

DECEMBER 25, 2016

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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THE LADDER

THE NATIVITY OF JESUS CHRIST OUR TRUE GOD AND SAVIOR

Mailing Address:

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Palm Desert, CA.92261

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– Fr. Theodore Pantels,
Proistamenos (Pastor)

– Deacon Euthym Kontaxis,
M.D.

Holy Communion Order

1. Please remain standing while following the directions of our ushers.
2. Ladies, kindly remove lipstick before receiving.
3. When receiving Holy Communion, make the Sign of the Cross, state your name (baptismal name), and naturally receive as if being fed.
4. Non-Orthodox Christians may not receive Holy Communion, but they may receive the Holy Bread at the end of the service.
5. All Orthodox Christians must be spiritually prepared to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Please see the priest if you have any questions.

THE FALL OF ALEPPO

Certainly it is difficult for any Christian who still might be living in Aleppo, Syria to have a "Merry Christmas" this year. Children wake up to a destroyed world in which there is little reason to believe that they would have a "tomorrow." On many occasions during the course of our liturgical services, we hear the intonation of petitions for the salvation of the victims of the Middle East. As we pray for the people in the Middle East, our thoughts go to

the issues over which we find ourselves complaining every day here in this country. Truly, our complaints are trivial compared to the life-and-death issues that the people in the Middle East face. I see it in myself! I confess...I am a whiner! Not one day goes by in which I do not find myself whining about something that annoys me, without regard to how others may feel about it. Sure, I could excuse myself by admitting the fact that not one day goes by in which I do not hear
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THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST OUR GOD – Fulfilled was the prophesy of the Patriarch Jacob which he had spoken 1,807 years before: "A ruler shall not fail from Judah, nor a prince from his loins, until there come the things stored up for him; and he is the expectation of the nations" (Gen.49:10)... Thus, our Saviour was born in Bethlehem, a city of Judea, whither Joseph had come from Nazareth of Galilee, taking Mary his betrothed, who was great with child, that, according to the decree issued in those days by the Emperor Augustus, they might be registered in the census of those subject to Rome. Therefore, when the time came for the Virgin to give birth, and since because of the great multitude there was no place in the inn, the Virgin's circumstance constrained them to enter a cave which was near Bethlehem. Having as shelter a stable of irrational beasts, she gave birth there, and swaddled the Infant and laid Him in the manger (Luke 2:1-7)... From this, the tradition has come down to us that when Christ was born He lay between two animals, an ox and an ass, that the words of the Prophets might be fulfilled: "Between two living creatures shalt Thou be known" (Habbakuk) and "The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib." (Isaiah 1: 3)...While the earth gave the new-born Savior such a humble reception, Heaven on high celebrated majestically His world-saving coming...the Heavenly Powers praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men" (Luke 2:8-14). *(Excerpts taken from www.goarch.org)*



Σιγουρα θα ειναι δυσκολο για οσους Χριστιανους οι οποιοι ακομη ζουν στο Χαλεπι της Συριας να εχουν <Καλα Χριστουγεννα> εφετος. Τα παιδια ξυπνουν σε εναν καταστρεμμενον κοσμον στον οποιον δεν υπαρχει λογος να πιστευουν οτι θα εχουν ενα <αυριο>. Σε πολλες περιπτωσεις εκφραζουμεν λειτουργικες αιτησεις υπερ της σωτηριας των θυματων της Μεσης Ανατολης.

Καθως προσευχωμεθα υπερ του λαου της Συριας, οι σκεψεις μας γυριζουν σε θεματα τα οποια συνανταμεν στην καθημερινη μας ζωην εδω στην χωραν μας. Τα παραπονα που εκφραζουμεν εχουν μηδαμινη σημασια σχετικα με τα θεματα των πιστων της Συριας. Το καταλαβαινω στον εαυτον μου: ειμαι παραπονιαρης! Δεν περνα ουτε μιαν ημεραν κατα την οποιαν δεν παραπονευομαι για καποιαν <ενοχλησιν.> Πανω απο αυτο, δεν περνα ουτε μιαν ημεραν κατα την οποιαν δεν ακουω παραπονα απο ολους: παραπονα για ισα δικαιωματα, παραπονα για την οικονομικη καταστασιν, παραπονα για την Εκκλησιαν, παραπονα για συνεργατες και ακομη για τους συγγενεις μας. Ομως, εχουμεν πολλες ευκολιες για τις οποιες πρεπει να ευχαρηστησουμεν τον Θεον.

Το καλυτερο δωρο που μπορουμεν να προσφερουμεν στον Θεον για τα Χριστουγεννα ειναι – ολοι μαζι – να σταματησουμεν τα παραπονα! Ας αρχισουμεν να διορθωσουμεν τα λαθη μας. Ας αρχισουμεν να ευχαριστησουμεν τον Θεον για το μεγαλυτερο δωρο Του: η ευκαιρια να μετανοησουμεν για τις αμαρτιες μας – να συγχωρηθουμεν και να σωθουμεν. Αυτη η δυνατοτητα διδεται σε εμας δια μεσου της Ενσαρκωσεως του Κυριου και Θεου και Σωτηρος μας Ιησου Χριστου!
+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

everybody else around me complaining about something – complaining about equal rights; complaining about the economy; complaining about the Church; complaining about co-workers and even complaining about their relatives. However, in fact, compared to others in the world, we have much for which to be thankful.

I suppose that the best gift that we can offer to God for Christmas this year is this: *Let us all, together with one heart, stop complaining and "Let us give thanks unto the Lord!"* "Let us give thanks unto the Lord" are words directly from the Divine Liturgy. We give thanks for our "second chance" to be eternally with God! In specific terms we thank God, *"For this Liturgy which [He] is pleased to accept from our hands, even though [He] is surrounded by thousands of Archangels and tens of thousands of Angels..."* (again, words coming directly from the Divine Liturgy). Through this prayer we are reminded that each one of us is more important to God than even the Angels, no matter how insignificant we might seem to be in the grand scope of the world! During our Lord's sojourn in the world, He remained unpopular with kings and dignitaries. If anything, they were the ones who eventually executed Him. His miracles were performed among the little people, like us. His wisdom was shared with simple folk, like you and me.

The Divine Liturgy is above all a service of thanksgiving. It is the Eucharist - *Thanksgiving*, in Greek. Our *thanksgiving* to God is for offering us a "second chance" at life. We have the opportunity to repent of sinful ideas, motives and deeds – to be forgiven and to be eternally saved. There is no power or authority that can take that "second chance" from us. Not even a priest has the right to condemn anyone – only to pray for everyone. Only Christ is the Judge and His Judgment is one that is mingled with His love and eagerness to forgive. The Creator has taken on the flesh of His creation with the Name: Jesus Christ. God is now among us and within us. The face of the Creator can now be seen in our own faces, which is the whole point of icons. The issues we face are His issues; the pains we feel are His pains; our joys are His blessings.

All of this means that our lives are not just our own. We belong to God and, at the same time, we influence others around us, now and into future generations. To quote Henri J.M. Nouwen from his book, *With Burning Hearts*: *"The word of the Eucharist makes us part of the great story of our salvation. Our little stories are lifted up into God's great story and there given their unique place. The word of the Eucharist lifts us up and makes us see that our daily, ordinary lives are, in fact, sacred lives that play a necessary role in the fulfillment of God's promises."* (page 59).
+FR. THEODORE

PRAY FOR THE SICK: Yvonne Flessas, George Aeder, Adele Gallade, Kathy Ligeros, Nicholas Kyriakou, Erika Aguilar (Ana and Wynn Storton's daughter), Jim Alex (*Many of the faithful on our Prayer List face chronic or serious illness*).

HYMNS AND READINGS FOR TODAY'S CELEBRATION OF THE DIVINE LITURGY

ANTIPHON I: "Tes presvies tis Theotokou..." (By the prayers of the Theotokos...)

Verse 1— I will give thanks to You, O Lord, with my whole heart, in the council of the upright and in the assembly.

Refrain: "Tes presvies tis Theotokou, soter, soston imas."

Verse 2—: Great the works of the Lord, sought out in all things with regard to His Will.

Refrain: "By the prayers of the Theotokos, Savior, save us."

Verse 3— Thanksgivine and majesty are His work and His righteousness continues to the ages of ages. Holy and fearful is His Name.

Refrain: "Tes presvies tis Theotokou, soter, soston imas."

Chanter(s): Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages.

Refrain: "By the prayers of the Theotokos, Savior, save us."

ANTIPHON II: "Soston imas Ie Theou..." (Save us, O Son of God...)

Verse 1— Blessed is the man who fears the Lord; he will delight exceedingly in His commandments.

Refrain: "Soston imas, Yie Theou, O ek Parthenou techthis, psallontas si alleluia."

Verse 2— His seed shall be mighty on earth the generation of the upright shall be blessed.

Refrain: "Save us, O Son of God, Who was born of a Virgin, we sing to You, Alleluia."

Verse 3— Glory and riches shall be in his house and his righteousness continues unto ages of ages. For the upright, light springs up in darkness, for He is merciful, compassionate and righteous.

Refrain: "Soston imas Ie Theou, O ek Parthenou techthis, psallontas si alleluia."

Doxa Patri ke Io ke Aghio Pnevmati ke nin ke aei ke eis tous eonas ton eonon.

People: "O Monogenis Ios ke Logos tou Theou..." (O Only-Begotten Son and Word of God...)

HYMNS FOR THE ENTRANCE WITH THE HOLY GOSPEL: ANTIPHON III— *The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand until I make your enemies the footstool for Your feet. With You is the beginning in the day of Your power in the brightness of Your saints.*

Hymn for the Nativity: *Ee Ghenisis Sou Christe o Theos...* (pg. 105 in the Divine Liturgy Books)

Kontakion Hymn for the Nativity: *Ee Parthenos Simeron ton yperousion tiktee...* (pg. 105 in the Divine Liturgy Books)

Hymn chanted at the Entrance of the Holy Gospel: *Ek ghastron pro eosforou...* (pg. 120 in the Divine Liturgy Books)

Instead of "Aghios of Theos" (Holy God, Holy Mighty..." the hymn that is chanted is: *"Osi eis Christon evaptistite..."*, "As many as have been Baptized unto Christ they have put on Christ."

READINGS: Epistle – Galatians 4: 4-7/ Gospel – St. Matthew 2: 1-12

THE DIVINE LITURGY OF ST. BASIL THE GREAT CONTINUES.

Follow pages 125-143 in the Divine Liturgy Books.

Communion Hymn: *Litrosin apesteile Kyrios to laos aftou. Alleluia.* "The Lord sent redemption to His people. Alleluia.

After Holy Communion: *Ee Ghenisis Sou Christe o Theos...* (pg. 105 in the Divine Liturgy Book)

Dismissal Prayer: "May Christ our True God, Who was born in a cave and laid in a manger for our salvation and Who arose from the dead..."



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Coffee Hour: Philoptochos

PHILLOPTOCHOS— Merry Christmas! Make your reservations today for **Taverna Night on Saturday, January 7, 2017**. See **Tina Veroulis**. We need **Coffee Hour Hostesses** for the month of January. See the calendar schedule on the parish hall bulletin board. Our Christmas Bake Sale is over. Thank you for your support. If you haven't picked up your ordered bake goods, see Lula today.

ALTAR FLOWER BOUQUETS— The following are the sponsors of Altar Flowers for Christmas Day. Merry Christmas to everyone!

-**Matushka Gloria Lehman**: "In memory of the parents of Fr. Charles and Matushka Gloria Lehman; Anna and Charles Lehman and Evelyn and Edmond Koury."

-**Frank and Joan J. Fakinis**: "To all of our loved ones that have passed on."

GREEK FESTIVAL ON FACEBOOK— All parishioners of St. George who use Facebook are asked to place announcements for our 2017 Greek Festival on Facebook and to allow people to "like" their message so that information about our Greek Festival can spread to others in our vicinity and beyond. Please contact **Ana Storton and/or Jim Christopoulos** for more information about advertising our Festival on Facebook.

FUNERAL PLOTS / ORTHODOX SECTION— In a joint effort, **Fr. Ted and Fr. David Kruse** of the **St. Raphael Antiochian Orthodox parish** in Thousand Palms, California are looking into establishing an Orthodox Church Section at Desert Memorial Park Cemetery at the corner of Ramon and DeVall in Cathedral City. The first step in the process is to determine how much interest there is among the Orthodox Christian faithful in the Coachella Valley (Greek Orthodox, Antiochian Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox, Romanian Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, etc). We have the opportunity for burial plots to be purchased together in one area and then bless the ground making it an Orthodox area. We were given a price of **\$1585.00** per plot. Please let Fr. Ted know if you are interested so that he can work with Fr. David in making the appropriate arrangements.

STEWARDSHIP -The 2017 Stewardship Pledge Cards will be available beginning Sunday, January 1st. We will have a table set up in the church hall staffed by **Rhonda Latkovic**, Stewardship Chairperson, who will distribute cards between **Jan.1-8, 2017**. Any cards not picked up after the Sunday, January 8th church service will be mailed. Then, on **Sunday, January 15th, 2017**, we will celebrate Stewardship Sunday with a special prayer service during liturgy. We are asking all stewards to please return their 2017 Pledge cards by January 15th, if possible. Our 2017 Pledge Goal is **\$115,000**.

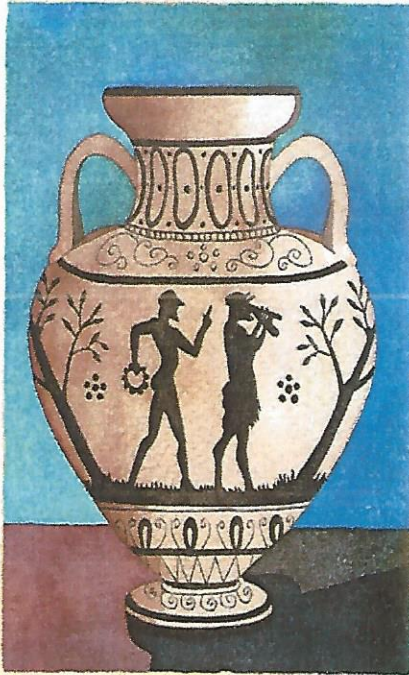
WEEKDAY CALENDAR

Note: Fr. Ted and Presvytera Petula will be visiting their children and grandchildren in Sacramento, California from Monday, December 26th to Saturday morning, December 31st. Fr. Ted will be celebrating the Divine Liturgy as always on Christmas Day (next Sunday, December 25) and on New Year's Day (the following Sunday, January 1, 2017). No meetings or Church Services are scheduled for this week.

*The December 2016 Ladder
is sponsored by
Linda Kallis*

We encourage all of our parents to sit in the church with their entire family as they participate in the beauty and mysteries of the Divine Liturgy. For those with young children, feel free to sit near an aisle so that you may easily take your children for a break, as needed. If necessary, we have a "crying room" in the narthex for your use. God Bless.

ST. GEORGE PHILOPTOCHOS



INVITES YOU TO ATTEND
TAVERNA NIGHT
JANUARY 7, 2017

AT 6 P.M.

\$40.00 PER PERSON

GREEK DINNER

MUSIC & DANCING

PAID RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE

IN ADVANCE BY JANUARY 1, 2017

TAKEN AT THE PHILOPTOCHOS TABLE

**NO UNPAID RESERVATIONS AT DOOR
OR MAIL THE FORM BELOW TO: ST. GEORGE**

PHILOPTOCHOS, P.O. BOX 4755, PALM DESERT, CA 92261

AND NOTE TAVERNA NIGHT

NAME: _____

NUMBER OF PERSONS ATTENDING: _____

AMOUNT ENCLOSED _____

PHONE # _____