

JANUARY 2020



Voice of St. George

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

74-109 LARREA ST., PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA



Inside this issue

HOLY BAPTISM: THE LIFE IN / WITH CHRIST

“Union with Christ belongs to those who have undergone all that the Savior has undergone and have experienced and become all that He has...The effect of this sacred rite is the imparting of the energies of the Holy Spirit... (The Life in Christ, by Nicholas Cabasilas, pg. 65). As our Savior walked into our human situation at a certain point in history, He continues to walk with us today. Our Baptism is a life with Christ through the Grace of the Holy Spirit. As such, we are given the Grace to share in the Divine energies of Christ. As such, our lives parallel the life of Christ as we grow in Divine union with Him.

Union with Christ is as much His union with us as it is our union with Him. His human nature is comprised of flesh taken from the Ever-Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit, taking the form of a man. His human existence in our world embodies all of

humanity - men and women of all races. The life of Christ can be lived by anyone at anytime and in any place.

At our Savior’s Baptism in the Jordan, the Father; the Son, and the Holy Spirit are revealed to us. In turn, our own baptism is performed by triple-immersion in water in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. With this, the parallels between our own personal lives and the life of Jesus Christ begin and are set to continue throughout our lives in this world.

Holy Baptism is literally the drowning of sin. The Sacrament that takes place after the candidate pledges to reject the devil and all his works and to join Christ. Joining Christ allows us to accept the Divine energies of our Lord as inheritors of Eternal Life. It is our spiritual birth. Our spiritual birth parallels our human birth.

Just as physically being born does not in itself sustain life without drawing breath, so is our participation in God’s Kingdom not sustained without the Grace of the Spirit through Chrismation.

With our Baptism and Chrismation, we follow Christ our God into the wilderness of this present world. The Gospels of Sts. Matthew (4:1), Mark (1:12), and Luke (4:1) record that, while the Holy Spirit lighted upon Christ as a Dove, the Holy Spirit also led Christ into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. With this, Christ joins us in our battles against temptations. Those three temptations that Christ endured are the “root” temptations of all others: the flesh (stone into bread); glory (looking for God and His angels to rescue us while still being selfish), and power (control of the kingdoms of the world). The

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power of prayer is given to us through the Holy Spirit. In his First Epistle to the Corinthians (12:3), St. Paul reminds us of this, saying, *"No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit."*

That the Holy Spirit "led" our Lord into the wilderness to be tempted means that, through prayer, we can avoid being led into temptation by calling upon the Name of Christ. Evil comes from acting on temptations. We are tempted by the devil who invades our thoughts, bringing to our minds the lure for self-glory, through pursuits of personal power and wealth. Our spiritual warfare is a matter of surrendering our self-will to God's Will. Peter Bouteneff, in his book, *How to be a Sinner*, reminds us of St. Paul's struggles, which are very much like ours: *"I do not understand my own actions. For, I do not do what I want, but the very thing I hate...But, in fact, it is no longer I that does it, but sin which dwells in me."* (Romans 7:15-20). Bouteneff continues to point out, however, *"Like St. Paul, our inmost self also delights in God's statutes...We are not totally depraved. But, we are deeply confused."* (pg. 82).

Through Baptism and Chrismation, the Holy Spirit enlightens us so that our confusion is turned into wisdom by joining Christ, as we live according to our baptismal pledge to continually fight the "good fight," which is a fight against evil and for good— the rejection of the devil and his temptations and a turning to Christ.

Our arsenal against evil is found in the gift of prayer, which is a life of constant *awareness* of the presence of the Holy Spirit, reminding us that Christ is with us. Prayer is also worship by which we partake of the Holy Sacraments, given to us by the Holy Spirit. 2020 is a year to be dedicated to sharing our understanding of the power of prayer and Orthodox Christian worship.

+FR. THEODORE

ARCHBISHOP'S ENCYCLICAL FOR THE FEAST OF ST. BASIL & THE NEW YEAR



Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

On this first day of the year of our Lord 2020, I greet you in His love with a heart filled with joy and peace. Our Incarnate Savior is with us, guiding us in His divine will, granting us wisdom, filling our hearts with hope in His eternal promises, and leading us in our sacred ministry to share the Gospel of salvation.

This is a day that calls us to reflection. We look back on the year that has past, considering all that has happened, the joys and challenges we have experienced. We look forward into the new year with hope, contemplating the opportunities and possibilities, and reflecting on all that we wish to accomplish.

In our time of introspection that comes with the transition to a new year, we must also be mindful of our relationship with God. When we contemplate the direction of our lives, our hopes and wishes, as well as our opportunities and struggles, we cannot neglect the essential role of our faith and our communion with God in addressing all areas of life. He is the Source and Sustainer of our lives. We are beautifully and wonderfully made for a divine purpose, and only through our faith in Him and His abundant grace are we able to experience and explore the great potential we have both now and for eternity.

We are blessed on this day to commemorate a great Father and Ecumenical Teacher of the Church, Basil the Great. His life is an embodiment and excellent example of how we commit our lives to the ways of the Lord. Saint Basil revealed the grace and power of God by living in the holy manner in which the faithful in Philippi where exhorted to do by the Apostle Paul: *Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think*

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ST. BASIL & NEW YEAR ENCYCLICAL, Cont.

these things. (Philippians 4:8) Saint Basil not only thought about these things, he lived them.

In faith and by the grace of God, Saint Basil knew the truth as revealed through Christ, and he preached, taught, and defended the truth throughout his life. He was honorable in character; he was just in addressing the struggles of others; his heart was pure, thus he saw God; his manner and ministry were filled with love and grace. In all things he pursued excellence, which for him was not only grounded in his worship of God, but represented the glorious power of grace and a firm witness of Christ. For Saint Basil, excellence in life was achieved through a life of worship, prayer, and service, and through a life that was transformed by the love of God and that offered His love to others.

We see this offering of love in the vital work of our home for children, Saint Basil Academy. Named in commemoration of this great saint who built ministries for the sick and suffering, the traveler, and orphans and widows, Saint Basil Academy offers a wholistic environment for the care of the children and youth who live there. Their challenges are met by the love of God through the caring staff, directors and trustees. They experience life that is lovely and gracious, pure and true, and through this they find healing and hope. As we are led by our Ladies Philoptochos chapters in the annual cutting of the Vasilopita, may we offer our prayers and support for the work of Saint Basil Academy. For over 70 years, our Academy has been a place of prayer, compassionate service, and quality care. Your support is a blessing and enhances our sacred ministry to the children and youth.

On this blessed Feast of Saint Basil the Great and the inauguration of a new calendar year, may we reflect on the life of this holy man of God who pursued excellence in all things. May we commit to deepening our communion with God so that we may do what is true, honorable, pure, lovely, and gracious. Let us reflect on all of these things

so that our opportunities and possibilities are imbued with the grace of God, and we are witnesses to all of His Life-Giving presence.

++ARCHBISHOP ELPIDOPHOROS,
Archbishop of America

CONGRATULATIONS TO MIA PETERSON!

Congratulations to **Mia Peterson**, daughter of **Mr. and Mrs. Silas "Pete" Peterson**, who has tried out and earned her position on the **Indio District Gymnastic Competition Team!** She worked for an entire year to perfect her routine and **will now be allowed to compete in 2020.**

HOUSE BLESSINGS

Appointments may be made with **Fr. Ted** for family house blessings following the celebration of our Lord's Theophany on January 6th. Please note that Fr. Ted will be away for two weeks from January 20th-February 1st.

CHURCH & WELLNESS

Awareness of the World Within

Currently, one of the most recommended practices in the effort to cope with issues of stress is the practice called "mindfulness." Indeed, mindfulness is nothing new on the stage of human history. At issue, however, is the direction in which we place our "mindfulness activity." Is it directed to an awareness of what is going on in the world *around* us? Or, is it directed to an awareness of what is going on in the world *within* us? To which direction is it best to go?

According to St. Theophan the Recluse, if we are to be able to cope with issues of the world around us, we need to first address the world within us. It is from within our souls that we effect the world around us. Having a positive effect on the world around us helps to determine the kind of effect the world has on us. "*Learn to perform everything you do in such a way that it warms the heart instead of cooling it,*" writes St. Theophan. "*Whether reading or praying, working or talking with others, hold fast to this one aim: to not to let your heart grow cold. Keep your inner stove always hot by*

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CHURCH & WELLNESS, Continued

reciting a short prayer, and watch over your feelings in case they dissipate this warmth. External impressions are very rarely in harmony with inner work." (*The Art of Prayer*, pg. 244). Keeping our "inner stove" warm is a matter of praying the "Jesus Prayer" without ceasing: "Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner."

St. Theophan, consistent with the Tradition of our Saints, is prone to call destructive habits and urges *passions*. "Without inner mental struggle, our external efforts cannot be successful...Inner struggle should therefore be unceasing and unremitting. (*The Art of Prayer*, pg. 245) An indispensable part of prayer is to summon from within us faith in God. For, placing ourselves in God's presence not only brings spiritual comfort, thereby *calming us down*. It reminds us of His Love and we gain the Wisdom of God in order to discern the response to the world around us which best serves to help others; to inspire them, and to find peace for ourselves. Our constant awareness of the presence of our Savior Jesus Christ brings salvation to us especially in those moments when calmer minds need to prevail.

As opposed to mindfulness being practiced from time to time in order to de-stress, St. Theophan advises that constant awareness of Christ's ongoing presence is needed in order to be prepared to deal with stressful moments at any given time.

Along these lines, St. Theophan gives the following advice: "Remember what is said about the positive value of inner work -- that it is inner work which gives to all our external activities their purpose and their effectiveness." (pg. 245). This applies not only to our study of the Bible or our participation in worship. Our work in life includes nurturing our every-day relationships in discharging responsibilities that are needed for families to thrive.

"Our whole task may be reduced to the following rule: collecting yourself within, recover spiritual awareness. Get set to work inwardly, and, prepared in this way, practice the external duties imposed upon you...But, by doing this, you must watch and notice with strict and unwavering attention everything that arises within

you. As soon as some passion is awakened, chase it away and strike it down...[Place into your soul] the words of St. Paul, 'And whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.' (Col. 3:17)." (pg. 247). The Saints collectively tell us that "striking down" temptations is most often a matter of having them "evaporated" before the Name of Christ and the Power of the Sign of the Holy Cross. Hold on to the Crosses given by your Godparents when you were baptized!

+FR. THEODORE

CHOIR NEWS

Welcome to two new members of our St. George parish choir. Filling the need for male voices are newcomers, **Nicholas Andros** and **Pete Snarskis**, joining **Angelo Veroulis**, who also serves as one of our chanters.

New choir members are always welcome. To join the choir, contact our **Choir Director, Annette Laskaris**.

MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR: THE CHANGE TO AN EASTERN ORTHODOX CULTURE

One of the most important Saints of our Church is St. Maximus the Confessor. His Feast Day is on January 21st. He is important because he is the one Saint who signaled a real shift to an Eastern Orthodox culture, not just a Greek or Hellenic one that had converted to Christ.

Maximus was born in Constantinople around the year 580 and he was raised in a pious Christian family. He was really like other pious Christians of his time, since he combined the Christian faith with traditional Greek learning and the knowledge of philosophy, which was centered around Hellenic thinking. He was a lot like the Three Hierarchs celebrated on January 30th. He spanned two civilizations: Ancient Hellenic and "Byzantine/Orthodox." He entered service as a chief counselor to Emperor Heraclius (611-641). The emperor was impressed by St. Maximus' knowledge and life. It should be noted that Heraclius actually saved the Roman/Byzantine

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MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, Continued

Empire by defeating the Persians. Although he defeated the Persians, however, he could not fully defeat the Arabs and Islam. This would be the cause of new problems in the future.

Eventually, Emperor Heraclius and those around him became corrupted by the Monothelite Heresy, which had been spreading throughout the East. The Monothelite Heresy was a false teaching about the identity of Christ. Accordingly, Monothelites believed that Jesus Christ has two natures, divine and human -- but, He has only one will ("thelisis," in Greek) -- that being, the divine will. At the Third Ecumenical Council in 681, it was affirmed by all that the proper teaching is that Jesus has two wills -- divine and human -- since Jesus is Fully God and Fully Man.

The Monothelite Heresy was promoted by the son of Heraclius, Constans II. With this, Maximus left the imperial service and went to the Chryopolis Monastery, where he received the monastic tonsure. Arguing against such heresies as Monothelism, while also arguing against those embracing Islam, caused a good deal of tension throughout the Empire, which seemed to cause anxiety for St. Maximus.

Maximus was convinced that only godliness and the best humility of Christ explains the redemption of the human race. His works give a good explanation of this. He once explained to a friend, *"Nature cannot comprehend God. It is only the mercy of God that has the capacity to endow the divine likeness (theosis) unto that which exists...In theosis, the human person (the image of God) becomes likened to God and [he/she] rejoices in all the plentitude that does not belong to human nature, because the Grace of the Spirit triumphs within and because God acts in one's being."* (Letter 22).

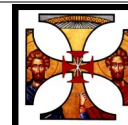
St. Maximus wrote many books on human nature and the nature of the soul. He wrote about Dionysios the Areopagite, who used some Neo-Platonic thought to support Christianity. He wrote *The Mystagogia*, which provides explanations of the Divine Liturgy. He also wrote exeget-

ical works on Holy Scripture, as well as works dealing with the spiritual experiences of the great Desert Fathers.

He pulled from the art of dialectic used by pre-Christian philosophers in order to author other books. The art of dialectic developed by pre-Christian philosophers was later further developed by St. Simeon the New Theologian and, afterward, even by St. Gregory Palamas. *"Theosis"* became a new term to explain the way that one could acquire the divine energies of God, making a person "God-like," as a co-worker of God in bringing about miracles.

Those who were persecuted for their Christian Faith, but who were not martyred, are known in the Church as *Confessors*, rather than *Martyrs*. His opposition to the teachings of Constans II was punished. He was exiled with his tongue cut out and his right hand cut off, making it hard for him to preach and write. St. Maximus developed Orthodox theology and lived a saintly life. He was duly honored at the Sixth Ecumenical Council.

--MATTHEW DAVIS

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

Our December Board Meeting was held on Monday, Dec. 2nd. The board met to finalize plans for the Christmas luncheon and to discuss the various other projects in the works for the month.

A review of Philoptochos finances showed that the bank balance as of 12/02/19 is \$10,461.21 with income for the period of 11/01/19-11/30/19 was \$1560.00 and expenses were \$773.28. Our baking supplies cost us \$197.89 but the income from the Christmas baking will not be reflected until the next month.

We spent \$57.83 to assemble packs for homeless and in-need American veteran's. These packs were donated to the DAV Chapter 66 located in Palm Springs. In addition, the board voted to

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PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS, Continued

make a \$200.00 donation to the DAV Chapter for the holiday. (see photo)

The Philoptochos Christmas luncheon was held on Saturday, Dec. 7th at Palm Valley Country Club. Our thanks to Olympia Pilafidis who set up the venue and planned many of the details of the party and to Tina Veroulis who managed the financial aspects and place cards. The event was a great success with 51 attendees and it was nice to see several men in attendance! Marge Guericke provided musical entertainment and did a most wonderful job on the piano playing holiday tunes. We even had a sing-a-long at one point! Our thanks to Linda Petalas for procuring 10 great prizes for our raffle! Finally, our gratitude to everyone who attended the event! We hope to make it even bigger and better next year! (see photos)

We assembled and delivered the annual Christmas baskets for the homebound in our community on Friday, Dec. 13th. We had a great turnout of volunteers who prepared and delivered 30 baskets! God Bless our volunteers! (see photo)

The holiday "Movie Matinee" event featuring the movie "Christmas with the Karountzoses" was held on Thursday, Dec. 19th. Our own Fanny Nicholas, who is in the movie, was on hand to speak to the attendees about her role and her grandsons role and how she became involved with the film. The film was a delight and our 20 attendees enjoyed it immensely. Fanny even gave us a movie "The Wrestler" to show for our next movie event! We hope to finalize the January schedule to include a movie and game afternoon both. (See enclosed photo.)

Thanks to the generosity of many of our church and Philoptochos members, and our special "stealth steward", we delivered Christmas gifts to 18 children currently being assisted at Safe House of the Desert on Friday December 20th. Our "Giving Tree" donations totaled \$815.00 for this project. (see photo)

And last but certainly not least, 16 volunteers

joined together on Christmas Eve day at Coachella Valley Rescue Mission in Indio to donate their time to help prepare the holiday meals for the Homeless. Volunteers from our community peeled and diced close to 500 pounds of potatoes, about 40 bags of green beans, and sliced pies. It sure shows that we know our way around a kitchen to complete these tasks within 3 hours! CVRM is an amazing place and we hope to make our volunteer efforts in the future a monthly commitment. The 19 volunteers names who helped with the Christmas Eve kitchen prep at CVRM were: **Pete & Anastasia Peterson**, their children **Mia & Eli**, & friends **Madison & Kaleb**, **Kelly Murray & her children**, **Kira & Noah**; **Tasia Richards & her friends Anna & Skye**; **Nick & Carol Speliopoulos**, their daughter & son-in-law **Nicole & Jeff Spah**; **Tina Veroulis**; **Nick & Rhonda Latkovic**. (see photos)

Our January General Members Meeting will be held on Friday, Jan. 19th at 11:30 AM in the church hall.

The Ladies Philoptochos wishes you a happy and healthy New Year in 2020!

Yours In Christ,
–RHONDA LATKOVIC,
Philoptochos President



Philoptochos Christmas Baskets to the home bound: (left to right) Athena Snarskis, Mary Piggott, Linda Petalas, Tina Veroulis, Catherine Meek, Rhonda Latkovic, Mary Lee and Chris Delgans

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS, Continued



Philoptochos Christmas Luncheon: Nicholas Demetropoulos and Fr. Ted



Philoptochos Christmas Luncheon: (left to right): Connie Loomis, Olympia Fick, Pam Zaverdas, Athena Snarskis



Philoptochos Christmas Luncheon: (left to right) Nancy Breighner, Marge Guereke, Eva Canakis, Annette Laskaris, Nicholas Andros, Tommie Maverick

To the right----->
 Philoptochos-led parish project of the "Giving Tree," through which Philoptochos members, together with many parishioners, gave gifts for children victims of human trafficking, housed at Safe House of the Desert. Tina Veroulis (left) and Rhonda Latkovic (right) delivered the gifts.



<----To the left: Philoptochos Gift to the Disabled Veterans, Chapter 66: (left to right): Rhonda Latkovic, Silas "Pete" Peterson, member of our parish AHEPA Chapter 528 representing the Disabled Veterans, and Athena Snarskis.

2020 CHURCH CALENDARS

The 2020 Church Calendars are now available and can be acquired from our parish office. Only one Calendar per household, please.

The Church Calendars are excellent resources for knowing the dates of major Orthodox Feast Days throughout the year. Daily Bible passages are listed, as well as a brief explanation of a Saint to be honored or a Feast Day of our Lord to be celebrated during a particular month throughout the year.

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS, Continued

**PHILOPTOCHOS MEMBERS & ST. GEORGE PARISHIONERS
HELP SERVE HOMELESS AT COACHELLA VALLEY RESCUE MISSION**



St. George Philoptochos members and parishioners contributed time and effort in helping to provide meals to the homeless at the Coachella Valley Rescue Mission (CVRM) on Christmas Eve, December 24th.

<----- To the left St. George volunteers help in preparing the string beans to round out a well-balanced meal.

To the right-----> Rhonda Latkovic stands ready to serve dessert -- pumpkin pie -- for the homeless at CVRM.

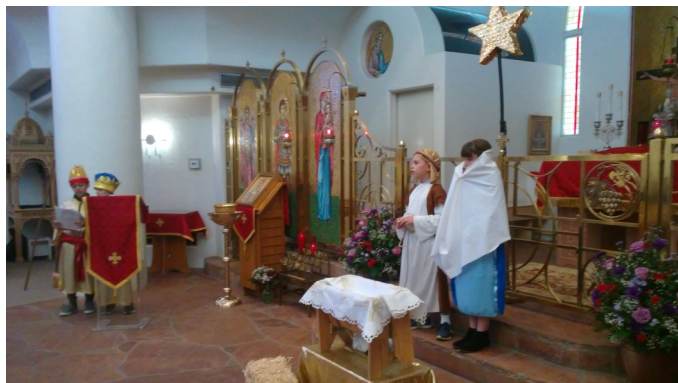


<----- A group picture of all of our volunteers serving meals to the homeless at the Coachella Valley Rescue Mission on Christmas Eve.

ST GEORGE SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PAGEANT



The "Grand Finale of our 2019 Sunday School Christmas Pageant



This year's Christmas Pageant began with narration given from the Holy Scriptures as the Nativity program unfolded

AHEPA NEWS



Here comes 2020!

This last year marked many monumental events, both heartwarming and heartbreaking. Navigating each obstacle was just so much more meaningful knowing how much love and support I had behind and beside me.

Today we must stand up taller for GOD, our Church and the AHEPA Family. Our lives have been disrupted by the politics of society and the media. Let us overcome those influences and resort back to the primal beliefs that we held in our hearts. Move forward by helping those in need, protecting those who cannot protect themselves and rebuild on the foundation provided by GOD our Savior.

For nearly a 100 years, since 1922, the Order of AHEPA has promoted the ancient Hellenic ideals of education, philanthropy, civic responsibility, family and individual excellence through community service and volunteerism. That is our mission of AHEPA Chapter 528 at St George Palm Desert.

Founded in 1922 in Atlanta, Georgia, on the principles that undergirded its fight for civil rights and against discrimination, bigotry, and hatred felt at the hands of the Ku Klux Klan, AHEPA is the largest and oldest grassroots association of American citizens of Greek heritage and Philhellenes with more than 400 chapters across the United States, Canada, and Europe.

AHEPA Chapter 528 scholarship program, which was established to promote, encourage, and advance education at the college, and university level. Applications are available at ahepa528.org, due by May 1st. Presented on AHEPA Sunday May 17th. Any qualified student at St George GOA parish, Palm Desert, or immediate family member of AHEPA Chapter 528 may apply for the scholarship program. (Grades eligible: graduating High School Senior through Graduate school).

Super Bowl Sunday February 2nd. Join the fun

at St George Church cheering your favorite team with a potluck of favorite foods created by AHEPA family members and friends. Buy a superbowl square, support funding our scholarship program.

A Win for Wynn: *"Those of you who know brother Wynn Storton, know he is AHEPA. Wynn has held multiple positions from Chapter 528 Scholarship Chairman, AHEPA National Webmaster, Chapter 528 President, to District 20 Governor, to Region 8 Supreme Governor. Wynn was also selected as AHEPA Governor of the year, in both 2015 & 2016. However, his proudest accomplishments are from co-chairing the AHEPA Veterans Affairs & AHEPA Service Dogs for Warriors Programs. Recently, his tireless work has come to a halt. Wynn has been diagnosed with Diffuse Large B cell Lymphoma, a very aggressive but highly treatable cancer. Wynn is battling cancer for a second time having beat Colon Cancer in 2011. Wynn has an underlying immune deficiency called CVID, that makes him 70% more susceptible to contracting cancer. It also makes the fight more challenging to win. Please, pray for Wynn. Wynn is a important member of my AHEPA Service Dogs for Warriors Program. I believe all of us friends and relatives can collectively raise \$15,000 to sponsor a Service Dog that would benefit a veteran fighting PTSD...and we can name the dog "Wynn!" I know this will lift his spirits and give him strength in this fight.*

"With God's love, we can all make this happen. Let us all give what we can and make this a reality. Let's WIN for WYNN!" -- George Karatzia, Chairman AHEPA Service Dogs for Warriors. <https://ahepa-servicedogs.org/https://www.gofundme.com/f/nf7x2u-lets-win-for-wynn>.

Donations can be mailed to: **AHEPA Service Dogs for Warriors Inc** PO Box 724 Holmdel, NJ 07733. **Please name of person donating for.**

Next formal chapter meeting scheduled for January 17th, location to be determined. Everyone invited. Please join us to plan for a tremendous year for all.

--WYNN STORTON, PSG
AHEPA 528 President

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS



The Parish Council met on **Wednesday, December 4th.**

-The names of the members of **2019 Parish Elections** were recorded in the Parish Council minutes: **Nancy Breighner, Bess Heinrich and Emily Tcharos.** Since there were three candidates to fill three spaces on the 2020 Parish Council, the Parish Elections were **Confirmation Elections.** The names of the Parish Council candidates are: **Becky Allen, Tony Dalkas, and Peter Snarskis.**

-**Nick Kaperonis** reported that it is time to clean the interior and exterior flagstone. The maintenance has been done every 3 years. Mario Hernandez Enterprises can do the work for \$7,790.00. In that this was the initial estimate, the Council agreed to obtain other bids for purposes of price comparison.

-A decision was made to set in place a **Parish Hall "Decoration Committee."** **Becky Allen** will report the names of those who will be recommended to the Parish Council to be confirmed as members of this committee. The committee will be responsible to fix a plan for the normal appearance of the hall during most of the year, as well as creating an over-all plan for the hall's appearance during seasonal times of the year: Christmas, Lent, Easter, etc.

-**Rhonda Latkovic** reported that we will be expending the **Memorial Wall** by **160 plaques.** Rhonda added that money has been donated for a wall fountain with 3 basins and an Orthodox concrete cross. A commercial company will be hired to install it on the office wall. We need to sell an additional 45 name plaques.

-Regarding the **Festival,** it was reported that we only have \$2,200 in commitments in sponsorships/ads for the Program Book at the present time. It was agreed that efforts to procure sponsorships and ads need to be intensified. On separate note, a company has been procured by the Festival Committee to pre-sell Festival entrance tickets, guaranteeing income for the Festival in

the event of bad weather.

-The Parish Council confirmed the members of the 2020 Auditing Committee: **Annette Laskaris, chairperson, Annette Lewis, Tasia Richards.**

-Discussion was entertained regarding the possibility of re-crafting the current **Endowment Fund Policy By-Laws** in order to adjust for current economic realities that did not exist when the Policy By-Laws were first drafted in 2006.

-New parish hall ceiling lights are to be installed in order to improve the lighting in the parish hall at a more efficient cost.

ENDOWMENT FUND REPORT

In accordance with the Endowment Report received during the first week of December, the fund's value increased in November following the markets from \$368,327.06 end of October to \$377,190.52 end of November or a \$8,863.46 increase in value.

The Fund increased from January's 2019 value of \$320,200.50 to a 18.79% increase in value or +\$60,173.11. The Resource Group fees for the current year are at 1% totaling \$3,483.09. Growth percentage includes fees but does not include inflation to date.

The End of Year (EOY) Endowment Fund Report will include details of each holding and administrative fees for the year.

Please be aware markets are volatile and change in value quickly and past results are no guarantee of future results.

Consider the St George of the Desert Endowment Fund in your Estate Planning and direct any questions me at n.m.latkovic@gmail.com or 760-455-9727.

--NICHOLAS M. LATKOVIC,
Endowment Fund Chairman

GROUP EXCURSION TO GREECE

Our teacher of Modern Greek for Adults ("Survival Greek"), **Margarita Pagoulatos**, will be leading two group excursions to Greece: "**The Spring Experience**" -- from **May 8th to May 26th** and "**The Fall Experience**" -- from **September 18th to October 6th**.

Details regarding the prices for these excursions, as well as the itinerary for each of the two excursions are available on the website address: www.margreek.2020.com. In addition, all who are interested in participating in these excursions are encouraged to speak with **Margarita Pagoulatos** at: 714-308-0226 or **Jose Alfredo Garcia** at: 310-988-3531 and see the enclosed "Spring Experience" flier.

"CHRISTMAS WITH THE KAROUNTZOSES"

On Thursday, December 19th, many of our St. George parishioners enjoyed the showing of the movie, *Christmas with the Karountzoses*, starring our own Fanny Nicholas. Everyone enjoyed this comedy-with-a-message movie -- the message being that, with faith and gratitude to God, many spiritual and timeless awards go to those who maintain honored family values.

Athena Snarskis laid out the "movie" atmosphere with pop corn and treats, bringing us together for this great opportunity to enjoy a fun and rewarding Christmas season with genuine Christmas joy and fellowship.



December's Philoptochos Movie Matinee: *Christmas With the Karountzoses*, courtesy of Fanny Nicholas' family: (left to right): Paul Kosturos, Rhonda Latkovic, Fanny Nicholas and Athena Snarskis

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

Christmas Pageant: Our parish Sunday School students gave an inspiring and heart-felt performance, *The Story of Christmas*, as this year's annual Sunday School Christmas Pageant. Many thanks to Athena Snarskis and Irene Stambolis

for directing the play. We congratulate the students, staff and parents -- and our parish choir -- for offering our parishioners a wonderful Christmas experience. (See photos on page 8.)

Christmas Caroling: On Christmas Eve, December 24th, our Sunday School students and their parents joined in singing Christmas carols to our parish home bound members. Following early afternoon visits to the home bound, the Towne Center Café was the scene for the annual Sunday School brunch. Many thanks to Sunday School Superintendent, Dr. Jim Christopoulos for his efforts in bringing our Sunday School students and parents together for this annual event.

Sunday School classes resume following the New Year holiday, on **Sunday, January 5th**. In addition, mark your calendars for **Sunday, January 19th**. This is "Godparent Sunday. Godparents are asked to attend the Divine Liturgy with their Godchildren and they are invited to join their Godchildren in their Sunday School class.



<-----Christmas caroling: Deacon Euthym, Krisann and family bringing joy to Adele Gallade

Continued on the next page----->

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS



Christmas caroling with Nicholas Demetropoulos (sitting in chair).



Christmas caroling, while joining Doris Elmo (seated at table with friends) for lunch on Christmas Eve.



Christmas caroling for Chris Laskaris recovering from surgery

MEMORIAL WALL; GARDEN & FOUNTAIN PROJECT

The Memorial Wall, Garden & Fountain Project is expanding to include two additional plaques for both sides of the original wall. These walls will each hold 30 individual nameplates for a total of 60. The wall plaques are expected to be received in the February/March period. We have filled 13 of these new spaces. If you have not yet memorialized your loved one who has fallen

asleep in the Lord, spaces are still available, for a donation of \$225 per nameplate. Nameplate orders require 10-12 weeks lead time. Orders placed in January should arrive prior to EASTER.

If you have attended services over the Thanksgiving & Christmas holidays, you may have noticed that we have trimmed the plantings around the memorial wall area, clearing out a space to hold the new wall fountain addition and added new plants around a second bench. Our custom fountain should be installed by the end of January. We expect the fountain to greatly enhance the memorial wall and garden area, adding a water feature to enhance one's feeling of tranquility while praying or meditating.

FESTIVAL NEWS



The season of our **2020 Festival preparation** begins on **Wednesday, January 8, 2020**. All members of our parish are asked to plan times to help as volunteers in preparing the items that are scheduled to be sold at our **2020 Greek Festival** on the weekend of **February 22-23**. Preparations for the Festival will take place at our parish hall on weekdays throughout January and February, beginning at 9:00 a.m. on weekdays throughout January and February, beginning at 9:00 a.m. on those days.

The **Festival Meeting for January** will be held on **Wednesday evening, January 8th at 6:00 p.m.** at our parish hall.

The schedule for this year's Festival preparation is as follows:

- January 8,9, and 10: Dolmades
- January 13,14,15 & 16: Tyropita
- January 20-February 8: Pasties
- February 10,11,12, 13,14 & 15: Baklava
- February 17,18,19,: Baking/ Galaktobouriko
- February 20,21: Festival Set-up

Our 2020 Greek Festival will take place on the weekend of February 22-23, 2020. Volunteers are needed to staff Festival stations. Those who

Continued on the next page ----->

FESTIVAL NEWS, Continued

cannot volunteer time and talents are asked to donate \$60 to hire a worker for one shift during the weekend of the Festival. Each shift is a 4-hour shift. The more donations, the more workers can be hired.

Our 2020 Festival Program Book is in need of more ads and sponsorships. The deadline is January 20th! In addition, personal ads can appear in the Program Book for \$35. Enclosed is a sample page showing the set-up for the \$35 ad-greeting.

The next Festival Meeting is on Wednesday, January 8th at 6:00 p.m.

2020 STEWARDSHIP RECAP

Many thanks to our current stewards (see enclosed list)! Because of your generosity, we exceeded our Stewardship goal this past year by \$10,000. Our actual total amount was \$134,611 versus our goal of \$125,000. Total stewardship families are 123, also up from last year.

If you haven't yet fulfilled your 2019 pledge, please try to do so as soon as possible. Thank you.

We will be mailing out your 2019 donation statements before January 26th, 2020, in time for IRS tax preparation purposes. The 2020 Annual Stewardship Campaign will begin in January. Our stretch goal is \$150,000. All current stewards will receive a new Stewardship Pledge packet in the mail by January 6th, 2020. Included in the packet is a letter from Father Theodore, and a pamphlet from the Metropolis titled "The Stewardship of Time", for all to review, and the new 2020 St. George pledge card. We ask that you complete the new pledge card and return it back to church by **February 9th, 2020**, which we have designated as Stewardship Sunday. On that day, the Parish

Council will collect all the pledge cards and Father Theodore will bless them at the altar, asking that our gifts will be multiplied to benefit our Lord and His church.

It has been my pleasure to serve as your Stewardship Chairperson this past year. I would love to add a couple volunteers to the stewardship committee for 2020. If interested, please reach out to me prior to February 1st. Thank you.

--RHONDA LATKOVIC,
Stewardship Chairperson

PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Congratulations to those elected to serve as members of the 2020 Parish Council of our St. George parish community: **Beck Allen, Tony Dalkas & Pete Snarskis.**

We are most grateful to the members of our Election Committee this year for their dedicated and conscientious efforts in ensuring our proper election process: Nancy Breighner, Bess Heinrich, and Emily Tcharos.

FR. TED TO BE AWAY

Fr. Ted will be away to visit his daughter and her family in Charlotte, North Carolina from January 20 to January 31, 2020. In case of emergency, contact Fr. David Kruse, pastor of St. Raphael Antiochian Orthodox Church in Thousand Palms: (760) 408-6116. Fr. Dionysie from the Resurrection of Christ Orthodox Monastery in Temecula will celebrate the Divine Liturgy, substituting for Fr. Ted, on Sunday, January 26th.

GOLF TOURNAMENT

Save the Date: **April 25, 2020 at Desert Willow Country Club.** Details will be announced in subsequent bulletins and parish newsletters.

St. George Greek Orthodox Church of the Desert
 74-109 Larrea St. / P.O. Box 4755
 Palm Desert, California 92261
 web: www.go-stgeorge.org/ email:
pdsaintgeorge@gmail.com
 Telephone: (760)568-9901 / FAX: 9760) 568-9492

JANUARY 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
NOTE: Sunday, Januray 5th Services: Orthros- 8 a.m. D. Liturgy- 9 a.m.		House Blessings During January: January 10th January 13th-17th Contact Fr. Ted at (760) 880-5869 to make an appoint- ment	1-CIRCUMCISION OF THE LORD/ THE FEAST DAY OF ST. BASIL THE GREAT Orthros-8:30 a.m. D. Liturgy-9:30 am	2	3 PRE-THEOPHANY Royal Hours- 9:00 a.m.	4- EVE OF THEOPHANY Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.
5-Sunday Before Theophany Ep.2 Tim. 4:5-8 Gos.St. Mk.1:1-8 Blessing of the Waters (Agiasmo)- 10:30 a.m. Vasilopita	6- HOLY THEOPHANY Orthros-8:30 a.m. D. Liturgy-9:30 a.m. Blessing of the Waters (Agiasmo)- 10:30 a.m.	7- ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST Orthros-8:30 a.m. D. Liturgy-9:30 a.m.	8-FESTIVAL BAKING BEGINS Parish Council- 2:30 p.m. Festival Meeting-6:00 p.m.	9 Choir Practice-1:00 p.m.	10 Philoptochos Board Meeting-11:30 a.m.	11
12-Sunday After Theophany Ep. Eph. 4:7-13 Gos.St. Matt.4:12- 17	13	14 Bible Study- 10:00 a.m. Adult Greek Class- 6:00 p.m.	15	16 Choir Practice-1:00 p.m.	17- ST. ANTHONY THE GREAT Orthros-8:30 a.m. D. Liturgy-9:30 a.m. Philoptochos General Mtg.-11:30 AHEPA Meeting-6:30 p.m.	18 ST. ATHANASIOS Orthros-8:30 a.m. D. Liturgy-9:30 a.m.
19-The 10 Lepers Ep. 2 Cor.4:6-15 Gos. St.Lk.6:17-23 Godparent Sunday	20	21	22	23 Choir Practice-1:00 a.m.	24	25
26- Zacchaeus Ep.1 Tim.4:9-15 Gos.St.Lk.19:1-10	27	28	29	30	31	

2019 Stewards of St. George

A Aeder, Thalia Alex, James Allen, Becky Amos, Kathy Andros, Nick Anton, John Argyros, George & Stacey Astromos, Spiro Attalla, Phillip "Ted" Ayanopolis, Theresa	D Dunkel, Mariya Dymond, Donald & Alexandra	L Lee, Bill & Mary Lehman, Gloria Lekas, Bill & Denise Lewis, Annette Long, Dr. Michael & Christine Loukatos, Harry & Debbie Lucas, Delphine & Brown, Steve Lyons, Douglas & Carol
B Bakakos, Margarita Barringer, Bill Barringer, Louise Dobbs Boukidis, Ann Bozigian, Linda Jean Breighner, Nancy	E Elmo, Doris	M Macdonald, Matthew & Chelsea Makrianis, Julie Maletis, Chris & Kristi Maletis, Edward & Cyndy Mallen, Andi & Greg Manesis, Dr. John & Bess Mantes, E.G. & Mary Ann Maverick, Tommie McEvoy, Peter & Stephanie Meek, Eve
C Canakis, Spiro & Eva Carkonen, Paul & Paulette Castrale, Craig & Eleni Castrale, Nicole Chiotis, Antony & Penny Christopoulos, Dr. Him & Gloria Clark, Susan Coussoulis, Nick & Christina Curreri, Jeffrey	F Fakinos, Frank & Joan Fergadis, Constantine	N Nicholas, George & Fanny Nicholas, Kay
D Daglas, Alice Dalkas, Anthony & Patricia Davis, Mathew & Christine Delegans, Chris Demetropoulos, Nicholas Desjoyners, Josie Diamond, Michael & Marilou Dixon, Ann & Richard	G Gallade, Adele & Hoffman, Ken Gannon, Robert & Sandy Geotas, Despina Gerkin, Paul Grafas, Peter & Evelyn	O Oeder, Richard
	H Halkidic, Anastasios & Penelope Harrigan, Athena Haveles, John Hector, Tim & Nadia Heinrich, Bess	P Panopoulos, Chris & Joan Pantels, Fr. Theodore & Presvytera Peti Petalas, John & Linda Peterson, Jim & Teddie Piggott, Bill & Mary Pishue, Sam Platis, Harry Plumis, Diana Poulos, Billie Pousen, DJ Prineas, Anna Psaltis, Harry Pulos, Alice
	K Kallis, Linda Kaperonis, Nick Karagianis, Lou & Penny Karalas, Bill & Bessy Karas, Demos & Evelyn Kassotakis, Mary Ellen Kolytiris, Constantine & Valerie Kontaxis, Dr. Euthym & Krisann Kontaxis, Nicholas Krespis, Nick & Fotini Kripner, Robert & Eva Kundanis, Christine	
	L Laskaris, Chris & Annette Latkovic, Nicholas & Rhonda Latkovic, Pauline	

Q

R

Rassi, Abraham
Rellos, Vasilios
Richards, Tasia

S

Sahpazis, Georgia
Sarikas, Kiriakos & Delores
Shaheen, Bernice
Snarskis, Peter & Athena
Spanos, George & Angie
Speliopoulos, Nick & Carol
Steele, Dr. Stephen & Lynanne
Storton, Wynn & Ana

T

Tatomir, John & Mary
Tcharos, Emily

V

Valissarakis, Lula
Vawter, Mike & Debbie
Velculescu, Victoria & Aurel
Veroulis, Angelo & Tina
Vidalini, Beverly

W

Wysup, Angie

X

Xitco, John & Kalitsa

Y

Young, Diane

Z

Zachariadou, Mary
Zambrano, Nelly
Zaverdas, Larry & Pam
Zhupa, Uraela

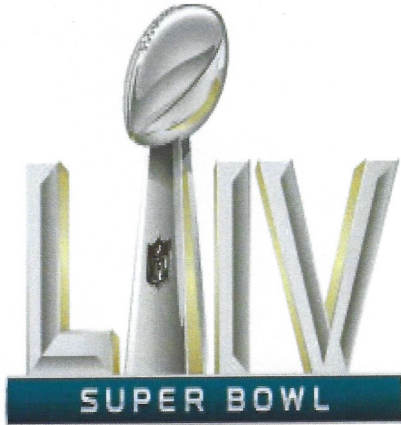
ALTAR FLOWER BOUQUETS

We thank God for those who continued to support our Altar Flower program throughout this past year:

Mrs. Nelly Zambrano Banki
Ms. Josie Desnoyer
Mr. & Mrs. Silas Peterson
Mrs. Tasia Richards
Mrs. Rhonda Latkovic
Mrs. Annette Lewis
Mrs. Theresa Ayanopolis
Mrs. Eve Meek
Ms. Gabrilla Zaharia
Ms. Becky Allen
Matushka Gloria Lehman
Mr. & Mrs. John Petalas
Mr. & Mrs. Peter McElroy
Mr. & Mrs. Frank Fakinos

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ loves the cheerful giver and we give Him all the Honor, Glory and Praise for His blessings!

--LOUISE DOBBS BARRINGER,
Altar Flower Coordinator



AHEPA 528 3rd ANNUAL

SUPER BOWL PARTY



FUN FOR EVERYONE

We will have doors open at 2:30 pm.
Game starts at 3:30 pm

Saint George Greek Orthodox Church
74109 Larrea St Palm Desert, CA 92261
\$20 Donation requested (*kids, no charge*)
Refreshments and fun provided!



<https://www.facebook.com/AHEPA528/>

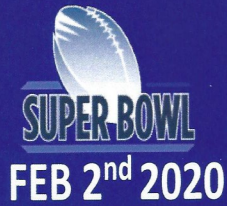
Livestream after each Quarter to announce winner!

\$10 pool squares available

Donate online, AHEPA528.ORG

ALL PROCEEDS FROM THE EVENT WILL GO TO SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM
Please make any checks to AHEPA Chapter 528 or donate online

Scholarship awards benefit members of
Saint George Church and the AHEPA 528 Family



\$20 DONATION

- and you get
- 1 Square in the Football Pool
 - Refreshments
 - Appetizers
 - Live Game
 - Cash Prizes

\$10 pool square*

**After first donation*

**REFRESHMENTS
AND FUN
PROVIDED!**



PLEASE SEE BROTHERS

WYNN STORTON,
HARRY LOUKATOS,
PETE PETERSON or
NICK KRESPIS

FOR FURTHER DETAILS

**CONTACT@AHEPA528.ORG
760.832.2825**



EACH SQUARE COST \$10.00

50% of Pool to winners.
Remainder 50% goes toward
George Tcharos Scholarship
20% at 1st Quarter
20% at 2nd Quarter
20% at 3rd Quarter
40% at Final Score

**Empty squares go to Scholarship program
Pool numbers selected at start of game
Winners can be announced by text
but will also be on Facebook live.
Text Wynn at 760.832.2825 for your numbers.



<https://www.facebook.com/AHEPA528/>

ST GEORGE PHILOPTOCHOS CALENDAR

JANUARY 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 NEW YEARS DAY <i>Holiday</i>	2	3	4
5 <i>Vasilopita Sunday</i>	6 FEAST DAY OF EPIPHANY	7 9:00 AM FESTIVAL BAKING BEGINS	8 9:00 AM FESTIVAL BAKING	9 9:00 AM FESTIVAL BAKING	10 11:30 AM BOARD MEETING	11
12	13 9:00 AM FESTIVAL BAKING	14 9:00 AM FESTIVAL BAKING	15 9:00 AM FESTIVAL BAKING	16 9:00 AM FESTIVAL BAKING	17 11:30 AM GENERAL MEETING (Alexandra and Athena lunch)	18
19	20 9:00 AM FESTIVAL BAKING	21 9:00 AM FESTIVAL BAKING	22 9:00 AM FESTIVAL BAKING	23 9:00 AM FESTIVAL BAKING <i>Tentative movie matinee event</i>	24 Tentative GAME DAY Event!!	25
26	27 9:00 AM FESTIVAL BAKING	28 9:00 AM FESTIVAL BAKING	29 9:00 AM FESTIVAL BAKING	30 9:00 AM FESTIVAL BAKING	31	

*Schedule: Game Activity - Mexican Train
Movie Matinee - The Wrestler*