

JUNE 2021



Voice of St. George

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

74-109 LARREA ST., PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA



“MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR YOU!”

St. Paul’s “thorn” was indeed a chronic, physical pain. St. Paul refers to the “thorn” as a **thorn in the flesh** -- and he used the Greek word *sarki* (“*skolops ti sarki*”). The word “sarki” actually means flesh. The noted Orthodox theologian, Panagiotis Trembelas, describes the word “*skolops*” as a “wooden bat” or, in Greek, “*kseelon*,” used to strike something and inflict punishing pain (a Greek idiom used to this day). In addition, Trembelas offers the nuance that the “thorn” is indeed, a chronic illness (“*arhosteia*”). (*The New Testament With Immediate Orthodox Interpretation [Kenee Dhiathiki Meta Syntomou Erhmenias]* pg. 743). In his Epistle to the Galatians, we also find reference to “his infirmities of the flesh,” (See Galatians 4: 13-15).

St. Paul preferred to pray three times, asking our Lord to cure him of his

“thorn in the flesh.” This is consistent with the Apostolic admonition noted in the General Epistle of St. James (5: 13-14) upon which the Sacrament of Holy Unction is based. The Holy Sacraments along with our personal prayers are considered by our Church to be active components of the healing process, along with the implementation of all modern, up-to-date medical procedures and physical therapy. At the same time, in His answer to St. Paul’s prayers, our Savior allows us to find meaning in our suffering: “*My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in your weakness.*” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Perhaps, with our Lord’s words in mind, St. Paul reveals that the strength given by Christ is not some impersonal, cosmic force independent of the love and empathy of our Incarnate God: “*Because He Himself has suffered and*

been tempted, He is able to help those who are tempted.” (Hebrews 2:18). With these words, we learn that our suffering is, at the same time, Christ’s suffering, just as His Incarnation; His Resurrection from the dead and His Ascension are all very much a reality involving our bodies and souls in the present.

We will not leave this earthly life without suffering from our own personal “thorns in the flesh.” Indeed, we should know that Christ our God truly suffers with us as He also blesses us and saves us. Accepting this fact and finding His strength requires our humility, as St. Paul’s experience teaches us. Humility is the only way that we can experience the power of God overtaking our feeble weakness. Given this realization, St. Paul, in yet another of his Epistles, offers these words of comfort: “*All things work to-*

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Mailing Address
St. George Church
P.O. Box 4755
Palm Desert, CA 92261
Tel: (760) 568-9901
FAX: (760) 568-9492
Email: [psaintgeorge@gmail](mailto:psaintgeorge@gmail.com)
Website: www.go-stgeorge.org
-Fr. Theodore Pantels, Pastor-
-Dcn. Euthym Kontaxis, M.D.

gether for good to them that love God." (Romans 8:28), confirming St. Peter's words, "Do all that is right and trust in God."

The Orthodox Church honors both **St. Peter and St. Paul** on **June 29th every year**.

+FR. THEODORE

THE FEAST DAY OF HOLY PENTECOST



The Feast of Holy Pentecost is celebrated each year on the fiftieth day after the Great and Holy Feast of Pascha (Easter) and ten days after the Feast of the Ascension of Christ. The Feast is always celebrated on a Sunday.

The Feast commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, a feast of the Jewish tradition. It also celebrates the establishment of the Church through the preaching of the Apostles and the baptism of the thousands who on that day who Jesus Christ. The Feast is also seen as the culmination of the revelation of the Holy Trinity.

The story of Pentecost is found in the book of The Acts of the Apostles. In Chapter two we are told that the Apostles of our Lord were gathered together in one place. Suddenly, a sound came from heaven like a rushing wind, filling the entire house where they were sitting. Then, tongues of fire appeared, and one sat upon each one of Apostles. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as directed by the Spirit (Acts 2:1-4).

Since the Jewish Feast of Pentecost was a great pilgrimage feast, many people from throughout the Roman Empire were gathered in Jerusalem on this day. When the people in Jerusalem heard the sound, they came together and heard their own languages being spoken by the Apostles (Acts 2:5-6)...

Peter, hearing these remarks, stood up and addressed the crowd. He preached to the people regarding the Old Testament prophecies about the coming of the Holy Spirit. He spoke about Jesus Christ and His death and glorious Resurrection.

Great conviction fell upon the people, and they asked the Apostles, "What shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38-39).

The Bible records that on that day about three thousand were baptized.

-- Taken from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese website: <https://www.goarch.org/en/pentecost>

SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

by
Deacon Euthym

"Where there are no labors, there are stagnation and the extinction of the sparks of life [despondency]..." St. Theophan the Recluse

The first steps at combating despondency and depression is to work at something. Having a task or goal and working toward its completion keeps us from stagnating and suffering from despondency and bad thoughts. The labors St Theophan refers to are spiritual in nature, but as the apostles worked during their ministry in spreading the word of God, daily labors of all kinds are a firewood to keep the "spark of life" aflame in us. It is in these tasks that we can pray, connect with God and have a sense of purpose. We should not feel overwhelmed by labors, but welcome them as opportunities to connect with others and mostly to connect with God in the labor, whatever it may be. When we receive the Eucharist (the bread of life, Christ Himself) on Sunday, it is up to us through spiritual labor to keep the "burning coal" aflame throughout the week, to heed the call from God and respond as did Isaiah, no matter how small or large the task may be.

"It is better to pray with good will for our neighbor, rather than to denounce him for every sin..." St. Mark the Ascetic

If we take this approach with others our perspective changes. Let us see the good in others, let us pray for them, asking God to help them in whatever struggles they may have. In turn, we should

Continued on the next page ----->

SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS, continued

see our own faults rather than pick apart others. If we do this, we become more vigilant in terms of our own shortcomings; we encourage others and avoid judgment which stems from pride. Proverbs is a great way to get daily advice and we can also learn a lot from others. So, let us avoid judging and let us seek to learn from others as it says in Proverbs.... "*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice*". The perspective of others can give us invaluable insight into our own spiritual state.

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS

During Holy Week, our St. George Philoptochos volunteers **Margarita Pagoulatos, Debbie Pousen, and Nick and Rhonda Latkovic** reported for sorting duty at The Narrow Door food bank in Indio. For over two hours, they along with several other food bank employees and volunteers, sorted over 15 bins of non-perishable food to prepare for the building of family food boxes that will be distributed out of the Southwest church parking lot every Saturday. The amount of food that was sorted is equal to what the food bank distributes in one month!

In addition, our St. George Philoptochos donated another **200 pounds of food to the food bank** earlier that same morning. This makes the total donation of food by our Philoptochos since the start of the pandemic to **5486 pounds of food!**

We want to thank our dedicated volunteers for their continued efforts with our "Feed The Hungry" initiative. Also, we are grateful for our members support and donations from our St. George community. Thank You All!

The newly elected members of our **St. George Philoptochos Board of Directors** are: **Linda Bozigian, Alexandra Dymond, Linda Kallis, Rhonda Latkovic, Margarita Pagoulatos, Linda Petalas, Athena Snarskis, Irene Stambolos, Tina Veroulis, Pam Zaverdas.**



The Newly Elected St. George Philoptochos Board Members: Standing-(left to right) Fr. Ted (spiritual advisor), Tina Veroulis (on "zoom" computer screen held by Rhonda Latkovic), Rhonda Latkovic, Margarita Pagoulatos, Alexandra Dymond, Pam Zaverdas, Athena Snarskis. Sitting - (left to right) Irene Stambolos, Linda Bogizian, and Linda Kallis. (Not pictured: Linda Petalas)

The annual Spring St. George Philoptochos General Members Meeting was held at the Old Spaghetti Factory in Rancho Mirage on Monday, May 17th. **His Grace, Bishop Spyridon** conveyed His most grateful appreciation to our Philoptochos for welcoming Him into our community. In addition, He delivered a most inspiring message to our Philoptochos membership reminding us all of the glory that we give to Christ our God by actually attending the Divine Liturgy on Sundays, participating in the Holy Sacraments, and noted that the world benefits greatly when people see us giving glory to our Lord and bearing witness to our Faith.



Pictured above, seated with His Grace, Bishop Spyridon of Amastris, are participants in this year's Annual Spring St. George Philoptochos General Members Meeting and Luncheon. From left to right: Linda Kallis, Annette Laskaris, Presvytera Petula Pantels, Fr. Ted, His Grace, Bishop Spyridon, Nicholas Kaperonis, Nicholas Andros, Alexandra Dymond, and Kay Bell.

APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION

Apostolic Succession is seen when the Divine Liturgy is officiated by a bishop. The Sacrament of the Holy Priesthood includes the office of deacon, priest and bishop. In terms of spiritual authority, all bishops are equal. In terms of ecclesiastical duties, a bishop may be a diocesan bishop, a metropolitan, an archbishop, or patriarch. When the Divine Liturgy is officiated by a diocesan bishop, metropolitan, archbishop, or patriarch it is called a "**Hierarchical Divine Liturgy.**" It differs from the way in which the Divine Liturgy is celebrated by the priest. Among the reasons for this are the following:

1. **The Holy Spirit is in charge of the Church.** This is the truth from the **Day of Pentecost** (celebrated June 20th this year), as the Apostles were given the Divine Grace to "baptize all nations." The hierarch, be he bishop, metropolitan, archbishop, or patriarch is spiritually a direct descendent from the Holy Apostles. The Apostles ordained their successors and their successors ordained successors after them--hence, "**Apostolic Succession.**" The hierarch administers all of the Holy Sacraments, while the priest is but the arms and legs of the hierarch, to whom the priest and deacon are accountable. It is only with the blessing of the hierarch that a priest performs the Sacraments of the Divine Liturgy; Baptism; Chrismation; Confession; Marriage and Unction. However, it is the hierarch who ordains the priest; the hierarch who issues baptismal and marriage certificates, as well as the chrismation oil for Chrismation, and the "antiminsion" (the "Epitaphio Icon Cloth") without which the Divine Liturgy cannot be celebrated, since this sanctified altar cloth is the remnant of the consecration of a church temple, again performed only by the hierarch.

2. **The structure of the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, therefore, sends a message.** The message is that the grace of the Holy Spirit continues, as from the **Day of Pentecost**, to

guide the Church throughout the world for all time and into the future. The grace of the Holy Spirit, having descended upon the Holy Apostles, continues to work through the descendants of the Apostles, who are the Orthodox Christian bishops in the world today. In this way the Church maintains Her nature as being "One, Holy, Catholic (Universal) and Apostolic," as we say in the Creed. The Apostolic St. Ireneaus had proclaimed, "*Where the bishop is; that is where the Church is.*"

3. "**The Bishop's Candles**" represent our confession that **Jesus Christ is God, being one of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and He is of two natures: fully man and fully God.** One set of the bishop's candles has three candles (representing the Holy Trinity) and the other set has two candles (representing the two natures of Christ). The elaborate portion of the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy is at the singing of the hymn, "*Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.*" In truth, the Church is holy and, as such, is united as One Body through the Hierarch. This is why he blesses the congregation with the "bishop's candles," or in Greek: *dikelotrikera*, as this hymn is sung. This is also why a special intonation is made, asking our Lord to "save the people" and it is why we sing a hymn of honor to the presiding bishop, known in Greek as his *pheme*.

4. **At the Great Entrance**, the paten and chalice are presented to the hierarch separately, who, upon receiving each of them, prays for both the living and the departed, again proclaiming unity of the Church on earth with the Church in heaven.

With this understanding, everyone can accept the fact that the Church is their home no matter where they may travel; no matter their circumstance. We are Christ's eternal family.

+FR. THEODORE

AHEPA SUNDAY



His Grace, Bishop Spyridon conveyed to our St. George parishioners the blessings of His Eminence, Archbishop Elpidophoros and His Eminence, Metropolitan Gerasimos as we celebrated AHEPA Sunday this year on **May 16th**. In His Encyclical, His Eminence, Archbishop Elpidophoros reminded us that 2022 marks the centennial celebration of both the Holy Archdiocese and the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA), noting that throughout all of these years, our Archdiocese and the AHEPA have worked together to establish parishes and to promote Holy Orthodoxy, while cherishing our highly valued Hellenic humanitarian ideals.

In line with our parish tradition, our celebration of AHEPA Sunday this year (as in past years), included the presentation of awards from the **AHEPA 528 Fr. T. P. Theophilos Memorial Scholarship Fund** to our community college students. Receiving the **George Tcharos Scholarship Award** this year was **Emmarie Shannazarian**, and receiving the **St. George Scholarship Award** was **Symeon Seraphim**.

Also, the AHEPA 528 Chapter honored the President of our St. George Philoptochos Chapter, **Rhonda Latkovic**, with the **Humanitarian Award** for leading Philoptochos in the tremendous efforts to meet the needs of the homeless and those suffering from hunger. **Nicholas Latkovic** received "AHEPAN of the Year" recognition.

Next year's AHEPA Sunday promises to be a luncheon affair with "all the trimmings."

Those who want to contribute to the **AHEPA 528 Fr. T. P. Theophilos Memorial Scholarship Fund** may learn more details by going to the AHEPA 528 website: www.ahepa528.org.



Pictured above with His Grace, Bishop Spyridon of Amastris, are the recipients of the AHEPA 528 Fr. T. P. Theophilos Memorial Scholarships, Symeon Seraphim (the St. George Award) and Emmarie Shannazarian (the George Tcharos Award). From left to right: Kyriakos Seraphim, Alex Soles (AHEPA District 20 Governor), Olga Seraphim, Fr. Ted, Symeon Seraphim, His Grace, Bishop Spyridon, Emmarie Shannazarian, Haik Shannazarian, Mary Jean Shannazarian, Wynn Storton (AHEPA Chapter 528 President), Rhonda Latkovic (recipient of the AHEPA Humanitarian Award), Jack Shannazarian, and Nicholas Latkovic (recipient of the AHEPAN of the Year recognition).

SUNDAY SCHOOL

The Metropolis-wide Lenten Sunday School program leading up to Holy Week this year was a tremendous success.

Over 400 Sunday School students from across our multi-state Metropolis joined in a weekly Sunday School program. Our own St. George students actively participated in this program, along with their teachers, parents, and Fr. Ted. Sunday School lessons focused on the Gospel passages for each of the Sundays during Great Lent. In addition, the students participated in a "**Kindness Counts**" project of collecting one item each day during Lent to give to the poor, or, in lieu of collecting items, doing a kind deed for someone each day. It amounted to 40 items (for 40 days), or 40 good deeds (for 40 days). Items included toys and clothing in good condition; good deeds included helping to teach other children study skills, as well as helping with chores around their homes.

Following the celebration of Pascha, our students met over the last Sundays of May and look forward to the next school year -- 2021-2022.

CHOIR

Our parish choir will start singing the Divine Liturgy "acapella" beginning **Sunday, May 30, 2021** (in the manner in which they sang the Lamentations on Holy Friday evening this year). The choir will continue to sing the Divine Liturgy "acapella" throughout the summer months.

Those interested in joining our parish choir may contact our **Choir Director, Annette Laskaris** on Sundays after Church services.

USHERS

Volunteers are needed to help with ushering duties for Sunday Liturgies throughout the summer. Please contact either **Fr. Ted** or **Jim Christopoulos** to learn ushering procedures and be added to the schedule.

COFFEE HOUR

Sunday "Coffee Hour" for our parishioners will begin on **Sunday, May 30th**. We ask our parishioners and guests to continue to observe remaining local and **CDC safety requirements**, such as social distancing and food & drink serving. On **Sunday, June 6th**, parishioners are invited to "Coffee Hour" to celebrate **Emily Tcharos' 88th birthday**.

ST. GEORGE GOLF TOURNAMENT

The St. George
Annual Golf Tournament...
Desert Willow Golf Resort
See: www.desertwillow.com
SAVE THE DATE...
SEPTEMBER 25, 2021

CALENDAR OF MID-WEEK CHURCH SERVICES

Thursday, June 10th..... ASCENSION OF OUR LORD
Orthros-8:30 a.m./ Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

Tuesday, June 29th..... STS. PETER AND PAUL
Orthros-8:30 a.m. / Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

Wednesday, June 30th....SYNAXIS OF THE HOLY APOSTLES
Orthros-8:30 a.m. / Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.