

DECEMBER 22, 2019

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

74-109 Larrea Street

Palm Desert, California 92260

Website: www.go-stgeorge.org

Email: pdsaintgeorge@gmail.com



THE LADDER

THE SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 4755

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.

RESTORING THE IMAGE

“God so loved the world that He gave His Only-Begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have life everlasting.” (St. John 3:16). In sending His Only-Begotten Son, God chose the descendants of Abraham to be the people who would prepare the way for Christ to be born in the flesh. The people surrounding the lives of the Old Testament Prophets are honored today as we hear the genealogy leading to the birth of Christ in the flesh.

Because Adam and Eve disobeyed God,

they suffered damage of their own selves as being in the Image of God, the core of their being. As a consequence, people became disabled in their ability to comprehend God’s Love and to transmit God’s Love to the world. The Image of God within human beings was in need of being *restored*, and *saved*.

In his classic book, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, St. Athanasios writes: *“The Savior has worn a body; that being incorporeal by nature, and Word from the beginning, He has yet of the lovingkind-*

Continued on page 2

THE GENEALOGY OF OUR LORD – St. Matthew's book of genealogy of our Savior Jesus Christ begins from the lineage of Abraham (St. Luke's account runs back to Adam). The purpose for which the genealogy of Jesus is listed is to emphasize that Jesus is truly the Savior of all of humanity--past, present and future. *"This genealogy reveals that the Son of God so identifies with the human condition that He takes it on Himself and becomes part of it."* (Orthodox Study Bible, pg. 1266). Abraham is the father of faith in the One True God - the Creator, Who is good and loves us, having created us in His Image and Likenesses. The list of the ancestors of our Lord includes those who were righteous, as well as those who were not; men, as well as women; those of the “household of Abraham,” as well as Gentiles (people who were not of the Chosen People of Israel). Christ is God and, from within His own nature, He reveals the Diving Radiance of the glory of the Father and the Holy Spirit, as well. This is the radiance of God’s Love for all people and His Will that all people of all places and times are to have Eternal Life through Christ.

Salvation is a matter of the human will cooperating with the Divine Will through Christ our True God. The cooperation of the human will was (and is) offered by the Most Holy Ever-Virgin Mary.



Στο κλασικό έργο του, *Περί της Ενσαρκώσεως του Λόγου*, ο Άγιος Αθανάσιος γράφει ως εξής: <Ο Σωτήρ εφόρεσε σώμα, ενώ κατά φύσιν είναι ασώματος και Λόγος από την αρχή. Ακομη εκ της καλοσύνης και αγάπης του Πατρός παρουσιάσθηκε σε εμάς εν σώματι για την σωτηριάν μας...ενώ η αναγέννησις της κτίσεως είναι το έργο του Εαυτού Λόγου, του Οποίου την εδημιούργησε από την αρχή. Μάλιστα, δεν φαίνεται παράξενο που ο Πατήρ έφερε την σωτηριάν του κόσμου διά μέσου Αυτού του Οποίου τον εδημιούργησε... Ο λόγος για τον οποίον κατήλθε εις τον κόσμον είναι επειδή οι αμαρτίες προκάλησαν τον Λόγον του Θεού εξ αγάπης να έλθει εν τω Δικώ Του Προσώπῳ, το <απαύγασμα της δόξης> του Πατρός (η Εικόνα του Πατρός), ως ο Μόνος ικανός να ξανα-νεώσει τον άνθρωπον κατά την <Εικόνα του Θεού.> (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Τομος 4, σελ. 36, 38 & 43).

Ο Αγ. Ιωάννης Μαξιμόβιτς ετόνησε διά του βιβλίου του, *Η Προσκύνησις των Ορθόδοξων Χριστιανών Προς την Θεοτόκον*, <Στο Πρόσωπο του Ιησού Χριστού <ούκ έστιν άρσεν και θήλυ> (Γαλ. 3:28), και ο Χριστός έσωσε όλην την ανθρωπότητα, ... διά μέσου της Αναλύσεως Του ανυψώνεται όλη η ανθρωπίνη φύσις.>

Το θέμα της <ισότητος> πρέπει να κατανοείται από την Ελληνο-Ορθόδοξην άποψην. Η σωτηρία μας είναι δώρον από τον Θεόν και έχουμε όλοι την ευθύνην να το διαφυλάττομεν. <Η ισότης> σημαίνει ότι ο καθένας είναι υπεύθυνος εξ ίσου να αγαπά όλους με την αγάπην του Θεού... <επί γῆς ειρήνη και έν ανθρώποις ευδοκία.>

+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

ness and goodness of His own Father been manifested to us in a human body for our salvation...and that the renewal of creation has been the work of the Self-same Word that made it at the beginning. For it will appear to be not inconsistent for the Father to have brought its salvation in Him by Whose means He made it...The reason for His coming down was because our transgression called forth the loving-kindness of the Word, that the Lord should both make haste to help us and appear among us...The Word of God came in His own Person, that, as He is the Image of the Father, He might be able to create afresh Man after the Image." (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 4, pgs. 36, 38 & 43).

The humanity of Christ is of the flesh of the Most Holy Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary. He was Incarnated of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, as we state in our Creed. In his book, *The Orthodox Veneration of the Mother of God*, St. John Maximovitch reminds us, "In Christ Jesus 'there is neither male nor female' (Gal. 3:28), and Christ has redeemed the whole human race...and by His Ascension did the Lord raise up the whole of human nature." (Kindle Edition pg. 652).

The issue of "equality," then, should be understood from the Orthodox point of view. With the Incarnation of Christ, the fullness of our human nature is restored and we are gifted with salvation. In response, our responsibility is to preserve the Image of Christ our Savior in us, given that we are indeed created in the Image and Likeness, which is our true *identity* and *dignity*. This gift is lost if we fail to remember – and be *always aware* – that it is a gift of life for each of us and for each person in the world. Equality means that we are *equally responsible* to share the gift of God's Love *with* all, because it is given by God *for* all. In assuming this responsibility by taking up His Cross in our lives, we find meaning and worth in our own personal lives, which leads to every reason to seek wellness of soul and body. Genuine wellness is personal peace, which is then to be shared with all around us giving way to "peace on earth and joy to the world."

+FR. THEODORE

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, soson imas."*

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

Refrain: *"Tes presvies tis Theotokou, Soter, soson imas."*

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

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

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

Refrain: *" Tes presvies tis Theotokou, Soter, soson*

ANTIPHON II: *"Soson 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: *"Soson imas Ie 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 Arose from the dead; we sing to You, Alleluia."*

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

Refrain: *"Soson imas Ie Theou, O Anastas ek nekron, psallontas si alleluia."*

Doxa Patri ke Yio ke Aghio Pnevmati ke nin ke aei... *"O Monogenis Yios ke Logos tou Theou..."*

ANTIPHON III- *This is the day the Lord made; let us greatly rejoice and be glad therein.*

Sunday Resurrection Hymn: *Ote katilthes pros ton thanaton (Tone 2)... (When You descended to the realm of death, You, as Life Immortal, rendered to Hades a mortal blow by Your all-radiant divinity. And when You, from the inner depths and the darkness below did raise the dead, all the hosts of heavens did proclaim and cry out: O Life-giving Christ and our God we give glory.)*

Hymn for the Eve of the Nativity: *Etimazou Vithlehem...(O Bethlehem, prepare, Eden is opened unto all. And be ready, Ephrata, for the Tree of life has in the grotto blossomed forth from the Virgin. Indeed her womb is shown to be spiritually a Paradise, in which is found the God-planted Tree. And if we eat from it we shall live, and shall not die, as did Adam of old. Christ is born, so that He might raise up * the formerly fallen image.)*

Hymn for the Holy Fathers: *Meghala ta tis pisteos...(Magnificent are the accomplishments of faith! The holy Three Servants greatly rejoiced, as they stood in the fountain of fire, as if beside the still waters; and the Prophet Daniel appeared to be a shepherd of lions, as if they were sheep. At their entreaties, O Christ God, save our souls.)*

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 the 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 : *Ee Parthenos Simeron... (On this day the Virgin Maid goes to the grotto to give birth to the pre-eternal Word in an ineffable manner. Dance for joy, all the inhabited earth, on hearing. Glorify along with Angels and with the shepherds Him who willed that He appear as a newborn Child, the pre-eternal God.)*

Axion Estin - page 52 in the Divine Liturgy books

Communion Hymn- *Enite (Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise Him in the highest.)*

ANNOUNCEMENTS



MEMORIAL – Today’s Memorial Service is for the Eternal Rest and Salvation for the servant of God, **Anastasia Rellos (40 days)**, the beloved daughter of **Maria and Bill Rellos**. Also, today’s Memorial Service is for the Eternal Rest and Salvation for the servant of God, **His Eminence, Metropolitan Anthony (15 years)**. May our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ grant Eternal Life to **Anastasia Rellos** and **His Eminence, Metropolitan Anthony**. May He grant peace and comfort to **Maria and Bill Rellos** and to all of the faithful of our Holy Metropolis of San Francisco. **MAY THEIR MEMORIES BE ETERNAL!**

PHILOPTOCHOS – The Philoptochos Christmas Bake Sale continues today following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Koulourakia: \$7.00 per dozen; Christmas Bread: \$12.00 per loaf.

2020 CHURCH CALENDARS – The 2020 St. George Church Calendars are now available. Each of us is asked to please pick one up for our homes from our parish office.

ALTAR FLOWER BOUQUETS – The following is the Contribution/Dedication for this Sunday (representing our Christmas) -- Our beautiful poinsettias are contributed by:

--Mr. & Mrs. John Petalas in loving memory of John's mother Eleni, and father Stavros Petalas; may their rest be Eternal!

Merry Christmas to all, and may the glorious blessings, and peace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be upon you, and your families! **Louise Dobbs Barringer**, Altar Flower Coordinator

SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS CAROLING – Following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on Christmas Eve (day), our Sunday School children, **accompanied by their parents**, will join in singing Christmas carols to home bound parishioners. Following their caroling, they will join together for their annual Christmas luncheon at Towne Center Café.

2020 GREEK FESTIVAL FLIERS--“2020 Greek Festival Sponsorship/Ad Forms” are available in our parish hall. Buying and/or selling **sponsorships and/or ads** for our **2020 St. George Greek Festival Program Book** will insure the success of our Festival.

PARISH BOOK STORE -- Great last minute **Christmas gift giving items** are now available at our Parish bookstore. There are many **new items** and **all reasonably priced**.

WEEKDAY CALENDAR

Tuesday, December 24th.....EVE OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

Royal Hours-8:00 a.m./Divine Liturgy of St. Basil-9:00 a.m.

Sunday School Christmas Caroling – 11:00 a.m.

Wednesday, December 25th.....THE NATIVITY OF OUR GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST
Christmas Day

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

Friday, December 27th..... ST. STEPHEN THE FIRST MARTYR

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

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

EPISTLE: Heb. 11:9-10, 32-40 — Brethren, by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundation, whose builder and maker is God. And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated— of whom the world was not worthy—wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

GOSPEL: The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, and Ram the father of Ammin'adab, and Ammin'adab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Bo'az by Rahab, and Bo'az the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uri'ah, and Solomon the father of Rehobo'am, and Rehobo'am the father of Abi'jah, and Abi'jah the father of Asa, and Asa the father of Jehosh'aphat, and Jehosh'aphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzzi'ah, and Uzzi'ah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezeki'ah, and Hezeki'ah the father of Manas'seh, and Manas'seh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josi'ah, and Josi 'ah the father of Jechoni'ah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoni 'ah was the father of Sheal'tiel, and Sheal'tiel the father of Zerub'babel, and Zerub'babel the father of Abi'ud, and Abi'ud the father of Eli'akim, and Eli'akim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eli'ud, and Eli'ud the father of Elea'zar, and Elea'zar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations. The Birth of Jesus the Messiah Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emman'uel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

PHILOPTOCHOS CHRISTMAS BAKE SALE

Today...following the Divine Liturgy

Final opportunity before Christmas!

CHRISTMAS BREAD-VASILOPITA-KOULOURLAKIA

KOULOURLAKIA - \$7.00 per dozen

BREAD- \$12.00 per loaf

SAINT GEORGE 2020 GREEK FESTIVAL SPONSORSHIP & AD PROGRAM

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Personal Name Listing w/ Message -- \$100

Business Name: _____

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Phone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

Authorized Signature: _____

Make checks payable to:

St. George Orthodox Church

P.O. Box 4755

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Phone: (760) 568-9901

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Print personal ad below:

Absolute DEADLINE for Copy: January 20th, 2020

Electric submission of camera ready corporate logos
& names are accepted in most formats.

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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

8-10 East 79th St. New York, NY 10075-0106

Tel: (212) 570-3530 Fax: (212) 774-0237 — www.goarch.org -

Email: communications@goarch.org

Date: December 20, 2019

ARCHIEPISCOPAL CHRISTMAS 2019 ENCYCLICAL

Protocol No. 68/19

December 25, 2019
The Nativity of Christ

To the Most Reverend Hierarchs, the reverend priests and deacons, the monks and nuns, the Presidents and Members of the Parish Councils of the Greek Orthodox Communities, the distinguished Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Day, Afternoon, and Church Schools, the Philoptochos Sisterhoods, the Youth, the Hellenic Organizations, and the entire Greek Orthodox family in America

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

We rejoice in the Lord on this blessed Feast of the Nativity, for we proclaim in the hymns of the feast, "Heaven and earth are united today, for Christ is born!" (Great Compline) In a divine and wondrous act of His abundant grace, God has bowed the heavens until they touched the earth. All creation rejoices, for the love of the Creator has been revealed. The gates of Paradise have been reopened, and God's plan for our salvation is made known. The manger has become the throne of the Cherubim, for our God has clothed Himself in created flesh.

Throughout all the world, Orthodox Christians proclaim this truth through our worship. We continue to share that through the Holy Nativity, the Word is made manifest and dwells among us. *God has spoken to us through a Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom He also created the world.* (Hebrews 1:2) Today, He has come for our salvation. Christ has entered our humanity. The glorious Light of heaven now shines upon the earth, illuminating the hearts and minds of all who receive Him.

As we gather to offer our praise and thanksgiving to God, heaven and earth continue to be united. They are united just as the angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds with the good news of the birth of Christ. The heavens were opened, *and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!"* (Luke 2:13-14) Today, heaven and earth are united, just as the wise men from the East saw His star as a sign of the birth of the King of the Jews and came to worship Him.

Today, our world needs the light of the birth of Christ to shine in the darkness. Our world needs to see that in Christ heaven and earth are united, offering to all the grace of God, salvation, and the true nature of our being and purpose. His glorious birth unites heaven and earth by restoring our communion with God, overcoming the alienation caused by sin; and this divine revelation shows us the way to be transformed in the image and likeness of God. By being born in the flesh, Christ reveals the path to holiness, to the unification of heaven and earth within each one of us.

On this blessed and sacred day, may we rejoice together in the presence of Christ our Lord, who through His love for us was born of the Virgin Mary and is now crowned with glory and honor. I also ask that on this day and those that follow into a new year, that each of you commit to offering through your lives a witness of the unification of heaven and earth. Christ is born! We are called to glorify Him in all that we do. We must be like the shepherds who, after seeing Christ, *returned, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen.* (Luke 2:20) On this glorious Feast may we be inspired in seeing that heaven and earth are united, and may we go out and give *Glory to God in the Highest* and share the wondrous news of His birth for our salvation!

With paternal love in Christ,

A handwritten signature in Greek script, likely reading "Ελπίδοφορος", written in dark ink.

**† ELPIDOPHOROS
Archbishop of America**