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Voice of St. George

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

74-109 LARREA ST., PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA



ST. CATHERINE: IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH

Inside this issue

A paper by Dr. Gregory Sadler that was published by the web-masters who post religious studies through Academia.org, caught my attention. The title of the paper is: "Saint Catherine of Alexandria, Patroness of Christian Philosophers, Inspiration for Contemporary Christian Philosophy?" I found his insights interesting, except that, from an Orthodox Christian point of view, Christianity is not a philosophy; it is a daily way of life. **This year, we celebrate the memory of St. Catherine the Great Martyr on Thanksgiving Day -- November 25th.**

Yet, it was St. Catherine who debated the philosophers of her time and, through her gift of God's Wisdom, she not only "out-debated" them, but won them over to worship Christ our God.

St. Catherine was born in Alexandria during the reign of Maxentius. In her

later years, Maximinus became Emperor. As a scholar of many branches of human knowledge, she was well versed in the art of reason and logic, which philosophers of her time used to advance their own thoughts about life. Dr. Sadler writes: "*At the same time, she...at least deferred marriage, preferring to remain a virgin. In some way, discussed at great lengths by some of the hagiographic narratives, she came to learn about Christianity and became a convert, entering into a spiritual marriage with Christ.*"

Sadler notes that St. Catherine did not develop a philosophical system, but we was able "*to engage in philosophy as a Christian in a particular situation and with particular interlocutors.*" In her debates, she pulled from the inexhaustible treasure of Apostolic Tradition, giving specific attention to real life concerns addressed by the Holy Gospel as she con-

versed with the philosophers around her. The example of St. Catherine sets before us the challenge to learn of and know our Orthodox Christian Faith so that we can defend it against the currents of today's modern thinking.

In that thoughts determine our lives, as Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica would say, then it is imperative to understand the mind of St. Catherine, who exemplifies the mind of the Church. In this regard, the words of Dr. Sadler ring true: "*We cannot surmise all of what might have been said and debated, drawn upon or thought up on the spot, by Catherine and her interlocutors, but what we glimpse in the story is that her practice of philosophy becomes the occasion of conversion, the motive for martyrdom, a way in which she models the unsoundable depths of charity and wisdom of the Triune God, and the fundamental way she encounters, is en-*

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gaged and transformed by, and responds to God. This is philosophy in a form quite different than the forms in which we are accustomed to see it, 'a way of philosophizing that is not that of philosophers,'..." Thus, St. Catherine reminds us of the words of our Church in honor of the Most Holy Theotokos: *"Hail, Who proved philosophers foolish; hail, reproof of rhetoric's art."* (The 3rd Stanza of *The Akathist Hymn*).

+FR. THEODORE

ARCHIEPISCOPAL ENCYCLICAL FOR THE FEAST OF THE HOLY UNMERCENARIES STS. COSMAS & DAMIAN



Honor your father and your mother, which is the first commandment with a promise, that it may be well with you, and you may live long in the land.

(Ephesians 6:3-4)

My Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today, as we commemorate the patrons of our National Philoptochos, the Holy Unmercenary Saints Cosmas and Damian – whose feast we celebrate tomorrow, on the first of November – we have the blessing of the paternal presence in our land of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. All around the country, our Philoptochos Societies are dedicating their collections today for the needs and the support of the benevolent and philanthropic ministries of our Mother Church of Constantinople.

Therefore, let us honor the presence of our Spiritual Father within the Archdiocese of America, and honor our Mother, the Great Church of Christ – the Ecumenical Patriarchate – and, as St. Paul instructs us, seize the promise of the Commandment of God. Not only is this commandment the first one with promise, it is also a positive commandment. We do not hear "Thou shalt not," but rather, "Honor!"

And when we honor our Spiritual Father and our Mother Church, we receive the blessing of Almighty God upon our Nation and upon all of our parishes. We bring our offerings to the philanthropic ministries of the Ecumenical Patriarchate – ministries that offer medical assistance and all

kinds of support to those in need. We reach across the ocean and embrace brothers and sisters that we may never meet in this life, but with whom we shall surely be acquainted in the Kingdom of Heaven.

On this Sunday when our Philoptochos leads the way through their awesome generosity, I ask each and every one of you to show your honor for our Father in Christ and the Mother of our Orthodox Faith. I thank you for the love you have for our Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and express the deep gratitude of our Mother Church for your stewardship in support of these vital ministries.

With paternal love in our Lord Jesus Christ,

† ELPIDOPHOROS

Archbishop of America

SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

by

Deacon Euthym

"Our wickedness shall not overpower the unspeakable goodness and mercy of God; our dullness shall not overpower God's wisdom, nor our infirmity God's omnipotence."

– St. John of Kronstadt

In the Gospel we hear the refrain...ask, seek and knock. Here St John helps us to realize that God's mercy is full and powerful and will overcome any wickedness sin. He goes on to say that we can be vessels of God's wisdom and power. This only happens through humility and trials. So when we find ourselves in trials...slow down, relax, ask God for help and mercy (ask, seek, knock) and He will deliver us. This is the "peace" of a Christian...the knowledge that God's love will overcome in the end and His mercy endures forever.

"And so let us be glad and bear with patience everything the world throws at us, secure in the knowledge that it is then that we are most in the mind of God."... St. Basil the Great

Faith is the hope of things unseen and is seen in the patience to wait until it is revealed God has

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SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS, Continued

only good in store for us. The world though, is filled with difficulties and struggles. These are not from God, but result from collective sin. The world is fallen, God resurrects the fallen. He re-creates us to be in His image and likeness....filled with love, humility and peace. If we are patient, we will see how God takes the brokenness of the world and turns it into something beautiful. Let us sturdy ourselves and not lose hope. He is present everywhere and fills all things. Invite Christ into your heart daily. Both when life brings us worldly blessings and worldly challenges. We must meet the ups and downs of life with the same attitude...."Glory to You our God, Glory to You"...then wait for His will to be revealed. He is the true light and the light which overcomes the darkness.

"Everyone has the responsibility of understanding the deeper meaning of life... If they did this, then people wouldn't be mean and petty, nor would they grumble with one another..."..Saint Paisios of Mount Athos

How important it is to avoid living a trivial existence. For each of us to contemplate the deep and hidden things of God and apply them to our lives. Efforts to immerse ourselves in prayer and scripture does not preclude us from having fun, enjoying life, gathering, working, planning, purchasing, giving, creating, competing...you name it. We are not all called to remove ourselves from the world as monastics. But to live deeply, sincerely, and committed to God and salvation, changes how we approach all of these aspects of life. Can we compete in athletics and pray?...yes. Can we work and pray?...yes. Can we vacation and pray?...yes. Can we see Christ in every person we encounter?...yes. What if our conversations trended toward the deeper, things of the soul? A lot of trivial behaviors would disappear as well according to St Paisios. So let us think deep and live deep, immersed in the never ending depths of the glory of God.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

We thank God for our Sunday School staff: **Jim Christopoulos, Athena Snarskis, Melissa Hawkins, Athena Harrigan, Deacon Euthym, Presvytera Petula, Irene Stambolos, and Ana Storton.** Additional members to our Sunday School staff is a blessing, in that teachers are now available to assist for a class as needed. Additional staff members are helping in special needs, such as refining our curriculum and setting up monthly arts and craft projects.

This year the underlying theme is that of "**The Gifts of the Holy Spirit.**" Students are encouraged to thank God for their gifts, talents, and virtues, such as patience, love, and obedience. In addition, we thank God for our students' parents for helping to supplement our Sunday School lessons in their homes and among other family members.

As of **Sunday, October 17, 2021,** our parish choir director, **Annette Laskaris,** will be teaching hymns of the Divine Liturgy to our Sunday School students with the ultimate goal of establishing a **Jr. Choir** in our parish. We ask parents and grandparents to help our students in participating in these Church music lessons so that we can, from time to time, hear the angelic voices of our students singing the beautiful Church hymns as we celebrate the Divine Liturgy.

On **Sunday, October 24th,** our Sunday School students joined in a fun activity in which they will paint pumpkins in celebration of the harvest season. We are reminded to thank God for the food that is given to us as the earth's fruits are harvested and to give to those in need.



To the left, a group picture of participants in this year's "Pumpkin Painting" project.

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS

Fr. Ted accompanied our St. George Philoptochos President, **Rhonda Latkovic**, who met with the leadership of **Safe House of the Desert** on **Wednesday, September 29, 2021**. Safe House of the Desert takes in young people between the ages of 11-17 and adults between 18-21 who have been rescued from human trafficking. Safe House of the Desert also seeks ways for providing housing and help to those over 21 who are suffering the trauma of various abusive situations, mental illness, and homelessness. Safe House of the Desert serves as a "reference point" for the homeless by networking with **Coachella Valley Rescue Mission, Martha's Kitchen, Harrison House, Main S.T.A.Y. Young Adult Emergency Services in Riverside, California, and Riverside University Health System/Behavioral Health**. If anyone knows a young person or adult in crisis, call: (760) 343-3211. Services are funded in part by the charitable organizations throughout the community. St. George Philoptochos is certainly a member of that team.

On **Saturday, October 9th**, members of our St. George Philoptochos Chapter participated in the "**Paint El Paseo Pink**" Walk for Cancer Cure, sponsored by the **Desert Cancer Foundation**, with whom we work throughout the year. The **Desert Cancer Foundation** provides funds to patients who are in economic need for assistance in order to pay cancer treatment costs that are above and beyond those costs covered by their insurance companies.

The Philoptochos "SOCKtober" new-socks drive for those in need at the Coachella Valley Rescue Mission was extended to **Monday, November 1, 2021**.

In addition, please note that the **November 2021 Philoptochos General Meeting** will be held on **Monday, November 8th** at **11:00 a.m.**

The Annual **Philoptochos Christmas Luncheon** will be held at the **Desert Willow Golf Resort** on **Saturday, December 4, 2021** at **11:30 a.m.** A \$40 per person donation is requested for partici-

pation in the luncheon, which includes one's entrée; appetizers; seasonal soup starter; dessert; refreshments and raffle prizes. Reservations can be made through the "Philoptochos Christmas Luncheon Flier," which is enclosed.

Kolyva Making Lessons--Kolyva is the Greek name given to the boiled wheat that is used for Memorial Services in the Orthodox Church. Wheat represents the regeneration of our lives as we enter Christ's Eternal Kingdom after we leave this present life. Our Philoptochos chapter is planning **Kolyva making lessons** for those interested in learning about how to make it and understanding the symbolism involved. Details and dates for instruction will be announced soon. We ask those who are interested to please indicate their interest in the next week or so by contacting **Christine Kundanis**, or **Fr. Ted**.

Our Chapter recently received a beautiful letter from His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros, thanking us for our "swift and unhesitating response to the Archdiocese Greece Wildfires appeal to support the immediate needs of our Greek brethren who have lost their livelihoods.' His Eminence continues in the thank you letter that "he is grateful for and appreciative of our generous contribution of \$1000.00 and he remains confident that together with the concerted efforts of the IOCC we will be able to provide solace to those suffering most." Our contribution was made thanks to a generous designated donation to our chapter from our "Stealth Steward." We are deeply grateful and thankful for his continued support of our chapter's efforts.

Our chapter kicked off the new "Meals on Wheels" initiative to assist the shut-ins of our parish. In addition, we are providing meals to families impacted by health issues, the death of a loved one, and more. On Monday October 11th, volunteers met at the church to prepare meals. Three meals for each recipient were lovingly prepared and packaged to be delivered to each household later that morning. The ladies prepared roast chicken and potatoes with Greek

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PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS, Continued

salad, homemade lentil soup, and a croissant sandwich, grapes and cheesecake. Our chapter would like to acknowledge the efforts of the volunteers who donated their time for this effort: **Athena Snarskis; Irene Stambolos; Rhonda Latkovic; Susan Segaar; Margarita Pagoulatos.** Thank you, ladies!



Pictured above are: Safe House of the Desert Case Manager, Erika Aldana (left) and Philoptochos President, Rhonda Latkovic (right).

AHEPA NEWS

The Chapter donated to a parish member in need of personal assistance - \$500; and to the Sannazarian Family, also for assistance - \$500; a Television for Sunday School classroom through Donations and even Socktober donations. *This did not come out of Scholarship funds.*

We cannot host a Thanksgiving dinner this year so we are selling raffle tickets to benefit the Scholarship program. The winner of the raffle will receive a **\$100 Albertsons Gift Card towards purchase of a ready-made turkey dinner** (to serve 8-10 guests). Go to ahepa528.org for information. Raffle tickets will be available this weekend at our parish hall, and the enclosed "Holiday Thanksgiving Raffle Flier"

In addition, please note that Fr. T.P. Theophilos Scholarships for 2022 are available at church or the Chapter 528 website. Please plan accordingly as letters of reference and transcripts need to be received. The deadline is May 1st and winners are announced on AHEPA Sunday, May 15th 2022.

Finally, our AHEPA Chapter is celebrating the 100th anniversary of AHEPA, **January 22nd 2022, and our Chapter is hosting this year's AHEPA District 20 Mid-Winter Conference.** A printed program in celebration will be published. Please consider placing a business ad; it is at a low price and all proceeds benefit the Fr Theophilos scholarship program.

Sunday, November 7th...With our AHEPA Chapter 528, we will be honoring our parishioners for Veterans Day. A simple, "coffee hour" recognition of the members of our parish who are veterans of the Armed Forces (and who are currently serving in the Armed Forces). We thank God for their love of God and our country.

The November Chapter meeting on Tuesday November 9th, 6 p.m., with Bible study, and 6:30 p.m. with the meeting at St George Church.

ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE ORDINATION TO THE OFFICE OF BISHOP OF HIS GRACE, BISHOP SPYRIDON OF AMASTRIS

On **Sunday, November 14th**, the **Hierarchical Divine Liturgy** will be officiated by **His Grace, Bishop Spyridon of Amastris** in commemoration of the **One-year Anniversary of His Ordination to the priestly Office of Bishop** of our Most Holy Greek Orthodox Christian Church.

We all look forward to participating in the Divine Liturgy as we observe this special day in the life of His Grace, Bishop Spyridon, and our St. George parish. We pray to our Savior that He grants **many years to our beloved Bishop Spyridon – eis polla eti, Despota!**

GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

FALL GENERAL ASSMBLY

Sunday, November 21st....St. George parish **Fall General Assembly** following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Selection of Election Committee (Parish Council Elections in December) and Auditing Committee.

USHERS NEEDED

We need ushers for Sunday Services. Those interested in helping with ushering duties, please contact **Fr. Ted or Pete Snarskis**.

ST. GEORGE COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS CARD

Details for participation in this year's Parish Christmas Card will be available through the "Christmas Card Flier" enclosed herein.

ST. JOHN GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH - ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA... 60th ANNIVERSARY GALA

Mark **Saturday, November 20, 2021** on your calendars, for the 60-year Anniversary Gala at St. John Greek Orthodox Church in Anaheim, California. The gala will be held at the Westin Anaheim Resort at 1030 West Katella Ave., Anaheim, California. For reservations and more information, contact: (714) 827-0181.

INTEREST IN GREEK FOLK DANCE

Greek Folk Dance Lessons might be provided if there is sufficient interest to acquire the services of a Greek Folk Dance instructor. Those interested in bringing their children to lessons in Greek Folk Dance, and/or are themselves (as adults) interested in learning Greek Folk Dance are asked to contact Fr. Ted at (760) 568-9901, or (760) 568-9901 as soon as possible.

HIS EMINENCE, METROPOLITAN GERASIMOS VISITS OUR PARISH COUNCIL

On **Tuesday, October 26th**, His Eminence, Metropolitan Gerasimos joined our Parish Council

meeting via "Zoom." It was an opportunity to review with His Eminence the overall ministries of our parish. His Eminence was very please with our reports. At the same time, He shared with us that He has spoken to many of the other Parish Councils of our Metropolis via "Zoom," expressing His concern that we are all united in the effort to follow a strategic plan in welcoming converts, youth, and new members into the life of the Church locally, keeping in mind that the Church is not only confined to a specific locale, but is world-wide in nature. We noted that stewardship is not only a "monetary activity," but a deeply spiritual activity, involving prayer and worship.

2022 ST. GEORGE GREEK FESTIVAL

All who want to volunteer to help toward the success of our upcoming **2022 St. George Greek Festival**, which will be held on **February 19-20, 2022**, are invited to attend our special **Festival Meeting on Monday, November 1, 2021 at 4:30 p.m.**

METROPOLIS OF SAN FRANCISCO YOUTH MINISTRY

Metropolis of San Francisco Youth and Young Adult Ministries is offering "Zoom" participation with teenagers of our parishes, entitled, *OrthoTalks*. *OrthoTalks* will be guided and monitored by **Fr. Gary Kyriakou**, Metropolis Pastor of Youth. This series of talks will aid students' social development by reinforcing the teachings of our Lord and our Orthodox Christian Church. **All High School, Jr. High and Middle School students are encouraged to participate by registering now at www.sanfran.goarch.org/othotalks.** The dates on which this program will be offered are: **Tuesday, November 16th at 6:30 p.m.** and **Tuesday, November 30th at 6:30 p.m.** Please note the enclosed flier.

WEEKDAY CALENDAR

Sunday Worship: Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m./Sunday School-10:30 a.m.

Monday, November 1st.....STS. COSMAS & DAMIAN--Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m. /Festival Meeting– 4:30 p.m. at our parish hall

Tuesday, November 2nd....Bible Study –10:00 a.m. (Zoom link:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85019077883pwd=eUhpY2FwZGwvRnJpdzRUWEZHRFJ1dz09>)

Wednesday, November 3rd ...Bible Study –6:30 p.m (Zoom link:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86111452564>)

Thursday, November 4th.....Choir Practice – 1:00 p.m.

Saturday, November 6th.....ST. RAPHAEL (Services will be at St. Raphael Antiochian Orthodox Church in Thousand Palms. Orthros-9:00 a.m. and Divine Liturgy– 10:00 a.m.)

Sunday, November 7th.....Coffee Hour Veterans Day presentation

Monday, November 8th.....ARCHANGELS MICHAEL & GABRIEL. Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m./ Philoptochos General Members Meeting -11:30 a.m.

Tuesday, November 9th.....ST. NECTARIOS THE WONDERWORKER. Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m./ Bible Study-11:00 a.m. (same "Zoom" link as for November 2nd)

Wednesday, November 10th..Bible Study - 6:30 p.m. (same "Zoom" link as for November 3rd).

Thursday, November 11th....Choir Practice - 1:00 p.m.

Saturday, November 13th....ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM. Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

Sunday, November 14th.....ST. PHILIP THE APOSTLE. Hierarchical Divine Liturgy.

Tuesday, November 16th.....Bible Study - 10:00 a.m. (same "Zoom" link as for November 2nd)

Wednesday, November 17th...Bible Study-6:30 p.m. (same "Zoom" link as for November 3rd)

Thursday, November 18th.....Choir Practice -1:00 p.m.

Saturday, November 20th..... Youth charity effort for *Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage*

Sunday, November 21st.....ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS INTO THE TEMPLE. Following the Divine Liturgy--Fall General Assembly Meeting

Tuesday, November 23rd.....Bible Study-10:00 a.m. (same "Zoom" link as for November 3rd)

Wednesday, November 24th..Bible Study-6:30 p.m. (same "Zoom" link as for November 4th)

Thursday, November 25th....THANKSGIVING DAY....ST. CATHERINE THE GREAT MARTYR. Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

Sunday, November 28th.... Regular Sunday Schedule

Tuesday, November 30th...ST. ANDREW THE APOSTLE. Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.