

APRIL 15, 2018

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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THE LADDER

SUNDAY OF ST. THOMAS



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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 AUTHORITY TO FORGIVE

There are at least two theological notes that sprout from today's Gospel passage: 1) Apostolic Authority, and, 2) the "grace" that comes from the doubt of St. Thomas.

Christ risen from the dead, when He showed Himself to the Apostles, said, "Peace be unto you. As the Father sent Me, I also now send you...If you forgive sins of any, they are forgiven..." (St. John 20:23). In this way, our Lord gave the authority to the Apostles to pray for the forgiveness of the sins of the faithful. This

authority, however, is not to be used willy-nilly, since the saving work of Christ is based on forgiveness of all people from Adam and Eve until His Crucifixion and after His Resurrection, as He forgave St. Peter who denied Him three times. The Apostles did not have the right to grant the opportunity for repentance to some people and not to others. However, the authority of the Apostles is weighed in accordance with one's repentance. This is the practice of the Orthodox Church to this day through the Holy Priesthood.

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HOLY CONFESSION AND THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS - Just as today's psychologists need a license to practice therapy, the Authority to forgive sins was given to the Apostles by our Risen Christ and it is passed on in the ordination of the Holy Priesthood - to bishops and their priests, who are the Sacramental "hands and feet" of the bishop in the life of a particular parish. To be clear, this Authority carries great responsibility before God, because its purpose is to gain the salvation of the penitent's soul. Therefore, the Authority is not an "ego privilege," but it can *only* be God-centered. This Apostolic Authority is given so that the Apostles and their successors have the authority also to *define* sins, as systems of thought and behaviors that are contrary to the saving ministry of Christ develop in society with the passage of time.

Indeed, when our Savior pronounced forgiveness to the paralytic (St. Luke 5:23), the Pharisees unwittingly proclaimed Christ as God, saying, "Who can forgive sins, but God alone." It is Christ our God Who forgives sins. However, for the purpose of protecting the integrity of the Church on earth, the Holy Spirit serves in guiding the Apostles with their right to hear the confession of sins to discern whether one is boasting of sins in the sense of one's self-proclaimed "freedom to sin," or whether one is truly repentant with faith and love for God.

+FR. THEODORE



Υπαρχουν τουλαχιστον δυο θεολογικες σημειωσεις, οι οποιες πηγάζονται απο την σημερινην Ευαγγελικην περικοπην: 1) η Αποστολικη εξουσια, και, 2) η <χαρις,> η οποια ερχεται απο την αμφιβολιαν του Αποστολου Θωμα.

Ο Αναστας εκ νεκρων Χριστος, την στιγμην οταν εφανερωθηκε προς τους Αποστολους, ειπε: <Ειρηνη υμιν. Καθως απεσταλκε Με ο Πατηρ, καγω πεμπω υμας...Λαβετε Πνευμα Αγιον. Αν τινων αφητε τις αμαρτιας, αφιενται αυτοις...>. Κατα αυτον τον τροπον, ο Κυριος εδωσε στους Αποστολους την εξουσιαν να προσευχονται για την συγχωρησιν των αμαρτιων του λαου. Αυτη η εξουσια, ομως, δεν χρησιμοποιειται αυθαιρετως, αφου το σωτηριον εργον του Χριστου βασιζεται στην συγχωρησιν των αμαρτιων ολων των ανθρωπων απο τον Αδαμ και την Ευαν μεχρι την Σταυρωσιν Του και μετα την Αναστασιν Του, οπως, εσυγχωρησε τον Αγιον Πετρον ο οποιος αρνηθηκε τον Χριστον τρεις φορες. Η εξουσια των Αποστολων ζυγιζεται συμφωνα με την μετανοιαν του καθε πιστου. Μαλιστα, η εξουσια των Αποστολων δεν εδωσαν στους Αποστολους το δικαιομα να χαρισουν ευκαιριες για μετανοια σε μερικους και οχι σε αλλους. Αυτη η εξουσια συνεχιζεται στην Εκκλησιαν δια μεσου της ιερωσυνης.

Η αμφιβολια του Αγιου Θωμα εγεννησε την ισχυρην του πιστιν, δια της οποιας ομολογησε την αληθειαν οτι ο Χριστος ειναι Θεος, οπως παρατηρουν οι θεολογοι του *Orthodox Study Bible* (σελ. 1465).

Η αμφιβολια του Αγιου Θωμα δεν ηταν αμφιβολια αντιστασεως προς την αληθειαν, αλλα αναζητησις για την αληθειαν. Ο Χριστος ειναι ο Θεος <της Αληθειας.>
+ Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

In reality the Authority that Christ gave to His Apostles *is* in part His own Authority as God. It is an Authority that is consistent with the two Commandments of Christ: 1) Love for God, and, 2) love for neighbor. Hence, the basis of this Authority is *love*, which means that the *purpose* of the Apostolic Authority (consistent with Christ's own Authority) is that of achieving the salvation of all nations: "*Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.*" (St. Matthew 28: 19). This particular gift of the Holy Spirit which our Lord gave to the Apostles (St. John 20:22) is associated with the Gift of Discernment, giving the Apostles the Wisdom of God.

To understand the true nature of Apostolic Authority, we have to understand the way in which our Lord has ministered to His people: *always with love so that they can dwell in God's glory*. This is obvious throughout our Lord's ministry, as it is with His relationship with St. Thomas, as we heard today in the Gospel passage. St. Thomas' expression of doubt was one of searching for the Truth, not one of denial of the Truth (as in the case of the Pharisees, noted by the theologians of the *Orthodox Study Bible*, pg. 1465). Indeed, our Lord often condemned faithlessness as a sin, calling out this world as a *faithless and sinful generation*. Given his desire to believe, Christ *forgave* St. Thomas. Not only does Christ forgive St. Thomas, but He welcomes him to a knowledge of the Truth, to which St. Thomas responds by *confessing Christ to be God* and then taking the message of salvation to the ends of the world.

This same Divine Gift is an on-going Gift of the Holy Spirit—originally imparted to the Holy Apostles, and then *inherited* by the successors of the Apostles - the bishops of the Church, and, by extension, their priests, who are charged with the salvation of the faithful through the Sacramental life of the Church.

This is a part of the Apostolicity of the Orthodox Christian Church. The faith, life and teachings of the Apostles is to be *lived* by the members of the Church, making the Church "*One, Holy, Catholic (Universal), and Apostolic,*" as we say in the Creed. Let us therefore keep in mind that repentance and forgiveness gives each person the opportunity to live in the light of Christ's Holy Third-Day Resurrection from the dead.

FR. THEODORE

PRAY FOR THE SICK: George Aeder, Adele Gallade, Erika Aguilar, Jim Alex, Chris Laskaris, J.J. Richards, Chris Panopoulos, Nicholas Kontaxis, Atlas Palos, Matthew Gray, Tasso Zambaras (*Many faithful on our Prayer List face chronic/serious illness*).

HYMNS FOR THIS SUNDAY'S CELEBRATION OF THE DIVINE LITURGY:

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

Verse 1— Shout to God, all the earth. Sing now to His name; give glory to His praise. Sing now to His name; give glory to His praise.

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

Verse 2—: Say to God, "How fearful are Your works; in the greatness of Your power Your enemies will lie to You."

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

Verse 3— Let all the earth worship You and sing to You; let them sing to Your 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— May God be gracious to us, and bless us; may He cause His face to shine upon us.

Refrain: *"Soston imas Ie Theou, O anastas ek nekron, psallontas si alleluia."*

Verse 2 – That we may know His way on the earth, Your salvation among all the Gentiles. Let the peoples give thanks to You, O God; let all the peoples praise You.

Refrain: *"Save us, O Son of God, We arose from the dead, we sing to You, Alleluia."*

Verse 3 – May God bless us, and let all the ends of the earth be in fear of Him.

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— Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered, and let those who hate Him flee from before His face. This is the day the Lord made; let us greatly rejoice and be glad therein.

Sunday Resurrection Hymn: *Christos Anesti...(Christ is risen from the dead, by death trampling down upon death and unto those in the tombs, bestowing life.)*

Hymn for St. Thomas Sunday: *Esfraghismenou tou mnimatos...(O Life, You rose from the sepulcher, even though the tomb was secured with a seal, O Christ God. And though the doors had been bolted, You came to Your disciples, O Resurrection of all. Through them You renew a right spirit in us, according to Your great mercy.)*

Kontakion Hymn for this Sunday: *Ei ke en tafo katilthes...(Though You went down into the tomb, O Immortal One, yet You brought down the dominion of Hades; and You rose as the victor, O Christ our God; and You called out "Rejoice" to the Myrrh-bearing women, and gave peace to Your Apostles, O Lord who to the fallen grant resurrection.)*

READINGS: Epistle – 1 John 1: 1-7 / Gospel – St. John 20: 19-31

Instead of "Axion Extin:" *Se tin fayeenin lambadha ke Mitera tou Theou tin arheezeelon dhoxan ke anoteran panton ton pimahnnton en eemnis megalinomen. (You, the brightly shining lantern and the Mother of God, the conspicuous glory, You are superior to all creation. We hymn and we magnify You.)*

Coummunion Hymn: *Epehnee Ierousalim ton Kyrion ehnee ton Theon Sou See-ohn. Allilouia. (Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion. Alleluia.)*



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Spring General Assembly Meeting following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy

PHILOTOCHOS – Our General Meeting will be tomorrow Monday, April 16 at 11:30 a.m. The agenda includes lunch (donation of \$6.00), the speaker Sara Bryant and our meeting right afterward. On April 22 we will have our second Dessert Bake Sale. Our first one in February was very successful, however, we fell short of funds to purchase the AED Machine for the Church so we are having a second sale. Please let **Athena Snarskis** know what yummy dessert you will be sharing. We need Coffee Hour Sponsors in May; please see **Athena Snarskis and Pat Dalkas**. Save the date of May 6 for the Agape Celebration of Love for Kids 'n Cancer at the Newport Beach Country Club.

AHEPA – Now is the time for college students to apply for the **AHEPA 528 Fr. T. P. Theophilos Memorial Scholarship**. Every year scholarship awards from the **Fr. T. P. Theophilos Memorial Scholarship Fund** are awarded to deserving college students of our parish and community on AHEPA Sunday. This year, **AHEPA Sunday** will be observed on **May 20, 2018**. Please visit the AHEPA 528 website: www.ahepa528.org to download the Scholarship Application Form. Also, donations to this AHEPA Scholarship Fund are always welcome by contacting this website for more information.

WEEKDAY CALENDAR

- Monday, April 16th.....Philoptochos General Membership Meeting – 11:30 a.m.
- Tuesday, April 17th.....Bible Study -10:00 a.m.
- Thursday, April 19th.....Choir Practice – 1:00 p.m.
- Saturday, April 21st.....Vespers – 5:00 p.m.

“I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me.” Phil. 4:13

*The Ladder for April 2018
is sponsored by:
Eve Meek*

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.

2018 AHEPA SUNDAY



CHAPTER 528

AHEPA was founded on July 26, 1922 in response to the evils of bigotry and racism that emerged in early 20th century American society. They also assisted Greek immigrants to assimilate into mainstream society.

Today, AHEPA brings the ideals of ancient Greece, which includes philanthropy, education, civic responsibility, and family and individual excellence to the community. Although a majority of the membership is composed of Americans of Greek descent, application for AHEPA membership is open to anyone who believes in the mission of the organization.

2018 SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

Please go online ahepa528.org for scholarships or see a current AHEPAn or Fr. Ted at Church

SCHOLARSHIPS PRESENTED AFTER SERVICES

Applicant must be *active member or son/daughter of an *active member, in good standing, of AHEPA Chapter 528 and/or St. George Orthodox Church of the Desert steward.

**Please read scholarship for eligibility and be aware of all deadlines.*

Chapter 528 meetings every 2nd Wednesday of the month~6:30pm at St. George Church

Chapter President - Wynn Storton PDG --760.832.2825 Wynn@ahepa528.org;

Vice President - Nick Krespis

Secretary - Gus Kurupas; Treasurer - Harry Loukatos PCP ;

Spiritual Advisor - Fr. Ted Pantels ...Contact@ahepa528.org

SUNDAY MAY 20, 2018

MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR FALLEN BROTHERS:

2011— Fr. T. P. Theophilos, 2016—Steve Geotas, 2016—Stan Georgalakis,

2016—Steve N. Pisanos, 2017—Bob Maverick, 2017—George Tcharos

Fr. Theophilos Theophilos Memorial Scholarship Fund

Donations accepted at www.ahepa528.org, or mailed to: AHEPA 528 Scholarship fund PO Box 1735
Palm Desert, CA 92261-1735