

APRIL 2022



Voice of St. George

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

74-109 LARREA ST., PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA



THE THEOTOKOS AND US

Inside this issue

Friday, March 25th is the **Feast Day of the Annunciation**. It is the event which marks the crowning of God's Divine Plan for our salvation. This event is one in which the Archangel Gabriel was sent by God to the Ever-Virgin Mary (the Theotokos) to announce to Her that She would bring the Only-Begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, into the world so that sin and death would be vanquished. As a result of the Annunciation, we find our lives forever interwoven with the life of the Theotokos. Her life is, indeed, the life of our Church, of which we are members by Holy Baptism.

By way of Her love and obedience to God's Will, God entered our world in the flesh. The purpose of our icons is to proclaim this fact. This is why we carried icons throughout our church on the Sunday of Orthodoxy. Because

Christ is in the flesh, our bodies and souls can participate in the power of Christ, if we freely choose to love God and our neighbor. In short, Christ enters our lives so that we can offer Christ to others, who, in turn, can also share in the power over sin and death. On a level personal to each of us, we continue the ministry that began when Gabriel spoke to the Theotokos.

Each human being is honored by God to experience the same honor as that given to the Theotokos. This honor is found in the fact that our Lord and Savior grants forgiveness of our sins and, if we seek His strength, our faults and temptations can be dispelled. By God's grace and mercy, our lives come to have deep meaning in the fact that we can be like God, imparting His grace and mercy to others. This is the ministry that was initiated on the occasion of the Annunciation to the

Theotokos, Who is hailed as the Chief Saint of our Church.

Back in 2019, I shared some thoughts from Fr. Steven Kostoff which appeared in an online reflection from the Orthodox Church in America. He noted that it is Christ's conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary that is the "moment" of His "enfleshment." Hence, the Church's insistence that a new human being begins to exist at the moment of conception. "The Word made flesh"- our Lord Jesus Christ - is the very conception is the beginning of His human life as God-made-man.

Let us respond to the love of our Lord by observing the Annunciation to the Theotokos as the beginning of salvation for each one of us. Let us continue through this Lenten Season by growing in the Wisdom of God.

+FR. THEODORE

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SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

by
Deacon Euthym

"If because of pride, self-esteem or self-love we are deprived of Jesus' help, we shall lose that purity of heart through which God is known to man. For, as the Beatitude states, purity of heart is the ground for the vision of God (cf. Matt. 5:8)..." St. Hesychius the Theologian of Jerusalem

"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God"...What does it mean to "see God"? We see God in our humility. He is present when we shed our pride, not because He has left us, but because of our pride, we have left Him. Love of self, pride, turns our gaze away from God into ourself. When we humble ourselves, we look back at God and keep our gaze on Him. We have free will, we choose where our gaze goes. Toward ourselves or toward God. How can we "see" God when we are looking at ourselves constantly, or worse yet, in a mirror. Self Love, Self esteem, pride all keep us from "seeing" God, where our true worth lies. In Him and in Him only. Let us lift our gaze to Christ, let us turn away from our obsession with ourselves during this Lenten period, and instead, relax and receive God's love, seeing ourselves in Him, as we are created in His image and likeness.

"Remember me O Lord, when you come into your Kingdom"....Great Compline

We are always on God's mind, He is remembering us every minute of every hour of every day. This cry which we say tonight at the Great Compline of Clean Monday, the first day of Lent, reminds us that it is us who forget Him. We know down deep that, because of our sinfulness, we have separated ourselves from the Living God...hence the cry..."Remember...". Remember me...who you created in your likeness and image. Remember me...who you suffered on the cross for. Remember me...who you healed and restored. Remember me...who you loved when I forgot you. Remember me...who is only worthy of being disowned because of my rebellion, my

treatment of others, my sloth, my anger, my lust, and my rejection of You who created me. Remember me, because of Your great love and mercy, which knows no limits or bounds, You who fashioned me and gave me free will. Let us begin this Lenten Journey by crying out to God and seeking to not stray from Him as we read in today's readings from Isaiah and Proverbs...Remember me...as you remembered the thief on the cross...when you come in to your Kingdom.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Throughout the remainder of this year's Lenten Season, we encourage parents, grandparents and Godparents to access our Greek Orthodox Archdiocese website at www.goarch.org to learn more about how the teachings of our Greek Orthodox Church influence our daily way of life.

Along with our regularly scheduled Sunday School classroom/church sessions that occur after receiving **Holy Communion** during the Divine Liturgy on Sundays, we are excited to encourage our children to join us in participation of our Church's worship services as posted here and look forward to developing our spiritual and liturgical life together as Orthodox Christians and in serving others not only in our communities but also to others in the world.

We ask that all of the youth of our parish attend our Sunday School Lenten Retreat on **Friday, April 15, 2022, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.**

We are especially inspired by the work of our students in preparing their projects reflecting the architecture and structure of our Greek Orthodox church temples. These projects were coordinated by our Sunday School teachers, **Ana Storton, Melissa Hawkins** and **Athena Snarskis**. The students have been learning about the three main parts of the interior of our church temples: the narthex; the nave, and the sanctuary.

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS

The Narrow Door Food Bank cancelled our planned volunteer outing on Saturday because of a lack of non-perishable food. Our church has reached out to them by making a \$500 donation and the Philoptochos is matching that donation.

We contacted **David Ramirez**, Founder & Operations Manager of **The Narrow Door** non-profit, and he will be our Guest Speaker at the **Philoptochos General Meeting planned for Monday, March 28th**. We will present our chapter donation to him at the meeting. In addition, a fellow board member made a suggestion that we ask our members to bring a canned food item, or two to the general meeting. we thought this was a wonderful idea and expanded it to include a **food drive from March 28th-April 11th**. (flier attached)

Many thanks to all of you for your ideas and support of our church and Philoptochos chapter.

AHEPA NEWS

We are most grateful to God for the efforts of our AHEPA President, **Wynn Storton**, and our AHEPA members for organizing and supporting the parish viewing of the movie, *Man of God*, depicting the life of St. Nectarios of Pentapolis on **Monday, March 21st**.

In addition, our AHEPA 528 is in the process of raising funds to send for humanitarian relief to the victims of the invasion of Russia into the Ukraine. For information as to how to support our AHEPA efforts in this regard, please contact Wynn Storton.

Now is the time to also donate to the **AHEPA 528 Fr. T. P. Theophilos Memorial Scholarship Fund!** Every year, on AHEPA Sunday in May, awards from this scholarship are conferred to college students from our local parish and community.

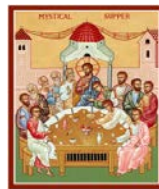
The April **AHEPA 528 meeting** will take place on **Tuesday, April 5, 2022**, with Bible Study at 6:00 p.m. and the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

ST. GEORGE GOLF TOURNAMENT

This year's **St. George Golf Tournament** will be **held on Saturday, April 30, 2022** at the **Desert Willow Golf Resort in Palm Desert**. As always, the awards banquet will feature the delicious Greek Dinner with all the trimmings. We thank God for the dedicated efforts of **George Arguros** and his committee for organizing this splendid event. Currently, we ask everyone to start registering as golfers and to begin efforts of assembling items for the **silent auction** that is to be featured at our golf tournament awards banquet. Call Fr. Ted ahead of time to make sure someone is available to help bring your donated silent auction items into the parish hall. **Registration forms** for the golf tournament are now available online and in our parish hall.

ST. GEORGE PARISH LENTEN RETREAT

Fr. Philip Zymaris, ThD, professor of liturgics at **Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology**, will offer two discussions related to the meaning of the prayers and hymns of the Divine Liturgy and the influence they are to have on our day-to-day way of life. We thank God for the efforts of our St. George Philoptochos for offering to prepare the luncheon for this morning/afternoon spiritual event. The complete schedule of the retreat will be provided in the very near future. Plan on joining us for this special and inspiring event. A donation of **\$20** is most appreciated. **Please RSVP as soon as possible**, because people from throughout our region are also interested in attending.



**ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA**

St. George Parish Lenten Retreat

Saturday, April 2, 2022

**10:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
(luncheon - 12:00 noon)**

Speaker:

**Fr. Philip Zymaris, ThD., Associate Professor of Liturgics
at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology**

**"THE DIVINE LITURGY: THE EXPERIENCE OF HUMAN
FLOURISHING"**

THE VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

On the Third Sunday of Great Lent, we are called by our Holy Church to venerate the Holy Cross of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. The first two Sundays of Lent proclaimed our Faith that God became Man so that we can become like God, being united with His energy of love.

From the Cross, God's energy of love continues to flow to us. To this day, the Sign of the Cross is enough to terrify demons. Such is the power and the love of our God. God's powers are infinitely greater than our own, which in itself makes us humble. Throughout His earthly ministry, every time God performed His miracles, through which He proclaimed His infinite love, people gratefully wanted to follow Him and, "picking up their crosses," they ultimately give their lives for Him.

In essence, they repented of sins. To repent of selfishness, hatred, prejudices, delusions is the cross of repentance. But this cross is one given out of gratitude and which, and the same time, gives joy. Thomas Hopko, in his book, *The Lenten Spring*, writes the following: "[We] must take up the Cross in [our] own lives. We must be co-crucified with Christ in order to share His glory, and to experience, even in this world, the beauty and power; the peace and joy of the Kingdom of God." (pg. 146)

The Cross is the central theme of the Divine Liturgy, which is our expression of gratitude to God; for, it is from the Cross that we partake of Christ's Body, which was broken for us, and His Blood, which was shed for us. While the Cross is Christ's victory over death, our heart-felt repentance is the cross that we carry for victory over sin. We carry our cross of repentance with the divine help of the Cross of Christ.

The Cross teaches us that God loves each one of us with love so powerful that it has eternal depth. We venerate the Cross of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ, because we are grateful. We are grateful, because, through His love, we can repent of sins and turn to our God, Who forgives

us and Who is always there to guide us to the Eternal Life of His glorious Resurrection.

+FR. THEODORE

Archiepiscopal Encyclical on the Feast of the Annunciation and Greek Independence Day

March 25, 2022

Unto the...entirety of the Christ-named Plenitude of the Holy Archdiocese of America.

To You the Champion, I your City dedicate a feast of victory and thanksgiving, as ones rescued out of sufferings, O Theotokos. (Kontakion of the Theotokos)

My Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today, as we chant our hymn of "victory and thanksgiving," we remember our sisters and brothers struggling in Ukraine at this very hour, who are under a brutal and inhuman attack by their neighbor, even their fellow Orthodox Christians. We remember that last year, as we celebrated the Bicentennial of the Greek Revolution, that in those early days of the struggle for independence, many Greeks came home from abroad - from Odessa and Kyiv and other regions of the Slavic world to fight for the freedom of Greece. And today, we hold dear in our hearts not only our Ukrainian brethren, but our fellow Greeks who are still in Mariupol, holding on with bare threads against the evil thrust against them. And we remember with pity the Russian people who are deceived by their leaders, and those poor soldiers being sent to kill their own flesh and blood.

This day, the Day of the Annunciation and the Day of the commencement of the Liberation of Greece, is a day when we direct all our love and all our compassion to those who are still fighting for democracy, for freedom, for truth. Like the Heroes of 1821, they too are willing to die for something greater than themselves, for a greater good.

Let us hold fast in prayer and supplication. Let us honor their struggle by living every day in gratitude and rejoicing for the freedom that we

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enjoy both in America and in Greece. Let us join our minds and hearts with that of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, whose icon rises over six meters high in the Cathedral of Saint Sophia in Kyiv - where she has raised her hands in mighty intercessions for over one thousand years. She is the Ὑπέρμαχος who watched over the Heroes of 1821, and she will watch over the heroes of Ukraine, and grant them victory over their unjust and fratricidal enemy.

Long live Greece! Long Ukraine!

With paternal love in the Lord Jesus Christ,
† ELPIDOPHOROS
Archbishop of America

AT THE MOVIES FOR MAN OF GOD

On Monday evening at 6:30 p.m. parishioners of St. George came together to watch the movie, *Man of God*, a biographical picture depicting the life of St. Nectarios of Pentapolis. The movie was seen at the Century Theater at the River in Rancho Mirage. Due to the many parishioners who bought tickets for this viewing, it turned out to be a "private" viewing for our parishioners who filled the entire theater.

His Grace, Bishop Spyridon gave copies of the *Paraklisis to St. Nectarios*, which he translated into modern English and published with Narthex Press, to those in attendance.

Arrangements for parish viewing were made by **Wynn Storton** on behalf of our AHEPA 528 Chapter.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Highlights from our Spring General Assembly held on Sunday, March 20th are the following:

1. The Planning Committee is in the process of seeking input from parishioners with regard to future parish growth, considering the recent influx of new residents in the Coachella Valley.
2. Golfers are signing up for the St. George Golf Tournament on Saturday, April 30th. Now is the time for parishioners to gather items to

donate for the silent auction, which is traditionally held during the awards dinner.

3. The renters at our parish rental property next door (the Desert Cancer Foundation) will be terminating their lease with us in April. Efforts are being made to bring in another party to rent our property for continued monthly income in order to prevent a budget short-fall by December 2022.

A. The trees in the parking lot are dead and they need to be removed.

B. R.S.V.P. by March 27th for the Parish Lenten Retreat scheduled for Saturday, April 2nd.

4. **Stewardship Report** -- A year ago as of March 25th we had 87 stewards totaling \$ 110,715 in pledges. As of this week, **79 Pledge Cards** have been turned into the office totaling **\$120,840 in pledges**. We have **5 NEW MEMBERS!**

-Jan/Feb 2022 (\$43,366) vrs. 2021 (\$41,275) **increased +5%**, which is good! We need to achieve \$25,000 this March in stewardship income to beat last year's 1st quarter.

-A year ago as of March 25th we had 87 stewards totaling \$ 110,715 in pledges. By years end we had 113 stewards, totaling \$146k, so there are about 35 stewards who have not yet turned in a pledge card. An effort will be made to reach out to those individuals. Easter is earlier this year April 24 vrs. May 2 last year.

-Our 2022 stewardship goal should be to achieve a minimum of \$165k this year, especially with the loss of festival income & now the rental income from the property next door. If we can achieve total steward numbers of 115-120 then we **should** beat our total stewardship from last year.

Thank You to all who have promptly turned in your pledge cards!

2022 ST. GEORGE LENTEN & HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

Wednesday, March 30th.....Presanctified Liturgy - 6:30 p.m.

Friday, April 1st....Presanctified Liturgy - 9:00 a.m.
Salutations (4th Stanza)n-6:30 p.m.

Saturday, April 2nd..Parish Lenten Retreat - 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, April 3rd....St. John of the Ladder: Orthros-8:30 a.m./ Divine Liturgy- 9:30 a.m.

Wednesday, April 6th..Presanctified Liturgy - 6:30 p.m.

Friday, April 8th.....Presanctified Liturgy -9:00 a.m.
Akathist Hymn - 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, April 10th.....St. Mary of Egypt: Orthros -8:30 a.m./ Divine Liturgy -9:30 a.m.

Wednesday, April 13th.. Presanctified Liturgy - 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, April 16th..... SATURDAY OF LAZARUS: Orthros - 8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy - 9:30 a.m.

Sunday, April 17th.....PALM SUNDAY: Orthros -8:30 a.m/ Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.
Bridgeroom Service - 6:30 p.m.

Monday, April 18th.....HOLY MONDAY: Bridegroom Service - 6:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 19th.....HOLY TUESDAY: Bridegroom Service - 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 20th..HOLY WEDNESDAY: Presanctified Liturgy - 9:00 a.m.
Sacrament of Holy Unction- 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 21st....HOLY THURSDAY: DivineLiturgy - 9:00 a.m.
Service of the 12 Gospels - 6:30 p.m.

Friday, April 22nd.....HOLY FRIDAY: Royal Hours - 9:00 a.m.
Service of Taking Down of Christ from the Cross (Apokathilosis) - 12 noon
Lamentations Service - 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, April 23rd.....HOLY SATURDAY - Divine Liturgy - 9:00 a.m.
Preparatory Prayer Service for the Resurrection - 11:00 p.m.

Sunday, April 24th.....GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA (HOLY RESURRECTION OF CHRIST)
Resurrection Service- 12 midnight
Divine Liturgy - 12:30 a.m.
Agape Vesper Service- 12 noon

Monday, April 25th.....ST. GEORGE: Orthros-8:30 a.m./ Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

Friday, April 29th.....THE LIFE-GIVING FONT: Orthros-8:30 a.m./ Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

Saturday, April 30th.....St. George Golf Tournament at Desert Willow Golf Resort
Shot-gun Start - 12:30 p.m./ Awards Dinner - 6:00 p.m.