

FEBRUARY 26, 2017

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

**74-109 Larrea Street
Palm Desert, California 92260**

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THE LADDER

FORGIVENESS SUNDAY



Mailing Address:

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Palm Desert, CA.92261

Tel: (760) 568-9901

or: (760) 880-5869

– 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 POWER OF FORGIVENESS

In the official documents of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church (which took place in the summer of 2016), there is a document with the title: "The Importance of Fasting and Its Observance Today," in which we learn that fasting is a *spiritual effort*. It refers to the words of St. Basil: "*Let us fast in a way that is an acceptable way of fasting. True fasting is the opposition against evil; the control of our manner of speech; the avoidance of anger; our separa-*

tion from desires; from condemning others; from falsehood and from senseless oaths...In such spiritual efforts true fasting is found." (On Fasting 2,7, PG 31 – Paragraph 3 of the Document). All of the documents of the Holy Council can be readily found on the Internet website: www.holycouncil.org

Indeed, this herein description of according to St. Basil, regarding the true nature of fasting, agrees with the teaching of St. Paul, as we heard today during the reading from his Epistle.
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FORGIVENESS SUNDAY

The first commandment that God gave to man was that of fasting, which Adam and Eve received but did not keep; and not only did they not become gods, as they had imagined, but they lost even that blessed life which they had, and they fell into corruption and death, and transmitted these and innumerable other evils to all of mankind. The God-bearing Fathers set these things before us today, that by bringing to mind what we have fallen from, and what we have suffered because of the disobedience of Adam and Eve, we might be diligent to return again to that ancient bliss and glory by means of fasting and obedience to all the Divine commands. Taking occasion from today's Gospel (Matt. 6:14-21) to begin the Fast unencumbered by enmity, we also ask forgiveness this day, first from God, then from one another and all creation.

According to St. Symeon of Thessalonika, "[The Lord's Prayer]...In the request for forgiveness is contained all the wisdom and power of the sacred Gospel, for it was primarily to forgive our sins and trespasses that the Word of God, our living Savior, came into the world...Because we sin even after baptism, we pray that He might forgive us our debts if we do not bear a grudge: for God has me as an example, and what I do to others, He does to me." and St. Germanos of Constantinople adds, "God, then, appoints the person who prays to be his own judge." In other words, if salvation depends on our forgiveness of others, if we do not forgive, we condemn ourselves.



Στα επισήμα έγγραφα της Αγίας και Μεγάλης Συνόδου της Ορθοδόξου Εκκλησίας (η οποία έγινε το καλοκαίρι 2016), υπάρχει ένα έγγραφο με τίτλο: <Η Σπουδαιότητα της Νηστείας και η Τηρησις Αυτής Σημεριν>, στο οποίο γνωρίζουμε ότι η νηστεία είναι πνευματική αγωνισμα. Αναφέρει τα λόγια του Αγίου Βασιλείου: <Νηστεύσωμεν νηστεύσαν δεκτην, ευαρεστον στον Θεον. Αληθής νηστεία είναι αλλοτριώσεις του κακού, εγκρατεία της γλώσσης, αποχή του θυμού, χωρισμός από επιθυμίες, από καταλαλιές, από ψευδούς, και από επιορκίες...Μεσα σε τετοια πνευματικά αγωνισματα ευρισκεται η αληθής νηστεία.> (Περί Νηστείας 2,7 PG 31– Παραγ. 3 του εγγραφου). Όλα τα έγγραφα της Αγίας Συνόδου ευρισκονται στο Internet: www.holycouncil.org.

Μαλιστα, η ως ανω περιγραφή της νηστείας κατά τον Αγ. Βασίλειον περί της αληθούς νηστείας, συμφωνεί με την διδασκαλίαν του Αγ. Παύλου, καθώς ακουσαμεν σημερα κατά την αναγνώσιν της προς Ρωμαίους Επιστολής του: <Αποθώμεθα ουν τα εργα του σκοτους, και ενδυσώμεθα τα οπλα του φωτός... Ενδυσασθε τον Κυριον Ιησουν Χριστον και της σαρκος προνοιαν μη ποιεισθε, εις επιθυμίας.> (Ρωμ. 13: 11–12).

Αυριο αρχίζει η Μ.Τεσσαρακοστή. Είναι εποχή να ανανεώσουμε την προσωπική μας σχέση με τον Χριστόν και με τους συνανθρώπους μας ώστε να ζήσουμε σύμφωνα με την αιτήσιν την οποίαν αναφώνεται κατά την τελετήν της Θ. Λειτουργίας: <Χριστιανικά τα τέλη της ζωής ημών, ανώθηνα, ανειπαισχυντα, ειρηνικά και καλήν απολογίαν την επί του φοβερού βηματός του Χριστού, αιτησώμεθα.> +Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

to the Romans: “Put off from yourselves works of darkness and put on the garments wearing the tools of the light...Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.” (Romans 13:11-12).

Great Lent begins tomorrow. It is a season for us to renew our personal relationship with Christ, along with that of our fellow human beings so that we can live according to the petition that we hear during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy: “Let us ask for a Christian ending to our lives, painless, blameless, peaceful and for a good defense before the awesome Judgment Seat of Christ.”

Forgiveness stands at the forefront of our defense at this awesome Judgment. It follows, then, that the heart of the Lord’s Prayer is, in fact, the theme of forgiveness. As we study the Lord’s Prayer, we come to understand that the Prayer itself is the proven formula for avoiding evil in our lives – and avoiding evil is necessary if we are to be prepared to meet Christ in His Kingdom.

Who forgives? God, Who is both the Creator of the heavens and the earth, is also “our Father” and cares for us, claiming us as His own. His Name is to be respected (hallowed) above all others – there are no other gods – and, indeed, we are not gods. We are weak creatures who require day-to-day strength. “Give us this day our daily bread” ...the “bread” is Christ our God. Christ is all we need for today’s bodily and spiritual sustenance. St. Athanasios says: “Christ taught us in this prayer to ask in the present day for the ‘epiousion arton’ (i.e., the bread to come) of which we have the first fruits in the present life when we partake of the flesh of the Lord.”

In truth, Christ is fully Man and fully God. As Man, He suffered what we suffer; as God He conquered death by death and gives us Eternal Life. It is God Who forgives us! It is God that forgives the people we do not want to forgive. That is why we must forgive them also, for they are not our property, but they belong to God. That is why St. Paul asks, “Who are you to judge another’s servant?” (Romans 14: 4)

From forgiveness come all the other things for which we pray. Forgiveness “leads us not into temptations” and resisting temptations “delivers us from evil.”

+FR. THEODORE

PRAY FOR THE SICK: George Aeder, Adele Gallade, Mike & Kathy Ligeros, Nicholas Kyriakou, Argyroula Krespis (Nick Krespis’ mother), Constantine Papapetru, Erika Aguilar, Nicholas Coussoulis (*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— Bless the Lord, O my soul, and everything within me, bless His holy name.

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

Verse 2— Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His rewards.

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

Verse 3— The Lord prepared His throne in heaven, and His Kingdom rules over all.

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— Praise the Lord, O my soul! I shall praise the Lord while I live; I shall sing to my God as long as I exist.

Refrain: *"Soston imas, Yie Theou, O Anastas ek nekron, psallontas si alleluia."*

Verse 2— Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob; his hope is in the Lord his God.

Refrain: *"Save us, O Son of God, Who is Risen from the dead, Alleluia."*

Verse 3— The Lord shall reign forever; your God, O Zion, to all generations.

Refrain: *"Soston imas Ie Theou, O Anastas ek nekron, 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 - *This is the day the Lord has made; let us greatly rejoice and be glad therein. Let heaven and earth praise Him, the seas and everything that moves in them.*

Sunday Resurrection Hymn: *Efrenestho ta ourania... [Tone 3]...(Let the Heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad, for the Lord has shown strength with His protective arm: by death He has trampled upon death and has become the Firstborn of the dead; He has delivered us from the depths of Hades, and has granted to the world His Great Mercy.)*

Hymn for St. George: *Os ton ehmaloton eleftherotis... (As the one who sets the captives free and the protector of the poor; as physician to the sick and champion defender of kings, bearer of trophies are you. O great martyr George, intercede with Christ our God that He may save our souls.)*

Kontakion Hymn for this Sunday: *Tis sofias odhigheh froniseos chorrighheh...(O guide to wisdom, provider of prudence, disciplinarian of fools, and defender of the poor, fortify and discipline my heart, O Master; You, give me a word, O Word of the Father. For behold, I will not hinder my lips from crying to You: O merciful Lord, have mercy on me who have fallen.)*

READINGS—EPISTLE: Romans 13: 11-14; 14: 1-4 / **GOSPEL:** St. Matthew 6: 14-21

Axion Estin. *"It is truly right to bless you..." (page 52 in the Divine Liturgy book)*

Communion Hymn— *Enite ton Kyrion...(Praise the Lord in the heavens; praise Him in the highest. Alleluia.)*

"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the well-spring of life"

Proverbs 4:23



ANNOUNCEMENTS

2017 ST. GEORGE GREEK FESTIVAL TODAY!

PHILOPTOCHOS – Save the Date. Our Membership Lunch will be on Saturday, March 18. Look for the invitation in the mail soon.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY – Circle **Sunday, March 19, 2017** on your calendar and plan to join us for the **St. George 2017 Spring General Assembly meeting.**

ST. GEORGE PARISH FEAST DAY / GOLF TOURNAMENT – The **St. George Feast Day** is **Sunday, April 23, 2017.** We are honored to host **His Eminence, Metropolitan Gerasimos.** As part of our Feast Day celebrations, we look forward to everyone’s support toward the success of our annual **St. George Golf Tournament - April 21 – 22, 2017.** Registration and Reservation Forms will soon be available.

KNITTING CLASS – The knitting group will resume on **Wednesday, March 8th @ 5:30 pm.**

MEN’S BIBLE STUDY GROUP – In response to interest expressed in forming a Men’s Bible Study group, we are scheduling the first Men’s Bible Study for next **Tuesday, March 7, 2017 from 6:30 p.m.- 8:00 p.m.** All men are welcome. The topic will be “The Bible Readings of Pre-Sanctified Liturgies.” The first Bible Study will be: Genesis 1:24-32 and 2:1-3. Study: 1) How was humanity created? What is the role of humanity? What is significant about the “Day of Rest”? Men are welcome at any weekly session. Prior participation is not required.

THE VOICE OF ST. GEORGE – March 2017 newsletter will be sent out on Friday, March 3rd.

WEEKDAY CALENDAR

Monday, February 27th..... **CLEAN MONDAY – GREAT LENT BEGINS**
Compline Service – 5:00 p.m.
Festival Appreciation Dinner-6:00 p.m.

Tuesday, February 28th.....Bible Study-10:00 a.m.

Wednesday, March 1st.....Pre-Sanctified Divine Liturgy – 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 2nd.....Choir Practice -1:00 p.m.
Parish Council – 6:30 p.m.

Friday, March 3rd.....Pre-Sanctified Divine Liturgy – 9:00 a.m.
First Salutations – 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, March 4th... ..**SATURDAY OF SOULS**
Orthros-8:30 a.m. / Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.
Vespers-5:00 p.m.

Next Sunday, March 5th.....Sunday of Orthodoxy (Procession with Holy Icons)

SPECIAL REQUEST – We ask that all avoid engaging in conversations during the course of the Divine Church Services. Conversations are distracting to those who want to pray and they show disrespect to our Lord.

*The Ladder for the month of February 2017 is donated by Annette Lewis
“In loving memory of Skip Lewis: 1 year of going to the Lord”*

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.

VESPERS FOR FORGIVENESS SUNDAY

There is no reading

from the Psalter.

Chanter/Choir: Lord, I have cried unto You, hear me. Hear me, O Lord. O Lord I cry out to You, hear me when I call out unto You. To You is due praise./ Receive my prayer as incense before You; I stretch out my hands to You as an evening sacrifice. Hear me, O Lord. *(The Deacon censes the icons and the faithful).*

From the depths I cry out to You, O Lord; Lord, hear the sound of my voice.

Let us make haste to humble the flesh by abstinence, as we set out upon the God-given course of the holy Fast; and with prayers and tears, let us seek our Lord and Savior. Laying aside all memories of evil, let us cry out and say: we have sinned against You, O Christ our King. Save us as the people of Nineveh in the days of old and in Your compassion make us partakers of Your Heavenly Kingdom.

If You should mark iniquities, O Lord, Lord, who would be able to be justified? Only from You is found mercy.

When I think of my works, deserving every punishment, I despair of myself, O Lord. Behold, I have despised Your precious Commandments and wasted my life as did the Prodigal. Therefore, I entreat You: cleanse me through the waters of repentance and, through prayer and fasting, make me shine with light. For, You alone are merciful. Do not reject me, O Benefactor of all, Who is supreme in love.

Glory be to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Let us set out with joy upon the season of the Fast, and prepare ourselves for spiritual warfare. Let us purify our souls and cleanse our flesh. As we fast from food, let us abstain also from every passion. Rejoicing in virtues of the Holy Spirit, may we persevere with love, and so be counted as worthy to behold the solemn Passion of Christ our God. And with great spiritual gladness, may we behold His Holy Passover.

(The Priest, Deacon and Altar Boys gather at the solea in front of the Royal Gates with the censer and candles)

Deacon: Wisdom. Arise!

Clergy and Chanters: O gladsome light of the Holy Glory of the Immortal Father, the heavenly, Holy, blessed Jesus Christ! Having come to the setting of the sun and having seen the evening light, we praise God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is proper that at all times we sing a song of praise in measured melody, O Son of God, Giver of Life. Behold, the universe sings to Your glory.

Deacon: The evening Prokeimenon.

Chanters: Turn not away Your face from Your servant, for I am in trouble; hear me speedily: hearken unto my soul and deliver me.

-Let Your salvation, O God, be a source of help for me.

Turn not away Your face from Your servant, for I am in trouble; hear me speedily: hearken unto my soul and deliver me.

-Let the poor see it and be glad.

Turn not away Your face from Your servant, for I am in trouble; hear me speedily: hearken unto my soul and deliver me.

All the Faithful Together: Lord grant that we may be kept this evening without sin. Blessed are You, O Lord, God of our fathers. Praised and glorified is Your Name forever. Amen. Let Your mercy be upon us, O Lord, even as we set our hope on You. Blessed are You, O Lord, teach me Your Commandments. Blessed are You, O Master, let me understand Your Commandments. Blessed are You, O Holy One, enlighten me according to Your Commandments. Lord, Your mercy endures forever; do not reject the work of Your hands. Praise is due unto You; worship befits You; glory is owed to You: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Deacon:

- Let us complete our evening prayer to the Lord...

- Help us; save us; have mercy upon us and protect us by Your grace....

- *(The remaining completion Litanies are exclaimed by the Deacon.)*

FORGIVENESS VESPERS, page 2

Priest: For You are a good and loving God and to You we give glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages.

Priest: Peace be unto all.

Deacon: Let us bow our heads unto the Lord.

Priest: *Lord our God, You inclined the heavens and descended for the salvation of all people. Look upon Your servants and Your inheritance. They have bowed down before You the awesome, yet compassionate Judge, not looking for human help, but awaiting Your mercy and in anticipation of Your redemption. Preserve them at all times; during this whole day and evening, as well as throughout the impending night and protect them from every enemy; from all adverse powers; from vain imaginations and from evil thoughts.*

May the might of Your Kingdom be blessed and glorified of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever
and to the ages of ages.

Chanters: Your grace has shone forth, O Lord, it has shone forth and given light to our souls. Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the season for repentance. Let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light, that having sailed across the great sea of the Fast, we may reach the Third-Day Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of our souls.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages.

The ranks of angels glorify You, O Mother of God, for You have given birth to Him Who is God and Who dwells with the Father and the Holy Spirit, Who created the angelic hosts out of nothing by an act of His Will. Pray to Him, All-Pure Lady, to save and illumine the souls of those who with true worship sing Your praises.

Priest: Now, O Lord, let Your servant depart in peace according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the presence of all people: a light to enlighten the Gentiles and glory for Your people, Israel.

All the Faithful: Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.(3) Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of the ages.

All-Holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, be gracious to us in our sins. Master, forgive our transgressions. Holy One, consider our weaknesses and heal them, for Your Name's sake. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

Priest: For Yours is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Chanters:-Hail, Theotokos, Virgin, Mary full of grace, the Lord is with You. Blessed are You among women and blessed is the fruit of Your womb: for You have given birth to the Savior of our souls.

*Glory...*O Baptist of Christ, be mindful of us all, that we may be delivered from our iniquities: for unto you is given grace to pray for us.

*Now and forever...*Pray for us, O Holy Apostles and all Saints, that we may be delivered from peril and afflictions: for you are fervent advocates before the Savior.

-Beneath Your tender mercy we take refuge, O Theotokos: despise not our prayers in times of distress, but deliver us from peril, for You alone are Pure and alone You are blessed.

Priest: THE DISMISAL PRAYERS -*The priest then asks the faithful to venerate the icons and to exchange one-by-one to each other the "kiss of peace", saying, "Forgive me."*



*You are cordially invited
to attend the*

St. George Philoptochos

Membership Luncheon

March 18, 2017

12:00 in the afternoon

At The Home of Kalitsa Xiteo

753 Mission Creek Drive,

Palm Desert, CA 92211

Please R.S.V.P. to

Carol Lyons 760-200-8509

*Directions to Kalitsa's Home: Take
Country Club Drive to Indian Ridge
Country Club and ask guard for directions.*

Kalitsa's phone: 760-200-9495