



# VOICE OF ST. GEORGE

**SAINT GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT  
74-109 LARREA ST.,  
PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA**



## HIS NAME IS: "GOD WITH US!"

## Inside this Issue

*"Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, 'God with us.'" (St. Matthew 1:23). The Incarnation of Christ is the fulfillment of the prophesy of Isaiah (Isaiah 7:14).*

God is with us in the flesh as Perfect Man - the New Adam. The "New Eve" is the Ever-Virgin Mary. While the old Eve was created from Adam's rib, the New Eve's pure flesh gives birth to the New Adam through the work of the Holy Spirit. According to St. Athanasios the Great, *"He takes a body of our kind, and not merely so, but from a spotless and stainless virgin, knowing not a man, a body clean and in very truth pure from [contact] from any man."* (On the Incarnation of the Word, by St. Athanasios, Nicene-Post Nicene Fathers, Ser. 2, Vol.4, pg. 46).

St. Athanasios also notes that God made us in His Image and Likeness, and that we thus know God by virtue of our created nature. But, *"People had so rejected God and so darkened their soul, as not merely to forget their idea of God, but also to fashion for themselves one invention after another, [giving themselves over to idols.]* (pg. 42). So, God took on human flesh in order to destroy death to which the human race was subjected as a result of rejecting God, and *"to attract [our] 'sense-oriented' attention to Himself visibly as man, and so to lead [us]*

*to know Him as God."* (pg. 44).

We know Him to be the Actual Creator of everything, including life itself, because He resurrected from the dead, destroying death - a genuine act of re-creation. Hence, God is not simply an impartial supreme being of the universe. God is now before us as one of us and we also call Him our Father – a point that St. Paul emphasizes in his Epistle to the Galatians (read at the Christmas Liturgy): *"God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons...God has sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father.'"* (4: 4-6).

Yes, God is with us even in our pains and sufferings, as well. Paul also notes in his Epistle to the Hebrews, *"Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God...For, because He Himself has suffered and been tempted, He is able to help those who are tempted."* (2: 17-18).

Christ is God and, as His Name indicates, *God is With Us – Emmanuel!* With Christ, we can end so much suffering. The suffering that comes from sin is remedied by repentance; the suffering that comes from the world is remedied through forgiveness, repent-

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Deacon

ance and co-creating solutions with Christ our God, as we sing, *"Christ is born! Glorify Him!"*  
+FR. THEODORE

### REFLECTION FROM METROPOLITAN GERASIMOS FOR THANKSGIVING

It was in 1621 that the first religious gathering for Thanksgiving took place. And now, over 400 years later, the traditions of this holiday still hold strong and have expanded to provide an opportunity for families to come together, to break bread, to convey gratitude, and to *"give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever!"* (Psalm 107:1-2)

Thanksgiving has a unique significance in the Greek Orthodox tradition. While this is not a religious holiday, the spirit of thanksgiving is prevalent in our Orthodox faith as a time for reflection, gratitude, and a renewed awareness of God's abundant blessings.

One of the central themes in the Greek Orthodox faith is Ευχαριστία - Thanksgiving. The Divine Liturgy is a profound act of thanksgiving, where faithful come together to offer gratitude to God for His redeeming love and the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. The Eucharist is the ultimate expression of this thanksgiving, as Orthodox Christians partake in the Body and Blood of Christ, giving thanks for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the Cross.

Thanksgiving within the Greek Orthodox tradition also reminds us of the importance of gratitude in our daily lives. Gratitude is not just a fleeting emotion but a way of life. It is an attitude that acknowledges God's providence and love in all circumstances, whether in times of joy or hardship.

We live in a broken world, surrounded by violence, war, religious persecution, and racial intolerance, as well as natural disasters that have destroyed God's creation. We must be vigilant and pray to God for healing in our world, and for unity and peace to prevail.

As we celebrate Thanksgiving, let us use this as an opportunity to give thanks for God's many

blessings – the gifts of life, health, family, friends, and the abundance of His creation. It is a time to offer heartfelt thanks for the spiritual guidance and support of our clergy and fellow parishioners, as well as for the opportunities to grow in faith and holiness.

Giving thanks goes beyond words; it is expressed in action. It is a call to love and serve our neighbors, to extend hospitality to strangers, and to show compassion to those in need. It is these acts of kindness and generosity that we embody the true spirit of thanksgiving and fulfill the teachings of Christ.

This Thanksgiving, let us remember that our faith calls us to be thankful, not only for what we have, but also for who we are becoming through our relationship with God. May our hearts overflow with gratitude, and may our lives be a living testimony of thanksgiving, reflecting the love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

St. John Chrysostom writes, *"Nothing is so agreeable to God as a grateful and thankful soul."* May the spirit of gratitude and God's unwavering love fill your hearts on this day and always."

Wishing you and your loved ones a most blessed and Happy Thanksgiving! God bless you!

### SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

by  
Deacon Euthym

*If you pray, pray without hurrying; if you read the Gospel or, in general, any religious or worldly books, do not read them hurriedly, but read with consideration and with a true view of the matter....*Righteous John, Wonderworker of Kronstadt

Why is it we apply worldly productivity to spiritual efforts? If I do MORE, do it FASTER, do it BETTER will I be HOLIER? Absolutely not. The worldly constraints of achievement does not apply to the spiritual life. We are asked to slow down, consider, ponder and reflect. We are asked, in terms of our spiritual life, to gently walk through the eternal life of prayer, study, worship

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*SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS, Continued*

study, worship and participation in the Holy Mysteries of the Church. Unfortunately we conflate the two. We often treat prayer and worship as tasks to achieve, and our worldly work as a time to slow down and be considerate of ourselves. The scriptures remind us to be a "worker worthy of his wages" and to "be still and know that I am God". Let us approach our life in this world and our spiritual lives in the appropriate manner for each. Both reveal and witness Christ to those around us.

*The unintelligent soul, though immortal and the master of the body, becomes the body's slave through sensual pleasure. It does not realize that what delights the body harms the soul; but, stupid and obtuse, it seeks out such delight...Venerable and Godbearing Father Anthony the Great*

*St Anthony was the father of monasticism. Monks and Nuns have a special calling in life that is not a prescription for all of us. But we are all called to be in a loving relationship with God. That being said, St Anthony's point is asking the question, where does our emphasis lie? Temporal pleasure or eternal life? God wants us to enjoy the world, but always with Him in mind as the Creator of all things. If God is present in what delights the body, then it is in line with our soul and His will. If we have to shut Him out, or pretend He isn't present or we are ashamed of what we are doing, then we enslave the soul to the world instead of allowing a free, loving relationship in communion with God. Let us then put God first and our daily decisions will glorify Him.*

*As I have come to understand, some people resemble the honeybee and some resemble the fly. Those who resemble the fly seek to find evil in every circumstance and are preoccupied with it; they see no good anywhere. But those who resemble the honeybee only see the good in everything they see. The stupid person thinks stupidly and takes everything in the wrong way, whereas the person who has good thoughts, no matter what he sees, no matter what you tell him, maintains a positive and good thought...+ St. Paisios of Mt. Athos*

This attitude difference reflects our faith and hope in God. If we believe with our whole heart in God, we seek good in all things, if we doubt or put God second, we seek the wrong, and personalize it to ourselves. St Basil said that he tries to be like the honeybee, learning the good from every interaction. Taking the good nectar from every "flower" he encounters. When we look at things with the blinders of ego and pride, and only seek to criticize or take offense, we miss the good nectar and make no progress. Let us see all things through spiritual eyes and take the good nectar from every encounter.

*To see our sins in their multitude and in all their abomination is indeed a gift of God bestowed in consequence of fervent prayer... St. John, Wonderworker of Kronstadt*

The Theotokos is our example of purity and innocence and when we pray to her and think of her, we become acutely aware of our own sinfulness, which leads to repentance. This is a very positive thing for us. Repentance leads to the Holy Mystery of Confession which reconciles us to God. This reconciliation is why Christ our God, took flesh and sacrificed Himself for us. St Athanasios said... "God became man so man could become like god". Our repentance returns us to our original created state in communion with God. So let us contemplate the virtues of our most holy Theotokos, first her humility and then her purity, especially on this her beautiful feast of the entry into the Temple, and let those virtues live in us as well.

**SUNDAY SCHOOL**

Our Sunday School students have been preparing for their annual Christmas Program, which will be presented on Sunday, December 10, 2023 following the Divine Liturgy.

The program will be a "living icon"-presentation, as the students will present themselves as the images that are found in the Traditional Icon of the Nativity of Christ. As they place themselves in the order of the images of the icon, they will lead us in singing the liturgical Orthodox hymn (the Apolytikion) that honors the Birth of Christ in the

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## SUNDAY SCHOOL, *Continued*

flesh.

Everyone participating in the Divine Liturgy on that day will receive a laminated Icon of the Nativity so that they can follow along with the program and sing the Apolytikion with the students. Everyone can then take the icon home with them as a special gift from our students.

We look forward to everyone's participation in the Divine Liturgy and our Christmas Program on **Sunday, December 10th!** Please see the enclosed flyer.

## PHILOPTOCHOS HAPPENINGS

The month of November was an active one for our Ladies Philoptochos Chapter! **On Saturday, November 11th**, Philoptochos hosted a **"Welcome Back to the Desert" Cocktail Party** for the St. George parish community. An array of Greek appetizers, food, refreshments & music were enjoyed by all in attendance. The **next day**, on **Sunday the 12th**, the chapter hosted its first **"Sip & Paint"** event with fellow parishioner, **Louka** guiding the group of 28 ladies & men in painting wine bottles with a festive holiday design. Then on **Monday, November 13th**, the **Philoptochos general members meeting** was held. Twenty-nine members attended the meeting starting with a delicious gyro sandwich made by our own **Nick Krespis's restaurant, Andy's #4 Burgers**. A special guest speaker from **"SafeHouse of the Desert"**, **Birgit Phillips**, spoke about the ways that at-risk children in the local area are assisted by their organization. Our Ladies Chapter presented Birgit with a donation of 50+ no-sew fleece blankets for the children at the SafeHouse!

With all these activities going on, somehow the ladies found time to start the **holiday baking**. **Greek pastries including koulourakia, kourembiethes, melamakarona, & baklava** are available for sale. Sweet bread will be available by the second week of December.

For the month of **December**, the chapter will be assembling and delivering the **Holiday Baskets** to our shut-ins on **Wednesday, December 13th**

starting at **10:00 am** in the church hall. Please let **Rhonda Latkovic** know if you would like to assist with this project. Also, please don't forget to sign-up for our annual **Philoptochos Christmas Party** scheduled for **Saturday, December 9th at 11:00 AM** located at the **Mountain View Club House of Sun City**. This was a popular event last year and we were at capacity. Don't get shut out this year. See **Tina Veroulis** to get on the party list!



"Welcome Back" Party brought us an opportunity for great fellowship on November 11th!



St George Philoptochos had their first ever PAINT & SIP ART EVENT on Sunday, November 12, 2023! With great success!







President Rhonda Latkovic welcomed parishioners to the Philoptochos "Welcome Back" reception on November 11th.



Our Ladies Philoptochos Chapter donated over 50 no-sew blankets for at-risk children housed at the "SafeHouse of the Desert."

## BUILDING A NEW ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN PALM SPRINGS

On **Sunday, November 12, 2023**, **Fr. Ted and Presvytera Petula** represented our St. George Greek Orthodox parish of Palm Desert at the major fundraising banquet in support for the **new Archangels Michael and Gabriel Romanian Orthodox Church in Palm Springs**. The banquet followed the Hierarchal celebration of the Divine Liturgy, officiated by **His Grace, Bishop Andrei**, the Auxiliary Bishop to **His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel** of the OCA. **Fr. Justin Capsa**, pastor of the **Archangels Michael and Gabriel Romanian Orthodox Church** in Palm Springs welcomed Fr. Ted and Presvytera Petula and expressed gratitude for the spiritual support offered by the St. George parish. last year, our St. George parish hosted the "start-up" fundraiser

for the new Romanian Orthodox Church.

The new church is scheduled to be completed in February 2025.



Pictured above from left to right are: Fr. Justin Capsa, pastor of Sts. Michael & Gabriel Romanian Orthodox Church in Palm Springs, His Grace, Bishop Andrei, Fr. Ted.

## AHEPA NEWS

Everyone is invited to our AHEPA 528 **Christmas Pot-luck Dinner on Tuesday evening, December 12, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.** our parish hall. The evening will feature a fun gift exchange game. See the enclosed flyer for details.

Our AHEPA Chapter was pleased to host the AHEPA Supreme Secretary, **Zenon Chrystodoulou**, at the November meeting, who gave us an update regarding the work of AHEPA on a national level. Plans are still in the works for the 2024 AHEPA National Convention, scheduled to be held in Cyprus this summer.



AHEPA 528 members hosted the AHEPA Supreme Secretary, Zenon Chrystodoulou, at their November 2023 meeting. Pictured above from left to right are: Zenon Chrystodoulou, Nicholas Andros, AHEPA 528 President, Wynn Storton, Ramsay Seikaly, Bill Rellos.

## 2024 ST. GEORGE GREEK FESTIVAL

Baking for our **2024 Greek Festival**, scheduled for **February 17-18th**, begins next month.

- Week of January 7th: dolmathes
- Week of January 14th: tyropita and spanakopita
- Week of January 21st: pastries
- Week of January 28th: pastries
- Week of February 4th: baklava
- Week of February 11th: packaging & galaktobouriko

Flyers have arrived for distribution throughout our Coachella Valley in the effort to advertise our Festival. See the enclosed copy of our flyer!

Indeed, manpower is an issue with regard to our Festival. The costs of hiring help can be off-set by our parishioners by donating funds that can be used to pay hired workers. A donation of \$80 can pay a hired hand for a 4-hour shift.

In addition, costs for food ingredients and set-up supplies can be covered by our parishioners by underwriting some of these costs with meaningful financial contributions.

Festival station chairpersons are asked to meet with our Festival Chairman, George Argyros, to arrange the needs for their individual station.

## PARISH ELECTIONS

**Elections** for candidates to serve as members of the **Parish Council for 2024** will be held on **Sunday, December 10th** following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

**Candidacy Forms** for those who are to be candidates for election must be completed and **returned by Monday, December 4th**. To serve as a member of the Parish Council one must participate in the **Youth Safety training course** of our Holy Archdiocese and submit to a state **background check**.

This year's **Election Committee** is staffed by **Annette Laskaris, Ana Storton, and Michael Hallinan**. We thank them very much for their service.

### ONLINE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CATECHISM CLASS

Online Orthodox Christian Catechism class will be offered by Fr. Ted on Wednesday evenings from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. throughout December and into January.

Those who would like to join are free to email Fr. Ted at [pdsaintgeorge@gmail.com](mailto:pdsaintgeorge@gmail.com) and receive a "Zoom" link to join.

The book that will be used is *Basic Guide to Eastern Orthodox Theology: Introducing Beliefs and Practices*, by **Eve Tibbs**. The book is available on Amazon and will soon be in stock at our book store.

### ST. GEORGE PARISH CALENDAR – DECEMBER 2023

**Sunday Services – Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.**

Friday, December 1st – Holy Water (Agiasmo) Service – 10:00 a.m.

Tuesday, December 5th – Bible Study – 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday, December 6th – ST. NICHOLAS THE WONDERWORKER

Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

Online Orthodox Christian Catechism – 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, December 9th – Philoptochos Christmas Luncheon – 11:00 a.m. (See enclosed flyer.)

Sunday, December 10th – Sunday School Christmas Program/ Parish Council Elections

Tuesday, December 12th – ST. SPYRIDON THE WONDERWORKER

Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

Online Orthodox Christian Catechism – 6:30 p.m.

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**ST. GEORGE PARISH CALENDAR – 2023, Continued**

Tuesday, December 19th – Bible Study – 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday, December 20th – Online Orthodox Christian Catechism – 6:30 a.m.

Friday, December 22nd – ROYAL HOURS FOR THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST – 9:00 a.m.

Saturday, December 23rd – FOREFEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST  
Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom – 9:30 a.m.

Sunday, December 24th – SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST  
Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom – 9:30 a.m.

Monday, December 25th – **THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST (Christmas Day)**  
Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great – 9:30 a.m.

## Sunday School Families and Parishioners!

Below is “The Nativity Hymn” we will all sing together at the end of our program “**ICONS OF THE NATIVITY**” on **Sunday, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023.**

We have included a **BEAUTIFUL RECORDING** from our Deaconess Krisann Kontaxis for you to learn and practice together!  
Many Blessings!

Fr. Ted Pantels, Presb. Petula Pantels  
& Mrs. Athena Snarskis



## Thy Nativity Hymn

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God,  
Has shine the light of knowledge upon the world,  
For thereby, they that worship the stars,  
Were instructed by a star, to worship Thee,  
the Sun of righteousness,  
And to know Thee, the Day-Spring from on high,  
O Lord Glory be to Thee!



# **Philoptochos Christmas Party**

**Dec. 9th 11:00 am**

**Sun City Clubhouse**

**38180 Del Webb Blvd, Palm Desert**

*Please Join Us! Bring a Friend!*

**-RSVP by December 4th-**

Luncheon Price \$60.00 per person includes:

Buffet luncheon with Tri-tip steak & baked fish, salad, potatoes, rice pilaf, seasonal vegetables & bread plus a special dessert. Coffee, iced tea, & water included. Cash Bar.  
\*Vegetarian meal option is available.

***Cash Bar! Music! Hostess Gift! Raffle!***

\*\*\*\*\*  
I am attending: (Name) \_\_\_\_\_

I am bringing a guest: (Name) \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*  
Total Number Attending: \_\_\_\_\_

Payment Type: Cash \_\_\_\_\_ Check \_\_\_\_\_ CC \_\_\_\_\_

Total Payment Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

I prefer at: \*Vegetarian Meal (circle)

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# CHRISTMAS POT-LUCK

EVERYONE IS WELCOME – PLEASE RSVP

This will be a pot-luck dinner, please bring your favorite dish feeds 12, please email or call so we do not duplicate dishes, beverages and bar provided by AHEPA Chapter 528.

**Tuesday 12/12/2023**

**6:00 pm at**

**St George Church**

• 74109 Larrea, Palm Desert CA 92260

**RSVP by 12/05/2023**

**Ahepa528.org**

**Contact@ahempa528.org**

*Wynn @ 760.832.2825 mobile/text  
or leave message with Fr Ted*

*Please bring a wrapped gift  
(no more than \$15 value)  
for a fun gift exchange game.*

**CHAPTER 528**