunday of Great Lent in the year 843. This final imperial decree regarding the use of icons is commemorated every year on the first Sunday of Lent, known as "The Sunday of Orthodoxy." This is why we are reminded about the teaching of the Church regarding icons during Lent, as opposed to celebrating the "victory of the icons" on (or near) the date of October 13th, at which time the actual decision for the use of Holy Icons was made at the Seventh Ecumenical Council held in 787. This year, October 13th falls on a Sunday, and the Saints of the Seventh Ecumenical Council will be honored at this time.

During the course of these many years between 787 and 843 it became vitally important for the issue of "icon-use" to be defined, not only for the Church, but for an entire civilization, which was struggling to define itself. Byzantine society was in the grips of a major struggle against Islam, and many emperors sided with the Islamic view that there should be no "images" of God or anything religious. This struggle became known as the *Iconoclastic Controversy*, the start of which could be placed at the feet of Emperor Leo III.

Yet, one of the worst emperors was Constantine V, who vigorously attacked the use of icons. He also called a council, condemning the use of icons as the "worship of paintings and wood." However, none of the five Patriarchs of the Church were present at this council, and, therefore, it was not an Ecumenical Council.

Following the reign of Constantine V, the Empress Irene, the widow of Constantine's son, convened the Seventh Ecumenical Council in 787, which was held in the city of Nicaea. Interesting-

ly, the First Ecumenical Council, which formed much of the Orthodox dogma that we recite in the Nicene Creed, was also held in Nicaea.

With icons, we teach that Jesus Christ is the Only-Begotten Son of God Who is of the same essence "True God of True God," and Who became Man for us and for our salvation. Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. As such, He has been seen among people living in this present life. Therefore, He can be depicted. Those who follow Him and become His Saints can also be depicted. Christ is not a fathom Who cannot be depicted and, He is God to Whom we are to pray.

It was St. John of Damascus, who, although living in Islamic-ruled lands, wrote the major defense for the use of icons: *"Concerning the charge of idolatry, icons are not idols, but symbols. Therefore, when Orthodox venerate an icon, they are not guilty of idolatry, not worshiping the symbol, but venerating it. Such a veneration is not directed towards wood, or paint, or stone, but toward the Person depicted...I do not worship matter, but the Creator of matter, Who for my sake became material and dwelled in matter."* Thus, relative honor is shown to objects, but worship is due to God alone. This Council at Nicaea established the truth that icons express the great truths about Christ and His Saints, as well as the teachings of the entire Church. Icons are a great teaching device and they also make better prayer possible.

This Council showed unity between Rome (in the West) and Constantinople (in the East). This unity brought Christians together, through which people were taught to properly pray and to offer reverence to the Saints. Today, we cannot think of "Byzantine" or Eastern Christian Civilization without thinking about icons. Christian churches in the East, along with their icons were usually tolerated by the Moslems in the past.

Looking at our own St. George Church, we see many beautiful icons which have recently been added. These icons enlighten us and present the life of the Church to all of us.

—MATTHEW DAVIS

**ST. GEORGE ENDOWMENT FUND**

The St. George of the Desert Endowment Fund value was **\$360,358.91** at the end of July, at mid-year, 2019.

The fund's value had increased in July following the markets from \$358,696.56 at the end of June to \$360,358.91...an increase in value of \$2,461.74.

The fund is currently well above its January 1st, 2019 value of \$320,200 – a 12.5% increase.

Be aware of the fact that markets are volatile and change in value quickly. Past results are no guarantee of future realities.


For that reason, the committee continues to search for moderate risk fund through our advi-

sor at The Resource Group which meet the criteria stated in the St. George of the Desert Greek Orthodox Church By-Laws. An example of this is the recent move from the Large Cap Higher Fee Fund SELCX to an S&P 500 Index Fund SSPIX low fee fund.

Keep in mind that our By-Laws restrict electronic access to our account by the committee. Hence, we experience some delays based on the acquisition of traditional, paper-mailed statements.

We are awaiting an updated report for the end of October.

Please direct any questions to me at: (760) 455-9727, or: [n.m.latkovic@gmail.com](mailto:n.m.latkovic@gmail.com).  
 – NICHOLAS M. LATKOVIC,  
 Endowment Fund Chairman



**2019 GREEK FESTIVAL**  
 of Temecula Valley

**OCTOBER**  
 12th & 13th

**SATURDAY**  
 10am – 9pm

**SUNDAY**  
 11am – 7pm

at the Old Town Temecula Civic Center

**Fun For Everyone!**


DONATE BLOOD  
**FREE ADMISSION**  
 by presenting your donor receipt!

Support your community,  
 join us for a blood drive!

**LifeStream**  
GIVE HOPE · GIVE LIFE · GIVE BLOOD

**SATURDAY**  
**Oct. 12**  
 1pm to 6pm

for appointments call  
 (800) 879-4484





**2019 GREEK FESTIVAL**  
 of Temecula Valley

*experience the treasures of Greece!*

**OCTOBER**  
 12th & 13th

**SATURDAY**  
 10am – 9pm

**SUNDAY**  
 11am – 7pm

at the Old Town Temecula Civic Center





- Live Greek Music** ♦ *The Olympians!*
- Dancing & Folk Dance Performances*
- Authentic Greek Food**
- Delicious Greek Pastries*
- Greek Wine, Beer, Liqueur & Coffee**
- Mediterranean Market Place*
- Children's Game Area & Petting Zoo**

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**ONLY \$3 ADMISSION**  
**SENIOR CITIZENS \$2**  
**KIDS UNDER 12 only \$1**

**FREE PARKING**  
*at old town garage*

28690 Mercedes St.  
 Temecula, CA 92590

**FREE ADMISSION**  
 to US Military, Firefighters & Law Enforcement with proper ID

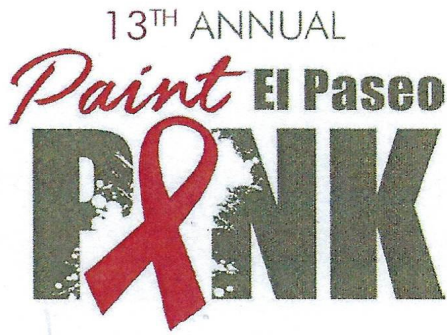
[www.TemeculaGreekFest.com](http://www.TemeculaGreekFest.com)

**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/](http://www.go-stgeorge.org/) email:**  
**[pdsaintgeorge@gmail.com](mailto:pdsaintgeorge@gmail.com)**  
**Telephone: (760)568-9901 / FAX: 9760) 568-9492**

# OCTOBER 2019

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1  Bible Study-10:00 am	2  Parish Council Meeting-2:30 p.m	3  Choir Practice-1:00 p.m.	4	5
6- 3rd Sunday of St. Luke Ep. 2 Cor.6:1-10 Gos.-Luke 7:11-16	7-  Philoptochos Board Mtg.-11 a.m.	8  Bible Study-10:00 am	9	10  Choir Practice-1:00 pm	11  AHEPA Dinner Meeting- 6:00 pm	12  PINK WALK  <b>Greek Festival- St. Nicholas Church-Murrietta</b>
13-Saints of the 7th Ecc. Council Ep. Titus 3:8-15 Gos. Luke 8:5-15  <b>Greek Festival- St. Nicholas Church-Murrietta</b>	14  Philoptochos General Meeting- 11:30 a.m.	15  Bible Study-10:00 am	16	17  Choir Practice-1:00 p.m.  Philoptochos Movie Matinee-2:30 p.m.	18 ST. LUKE THE EVANGELIST Orthros-8:30 a.m. D.Liturgy-9:30 am.	19
20-St. Gerasimos of Cephallonia Ep. 2 Cor. 9:6-11 Gos.-Luke 8:26-39	21	22  Bible Study-10:00 am	23 ST. JAMES THE APOSTLE Orthros-8:30 am D.Liturgy9:30 am	24  Choir Practice-1:00 p.m.	25	26 ST. DEMETRIOS THE MARTYR Othros-8:30 a.m. D. Liturgy-9:30 a.m.
27-7th Sunday of St. Luke Ep.2 Cor. 11:31-33; 12:1-9 Gos. Luke 8:41-56	28 PROTECTION OF The THEOTOKOS Orthros-8:30 p.m. D. Liturgy-9:30 a.m	29  Bible Study-10:00 am	30	31	<u>NOVEMBER 1</u> STS. COSMAS & DAMIAN Orthros-8:30 a.m. D.Liturgy-9:30 am	





# SIGN UP FORM

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12 • 2019

## PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

First Name:

Last Name:

Street Address:

City:

State:

Zip:

Sex:  M  F

Phone:

E-mail:

Team Name: **SAINT GEORGE**

I am raising pledges. My goal is:

I am a breast cancer survivor.

## PARTICIPATION TYPE (Per Entry)

Early Registration Fee \$25 - by October 10  
(includes T-shirt) \$

On-Site Registration Fee \$30 - after October 10  
(includes T-shirt) \$

I'd like to buy an additional T-shirt \$25 each \$

I'd like to make a donation \$

**TOTAL AMOUNT** \$

T-Shirt Size: (Select size for each registered participant.)

S  M  L  XL  XXL  XXXL

## PAYMENT INFORMATION

Cash  Credit Card  Check  
(Make check payable to Desert Cancer Foundation.)

Select One:  Amex  Visa  MasterCard  Discover

Credit Card Number:

Expiration Date: / /

For registrations with credit card authorization,  
**fax to:** Desert Cancer Foundation at 760-773-6532.

**Mail your completed registration form and payment to:**  
Desert Cancer Foundation  
74091 Larrea St.  
Palm Desert, CA 92260.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent /guardian signature if participant under age 18

## WAIVER AND RELEASE

I know that the 13th Annual Paint El Paseo Pink event on Saturday, October 12, 2019, is a potentially hazardous activity and I hereby assume full and complete responsibility for any injury or accident which may occur during my participation in this event or while on the premises of this event, and I hereby release and hold harmless and covenant not to file suit against Desert Cancer Foundation, the City of Palm Desert, its officers, officials, agents, employees and volunteers, any Walk sponsors and their agents and employees, and all other persons or entities associated with this event (the Releasees) from any loss, liability or claims I may have arising out of my participation in this event, including personal injury or damage suffered by me or others, whether same be caused by falls, contact with participants, conditions of the course, negligence of the Releasees or otherwise. Participant shall cause all walkers participating in Promotion to hold harmless and release Owner and Taubman Company LLC as Managing Agent from any and all claims and liability growing or arising out of the Promotion or their presence at the Center in connection with the Promotion. I hereby grant permission to Desert Cancer Foundation and its authorized agents to use my name, photographs, videotapes, motion pictures in connection with this event, including recording any other record of my participation in this event for any purpose.



**STEP UP FOR CANCER AWARENESS!**