

JANUARY 2023

# ICE OF ST. GEORG

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

74-109 LARREA ST., PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA 92260



#### DO WE UNDERMINE THE PURPOSE OF HOLY BAPTISM?

On January 6th, we will celebrate the one can find guidance. On a smaller Baptism of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ in the River Jordan by St. John the Baptist. In this event, our Savior puts each of us on His shoulders and buries our fallen human nature, damaged by sins and we are truly born again. This is why the Sacrament of Holy Baptism is performed by immersion in water -- it is a burial of ourselves in the earth (in water) so that we can we can be joined in Christ's Resurrection to Eternal Life. Hence, we chant the words of St. Paul at the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, "Those who have been baptized unto Christ have put on Christ."

As such, our lives are lives of worship to Christ our God. Everything we do is to be an act of worship. Thus, the entire cycle of our Divine Church Services is meant to strengthen, our efforts to worship God, giving God glory in all we say and do. We are reminded of our pledge to fight against selfishness and the temptations for self-aggrandizement so that we can give glory to God by exemplifying His love for all people. This is worship of God and is, what St. Paul called, "fighting the good fight." (1 Tim. 6:12)

The Church Herself is an excellent support system for one who truly wants to live a spiritual life dedicated to Christ's glory. On a grand scale, there are clergy, theologians, as well as the Divine Church Services themselves from which

scale, there is the family, which includes sponsors and Godparents to help nurture the newly baptized in living the moral and ethical life according to God's love. Even from Apostolic times, entire households were baptized, as noted in St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:16).

We are tempted into thinking that the Holy Tradition of our Church is "old fashioned" and that Baptism and Marriage are only ceremonies and social events. As Sacraments, however, clergy, (including myself as your priest) family, and sponsors would do well to always improve our way of being examples in showing how the Sacraments of the Church are to be lived.

In particular, baptizing the children on the basis of their innocence alone, while members of our households in general live lives that are at odds with the teachings and worship of our Church, undermines in large part the very purpose of the Sacrament. I shutter when I call to mind, as an extreme example, the scene from the movie The Godfather in which a baby is being baptized at the same hour when the baby's "relatives" are literally killing other people. Being washed of Original Sin, the child is destined to be living in a den of sins, calling into question the very purpose for baptizing

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#### Inside this issue

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Email: pdsaintgeorge@gmail Website:<u>www.go-stgeorge.org</u> -Fr. Theodore Pantels, Pastor--Dcn. Euthym Kontaxis, M.D.

THE BAPTISMAL GARMENT, Continued the child in the first place.

Going forward, let us join together as a community of Greek Orthodox Christians in the efforts to maintain a spiritual bond with those who have been newly baptized, as well as with their parents and Godparents. Let parents and Godparents commit themselves to learning the teachings of our Church and to live accordingly, as we participate with all of our hearts in the Divine Liturgy every Sunday. Let us also support the efforts of our Sunday School. +FR. THEODORE

# REFLECTION FROM METROPOLITAN GERASIMOS FOR THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

For many years, at Christmas time, I would annually attend a performance of Handel's "Messiah." Of course, there are many wonderful parts to the oratorio. Everyone loves hearing the rousing Hallelujah chorus. But a highlight of the performance for me was always the moment when the soprano would sing, "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying," then the full chorus would respond, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will toward men!"

These words from Scripture (Luke 2:13-14), contained in the story of the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, have found their way into our contemporary cultural landscape, appearing in many ways, from Christmas cards to ornaments, as decorations. Amid the festivities of the season, the profound words "peace on earth," can easily slip by and dare I say, have even become a cliché of the season.

"Peace on earth." So simple, yet so profound. Looking at the state of our world, we long for peace. We see wars. We see inequality, injustice, and oppression. We see civic discord. We see polarization and division among people, perhaps even among our friends and families.

As Orthodox Christians, we know the source of peace. Saint Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "Christ is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility." (Ephesians 2:14). Our Christmas celebrations should remind us of this. For Christ is born on this day. Who is this child? The prophet Isaiah described it well, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called 'Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, *Prince of Peace.'"* (Isaiah 9:6).

We also must recognize that Christ's nativity did not miraculously end hostilities among people. Humanity seems to prefer conflict over harmony and cooperation. Peacemaking, living in peace, is far harder it seems, because it requires daily commitment. Peacemaking and living in peace requires trust, and requires building understanding among people.

Peace on earth begins with inner peace. We open our prayers to God proclaiming, "In peace let us pray to the Lord" because we must approach the Almighty God with open hands of prayer, not the clenched fists of anger. As an old song from the 1950's says, "Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me." There is wisdom in those words. If we are at war internally, if we are angry internally, we cannot be peacemakers. We must do the internal work of digging into our souls to rid ourselves of the enmity and anger that prevents us from forgiving ourselves, forgiving our neighbor, and learning to live in peace and goodwill with all. As the Lord says in the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." (Matthew 5:9).

The Christmas holidays are beautiful days, filled with joy. We decorate our homes. We cook. We exchange gifts. We do things to celebrate the birth of Christ and to share the Good News that the Prince of Peace is born. By doing these things the Prince of Peace is born. By doing these things now, we are not just remembering something from two millennia ago, we are saying that the Prince of Peace is born "on this day," for us,

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### REFLECTION FROM METROPOLITAN GERASIMOS, Continued

for our times, for our world. Let us open our hearts to the message of the angels to the shepherds, "peace on earth and good will toward men," and commit ourselves to become peacemakers all these days and all the days to come, because there is so much to do!

May the Lord, God, the Newborn King, be always with you and your families, my beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Καλά Χριστούγεννα! Χρόνια Πολλά! God bless you!

#### SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS by Deacon Euthym

Thus it happened that two opposite marvels took place at once: the death of all was consummated in the Lord's body; yet, because the Word was in it, death and corruption were in the same act utterly abolished. (Athanasius of Alexandria)

He measures all by comparison with His own suffering, so that He may know our condition by His own, and how much is demanded of us, and how much we yield. (Gregory Nazianzen)

Let us read these and contemplate them over the next 4 days as we experience the feast of the Nativity and Baptism of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Christ took our flesh so that we could have the possibility of being clothed in His divinity and have a relationship with Him for eternity. The I AM, Creator of the universe, condescends to take our flesh as an infant born in the most humble circumstances, a cave designed to house the animals. From here salvation comes to the world. Think about this the next time you feel hopeless...Christ saves in the most unexpected circumstance. Our salvation comes through the most unexpected manners.

If we do not prepare ourselves for eternity by correcting our characters, we will not be able to enter the company of the angels and saints. Then we will pass into eternity with all these faults

and sins....Elder Thaddeus

Consider it like putting on a nice outfit for a wedding. We dress up. In turn, we need to dress up our characters for entry into paradise. We want to present ourselves... "without spot or wrinkle" Lord. Often we to our back against character improvement. Out of pride, laziness, embarrassment or a number of other obstacles. Let us let down our guard and really look at who we are and how we can "do better". The new year is a perfect time to reassess. To invite Christ into the cave of our hearts and place our faults and sins with Him so we can be renewed through His baptism at Holy Theophany.

#### 2023 ST. GEORGE GREEK FESTIVAL

Baking for our 2023 Greek Festival will take place on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, January 2nd, 3rd, and 4th, 2023 beginning at 9:00 a.m. on all three days. We need everyone to volunteer to help. We can all do our part in helping out; let us each do our best to ensure the success of our Greek Festival! All are asked to participate in a special Festival planning meeting on Monday, January 9th at 4:00 p.m. at our parish hall.

Those who are unable to physically work for festival preparations and/or during the weekend of the festival, are still able to help by donating toward our "hire-a-worker" campaign. For a donation of \$100, we can hire a worker for a 5-hour shift. Please contact Fr. Ted for more details.

The Cooking and Baking Schedule for our upcoming Greek Festival is enclosed herein. We ask that workers make a serious effort to participate in the Divine Liturgy on mid-week feast days; Orthros services will begin at 8 a.m., followed by the Divine Liturgy at 9 a.m. on those days.

Remember: Our St. George Greek Festival is Saturday, February 18 and Sunday, February 19, 2023.

See enclosed Festival Clover Registration Info!

#### PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS

On Sunday, January 8, 2023, our St. George Philoptochos will host their annual Vasilopita Celebration in the parish hall following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Traditionally, the funds raised from the Vasilopita celebration are sent to the National Philoptochos office to be used for the needs of the St. Basil Academy, which is the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese home for children in need.

On Saturday, December 10th, 65 of our chapter members, friends, and St. George clergy and parishioners gathered together for a wonderful Philoptochos-sponsored Christmas Holiday Luncheon at the beautiful Sun City country club resort! His Grace, Bishop Spyridon was in attendance and, in honor of his Patron Saint, St. Spyridon, as Fr. Ted ushered the guests forward, He personally, presented a relic to each attendee! Pictures from this event are available in our Philoptochos Chapter's current edition of their November/December 2022 newsletter, *Philo Strong*.

Our Philoptochos Chapter donated twenty \$50 gift cards to the Safe-House in the Desert Organization. Safe-House helps children who have been abused through human trafficking. Some of these gift cards were used as Christmas presents for those currently housed at the facility with the rest used for individuals when they leave the facility.

As is customary every year, members of our Philoptochos Chapter prepared homemade "goodie" baskets for seniors in our community. This project was founded by Philoptochos member Alice Pulos many years ago. We wish to thank our volunteers who assembled & delivered the baskets: Michael Colikas, Kalitsa Xitco, Tasia Richards, Maria Rellos, Rhonda Latkovic, Linda Petalas, Tina Veroulis and Debbie Pousen.

Upcoming meetings and events hosted by our St. George Philoptochos Chapter will be posted in *The Ladder* throughout this month.



On December 15th, our Philoptochos Chapter prepared and delivered Christmas Holiday Baskets to senior citizen members of our parish. (L to R) Tina Veroulis; Linda Petalas; Maria Rellos; Rhonda Latkovic; Michael Colikas; Kalitsa Xitco; Tasia Richards. Not pictured Debbie Pousen.

#### **AHEPA NEWS**

On Tuesday, December 14, 2022, members of our AHEPA Chapter 528 hosted their annual Christmas dinner and celebration at our parish hall. It was a festive event, attended by members of our St. George community.

Our AHEPA 528 Chapter is dedicating this month of January to the effort of making preparations for hosting the AHEPA District 20 Mid-Winter Conference on January 28, 2023. St. George parishioners are all invited to attend the District Conference Dinner on the evening of January 28th at the Desert Willow Golf Resort for \$75 per person. For more information, contact AHEPA 528 President, Wynn Storton at: contact@ahepa528.org. Also, please note the enclosed flyer. Deadline for R.S.V.P. is January 16, 2023!

Everyone is invited to join in our AHEPA 528 "Super Bowl Party" on Sunday, February 12, 2023 at our parish hall. Attendees will enjoy "Super Bowl" snacks and refreshments while watching the game on our T.V. monitor positioned in our parish hall. We ask everyone to always be supportive of the AHEPA 528 Fr. T.P. Theophilos Memorial Scholarship Fund as they enjoy this year's "Super Bowl Party" festivities.

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#### AHEPA NEWS, Continued



On Tuesday, December 14th, the annual AHEPA 528 Christmas Party took place at our parish hall. Standing, Ana Storton taking pictures of guests. Seated at the near table (Left to right) Nick Andros, Tasia Richards, and Ann Boukidis-Michas. Seated at the far table (Left to right) Tina Veroulis, Angelo Veroulis, Kyriakos Seraphim

#### **SUNDAY SCHOOL**

Our Sunday School Christmas Program was held in our parish hall on Sunday, December 11, 2022. Heart-felt gratitude is extended to **Presvytera Petula Pantels**, who with the enthusiastic support of our Sunday School Director, **Athena Snarskis**, organized this year's program, entitled "Christmas Around the World." We also express profound gratitude to the Sunday School students and their parents for participating in this year's program:

Philip Boutier Eleni Castrale Christian Cox Natalie Cox Harper Harrigan Jackson Harrigan Eleni Hawkins Melina Hawkins Alexander Miranda Angeliki Trapatsas

Of particular interest, attendees were allowed to feel special appreciation for their freedom to celebrate Christmas in this country after hearing the comments of **Anastasia Boutier** (who grew up in Russia) and **Olga Seraphim** (who grew up in Ukraine), both of whom shared their experiences during the Communist regime in the U.S.S.R. Christian Cox shared the fact that in the country of Brunei, Christmas celebrations are not allowed.

Eve-Marie Gandrillon beautifully sang the Christmas carol, "Il est né, L'Enfant Divin" in French (He is Born, the Divine Child), Angeliki Miranda sang the Christmas Carol, "O Holy

Night," to everyone's delight and little **Jackson Harrigan** gained applause, singing "Silent Night" with all of his heart.

Sunday School students also wrote impressive statements about the great gift of our Lord's birth in the flesh, noting that if Jesus never came into our lives, the world would be truly sad. Some of student's comments were posted in *The Ladder* on December 25th, while all of their comments are available in our Sunday School classroom.

Starting January 15th, 2023, we will be returning to having Sunday School sessions each Sunday! Thank you to Alexandra Pappas (Emily Tcharos' niece) and Emily Kayaloglou (Angeliki Trapatsas' Yiayia) in joining Presbytera Petula and Mrs Athena each Sunday this year! Fr Ted along with Deacon Euthym will also be making visits to each classroom!

#### **HOUSE BLESSINGS**

Following the celebration of **Theophany on Friday**, **January 6**, **2023**, Fr. Ted will be visiting parishioners throughout January who request House Blessings. Everyone is encouraged to make an appointment for Fr. Ted to bless their homes by contacting him at: (760) 880-5869 or (760) 568-9901, or emailing him at: frt.j.pantels@gmail.com.

Bottles of Holy Water from the Service of the Great Blessing of the Waters, held on the eve of Theophany and on Theophany will be available to all who worship at these divine Church services.

#### ST. GEORGE PARISH LENTEN RETREAT

Our St. George parish annual Lenten Spiritual Retreat is scheduled for Saturday, March 18, 2023. Fr. Steven Tsichlis, the pastor of St. Paul Greek Orthodox Church in Irvine, California will be our speaker. He is the author of the informative booklet, entitled "A Worshiper's Guide to the Divine Liturgy," copies of which are available in our parish book store. The title of his booklet fits with our overall theme for this year: "Understanding the Divine Liturgy." More infor-

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#### LENTEN RETREAT, Continued

mation will be forthcoming very soon via our weekly publications of *The Ladder* and future editions of *The Voice of St. George*. Circle the date, **Saturday**, **March 18**, **2023** from now and plan to join us!

**2023 CHURCH CALENDARS** -- The 2023 Church Calendars from our Holy Archdiocese are now available. For now, we ask that each household take one calendar for their homes so that we may have enough of copies for others.

## Giving Thanks

### Eucharistic Stewardship

#### **His Gifts**

Christian stewardship means that I own nothing. Everything I have belongs to God. He has loaned it to me. I am committed to use it responsibly, and one day, I will have to answer to Him for my use or misuse of His gifts.

I am the manager of God's gifts: my time, my talents, my possessions, my body, my soul - everything belongs to God. Saint Paul asks us, "What have you that you have not received?" Money, for example, becomes a sacrament when it is offered to God. It becomes a visible expression of our commitment, faith, and love for Jesus. Once given to God, our gifts are consecrated by the Holy Spirit, who then translates them into works of mercy that brings glory to God.

Stewardship comments from Rhonda Latkovic, Chairperson.

We are looking to expand our Stewardship team for 2023 and we need you! Our goal is to form a team of 7 to 9 parishioners to engage, energize, and lead our church to increased membership! We are looking for parishioners, both young & old, men & women, converts & Orthodox from birth who all want to work to ensure our church is around for our children's children and grandchildren. We will be recruiting members for our team. If you are interested in becoming a part of the 2023 please contact Rhonda Latkovic via phone or text (714) 875-4661, or email (r.s.fleminglatkovic@gmail.com) by January 8th, 2023.

## 2023 Stewardship

On behalf of the Parish Council and Stewardship Committee, we wish to thank all of our stewards for their generous donations to St. George this past year. Your stewardship donation is vital to the daily operations and services that we provide to all in our community.

For the new year, our plan is to automatically rollover your 2022 pledged amount into 2023, or in other words, we will keep it at the same level unless you wish to change it. For both new or continuing stewards who wish to change their stewardship pledge amount, we have new pledge cards available in the office for you to fill out and return.

Stewardship Chairperson Rhonda Latkovic will be available on Sunday, January 1st and 8th in the church hall after Divine Liturgy to answer any questions or to assist you with filling out a pledger card.

Thank you again for your support of our St. George parish. Praying for you and your loved ones to have a happy and healthy New Year in 2023!

#### PARISH CALENDAR - JANUARY 2023

NOTE: SUNDAY SERVICES ARE SCHEDULED AS FOLLOWS:

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

Monday, January 2nd......Festival Preparations begin! - 9:00 a.m.

Festival Meeting – 4:00 p.m.

Tuesday, January 3rd.....Bible Study – 10:00 a.m.

Thursday, January 5th.....EVE OF THEOPHANY

Vesperal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great –9:00 a.m. & the Great Blessing of the Waters (Agiasmo) [Strict Fasting Day]

Friday, January 6th......HOLY THEOPHAY (The Baptism of our Lord)

Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m. followed by the Great

Blessing of the Waters (Agiasmo)

Saturday, January 7th.....ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

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

Sunday, January 8th.....SUNDAY AFTER THEOPHANY

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

Philoptochos Vasilopita Celebration following the Divine Liturgy

Monday, January 9th..... Festival Preparations continue – beginning at 9:00 a.m.

Tuesday, January 10th.....Bible Study-10:00 a.m./AHEPA Meeting-6:00 p.m.

Tuesday, January 17th.....ST. ANTHONY THE GREAT

Orthros-8:00 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:00 a.m.

Bible Study – 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday, January 18th.....STŞ. ATHANASIOS & CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

Orthros-8:00 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:00 a.m.

Friday, January 20th.....ST. EYTHYMIOS

Orthros-8:00 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:00 a.m.

Wednesday, January 25th..... ST. GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN

Orthros-8:00 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:00 a.m.

Saturday, January 28th.....AHEPA District 20 Mid-Winter Conference hosted by our parish

AHEPA Chapter 528. Grand Banquet at Desert Willow Golf Resort – 5:00 p.m. (See enclosed flyer)

Monday, January 30th.....THE THREE HOLY HIERARCHS

Orthros-8:00 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:00 a.m.

Thursday, February 2nd.....THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST INTO THE TEMPLE

Orthros-8:00 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:00 a.m.

JANUARY 2023						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5*	6*	7
	Dolmades	Dolmades	Dolmades			
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	Tyropita	Tyropita	Tyropita Spanakopita	Spanakopita		
15	16	17*	18*	19	20*	21
	Pastries	Pastries	Pastitsio	Pastiţsio		
22	23	24	25*	26	27	28
	Pastries	Pastries	Mousaka	Mousaka		
	•					
29	30*	31				
	Pastries	Pork Souvlaki				
	j.	ŧ	FEBRUARY 2023			
-			1	2*	3	4
			Pork Souvlaki			
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	Baklava	Baklava	Chicken Souvlaki	Chicken Souvlaki		
12	13	14	15	16	17	18**
	Baking	Packaging	Galaktobouriko	Set-up	Set-up	St. George Greek Festival

St. George Greek Festival

\*<u>Divine Liturgy</u> is celebrated on these days between <u>9:00 am. & 10:00 a.m.</u> Efforts must be made to be in church for the Liturgy, not in the kitchen. \*\*Saturday of Souls- Orthros-7:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy: 8:30 a.m. -9:30 a.m.

#### 12/31/2022 GREEK FESTIVAL CLOVER REGISTERS

RE: 2023 Festival Sales using CLOVER™ Registers

The 2023 St. George Festival will use <u>Credit and Debit Cards only for all transactions</u>. <u>We will not be accepting cash at our booths</u>. All transactions will be done on a CLOVER™ device designed for credit card Festival use.

You can see the devices in the Church Hall on the table next to the Sunday School Rooms.

Sales and Transactions are immediately recorded to the correct account eliminating the need for Office Staff, Runners, and Night Cash Deposits during the Festival. Without cash on the premises, risk of robbery and theft is eliminated, and accounting accuracy is greatly improved.

Festivals using this method have seen dramatic increases in sales as the customer is not limited to the cash they have on hand. In addition, there will be a "TIP" screen at food and bar locations which has been proven to increase sales as well.

Chairman and Register workers will need to attend a brief "hands on" training session lasting less than 30 minutes during January and early February. The stations are very intuitive with ICONS and Menu Items already pre-loaded onto the screens. The station operation is very similar to your Smart Phone.

The training schedule will be posted in the 1<sup>st</sup> issue of the 2023 Ladder. A single session should be sufficient however users are welcome to attend more than 1 for additional training.

During the Festival, we will have on-site support people available for questions from open to close.

The registers can track SALES, VOID transactions, and provide REFUNDS in real time.

Our goal is to improve sales efficiency while reducing office staffing.





# Join AHEPA Chapter 528 for a Greek Island Dinner



January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Desert Willow Golf Resort

38995 Desert Willow Drive Palm Desert, CA 92260



No host Cocktails 5pm, 6pm Dinner / Cocktail Attire Preferred RSVP Required by 01/16/2023
\$75.00 per person

**Group Name** 

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Payable to: AHEPA CHAPTER 528
42-215 Washington St A-154 Palm Desert, CA 92211-8031
contact@ahepa528.org - 760.832.2825
Website payments - ahepa528.org/event

First Course - Greek Salad / Romaine Lettuce, Olives, Feta, Cucumber,
Roasted Bell Peppers, Roasted Tomatoes, and Lemon Dressing.

Entree - Duet Plate / Lamb Chop and Chicken Satay Served with Rice and Roasted Vegetables.

Dessert - Family-Style at Tables / Caramelized Apple Tarte, Baklava.

Beverages - Freshly Brewed Coffee & Iced Tea Service. No Host Bar.

/Following AHEPA District 20 Mid-Winter Conference /