

June 2, 2019

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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THE LADDER

THE BLIND MAN



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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.

GOD'S LIGHT REVEALS PARADISE

From today's passages from the Book of Acts and St. John's Gospel we find the themes of blindness (particularly, spiritual blindness) and enlightenment. The man who was born blind was healed by Christ and he gave witness regarding the Person of Christ to the "blind" Pharisees, who could not comprehend the reality that Christ is the Messiah. The woman sorcerer (or, "magician") in today's reading from the Book of Acts was deceived so as to "see" false visions of the future, when, in reality, she could not "see" God's divine enlightenment.

The human mind and soul are enlightened through Baptism (the washing away of sin and our spiritual re-birth) and Chrismation (the reception of the Holy Spirit).

The forty-day season after Pascha (Easter) is the "Day" of rebirth and enlightenment. Our lives in the Kingdom of God begin today: *"This is the Day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad therein,"* as we hear the antiphones just prior to the Entrance of the Gospel during the Divine Liturgy. This life consists of a *prayerful conscience*, in which we

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WHY DID ST. PAUL SEEK THE SILENCE OF THE WOMAN SORCERER?

Today's reading from the Book of Acts tells us about a woman sorcerer who was following St. Paul and the Apostles, crying aloud repeatedly: *"These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation."* In response, St. Paul turned and cast out the demon from her, thereby silencing her.

In his **Homily #35**, *On the Book of Acts*, St. John Chrysostom explains that her way of life was one of deception caused by a demon. St. John states, *"The demon wished in fact to make himself credible. [In this way], he uses deception for destruction."* The devil tricks us by trying to make us believe that he does not exist so that we won't believe in God. At the same time, by getting people to believe the words of a person living a life that goes against Christ's teachings, they would feel no need to hear the truth preached by the Apostles and they would be tempted to worship the woman sorcerer and her demons.

Only in the grace of the Holy Spirit, given through a contrite and sincere relationship with God on our part will our prayers be answered and our words be beneficial. By ignoring God's Commandments, our prayers go unanswered and demons deceive us.
+FR. THEODORE



Από τα σημερινά αναγνώσματα εκ των Πράξεων των Αποστόλων και του κατά Ιωάννην Ευαγγελίου, ευρίσκομεν τα θέματα της τυφλώσεως και του διαφωτισμού. Ο άνθρωπος που εγεννήθηκε τυφλός εθεραπεύθηκε από τον Χριστόν και έδωσε ματυρία περί του Προσώπου του Χριστού στους <τυφλούς> Φαρισαίους, οι οποίοι δεν εγνώρισαν την πραγματικότητα ότι ο Χριστός είναι ο Μεσσίας. Η γυναίκα <μάγος,> η οποία περιγράφεται στο σημερινό ανάγνωσμα εκ των Πράξεων, εξαπατήθηκε ώστε να <δει> ψευτικά οράματα του μέλλοντος, αν και στην πραγματικότητα δεν εγνώρισε την θείαν φώτιση από τον Θεόν.

Ο νους και η ψυχή του ανθρώπου φωτίζονται διά μέσων του Αγίου Βαπτίσματος (το <ξέπλυμα> της αμαρτίας και η ψυχική αναγέννησις) και του Αγίου Χρίσματος (η υποδοχή του Αγίου Πνεύματος).

Η σαρανταήμερη εποχή μετά το Πάσχα είναι <ημέρα> αναγεννήσεως και διαφωτισμού. Η ζωή στην αιώνιον Βασιλείαν του Θεού ξεκινάει από σήμερα: <Αὕτη ἡ ἡμέρα, ἣν ἐποίησεν ὁ Κύριος: ἀγαλλιασώμεθα καὶ εὐφρανθῶμεν ἐν αὐτῇ!> Η ζωή αυτή αποτελείται από μιὰ <συνείδηση προσευχῆς,> (δηλ.: συνείδηση που έχει παλμόν προσευχῆς) διά της οποίας γνωρίζουμε την φωνήν του Θεού μέσα μας.

Ο Αγ. Συμεών ο Νεός Θεολόγος συγκρίνει την κατάστασίν μας με έναν που εγεννήθηκε σε σπηλιά, φωτισμένη μόνον από μιὰ μικρή ρωγμή, επιτρέποντάς του να δει το φως του ηλίου και ένα όραμα <παραδείσου> έξω από το σκοτάδι. Όσο περισσότερο ανοίγει η ρωγμή (δηλ, διά της προσευχῆς), τόσο πίο πολύ είναι ο άνθρωπος συγκλονισμένος με την αγάπην του Θεού.
+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

are always aware of God's voice within us. It is this *prayerful conscience* - the conscience that lives with a *pulse of prayer* - that is at work in us so that, little-by-little, we develop an ever stronger relationship with Christ our God. The physical sight that the blind man received is only a prelude to the spiritual sight that allowed him to know the Lord. Spiritual sight (and insight) is a foretaste of life in God's Eternal Kingdom.

St. Symeon the New Theologian gives us a "down-to-earth" illustration of how we gain increasingly better vision of Paradise. In his "Homily 45," he compares our lives in this world with an individual who is born into a mythical cave, where there is only a small opening that allows the sunlight to flow inside, pushing away the darkness. Through this opening, one can see the bright sunlight illuminating a small part of the earth's splendor. The more the opening widens (figuratively, through prayer), the more one can behold "paradise," and, thus, the more one is inspired with God's love. Figuratively, the opening in "the cave" is brought about by the death and Resurrection of Christ our God, Who is the Light of the World; the rays of sunlight represent the gifts of the Holy Spirit, allowing us to fully participate in the life of Christ, Who is *the radiance of the Father*.

We always have a choice: either we can hide in darkness - in a world of falsehoods, deceptions, ignorance, and temptations, pretending that we are "okay" just the way we are - or, we can seek the knowledge of God through spiritual vision, with strength of will and through the cooperation of the Holy Spirit. This second choice is the only choice we can make for us to open the window to Paradise.

+FR. THEODORE

"At midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and every one's fetters were unfastened. When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." The jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out of their chains and said, "Men, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and he was baptized at once, with all his family." --Acts 16: 25 - 33

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.

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

Verse 2—Say to God, "How fearful are Your works."

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

Verse 3—Let all the earth worship You and sing to You.

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

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, and have mercy on us.

Refrain: *"Soston imas Yie 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.

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

Verse 3—Let the peoples give thanks to You, O God; let all the peoples praise You.

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

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

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

ANTIPHON III: *Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered, and let those who hate Him flee from before His face. As smoke vanishes, so let them vanish, as wax melts before the fire. So shall the sinners perish from the face of God. And let the righteous be glad. 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; O Christ is Risen from the dead, trampling down death by death and to those in the tombs bestowing life.)*

Second Resurrection Hymn: *To synanarchon Logon... [Tone 5]... (Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word, coeternal with the Father and the Spirit, Who for our salvation was born of a Virgin for He willed to be lifted up bodily upon the Cross, to endure death and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.)*

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: *Ei ke en tafo katilthes... (Though You did descend into the grave, O Immortal One, yet did You destroy the power of Hades and did arise, as Victor, O Christ God, calling to the Myrrh-bearing Women: 'Rejoice!' and giving peace to Your Apostles, O You Who does grant Resurrection to the fallen.)*

READINGS — EPISTLE— Acts 16: 16-34 / GOSPEL— St. John 9:1-38

Instead of "Axion Estin," *O Angelos evoh-a ti Keharitomeni... (The Angel cried aloud to the Lady full of grace: Rejoice, O pure Virgin; and again I say Rejoice. Shine, shine, O new Jerusalem. For the glory of the Lord has risen upon You. Rejoice and be glad, O Zion, and You, O pure Theotokos, exalt in the Resurrection of Him, Whom You did bear.)*

Communion Hymn: *Soma Christou... (Receive the Body of Christ; taste from the immortal fount.)*



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Coffee Hour: Mr. and Mrs. James Panos

MEMORIAL - Today's Memorial Service is for the Eternal Rest and Salvation for the servant of God, **Demitra (40 days)**, the sister of **James Panos**. May our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, Who arose from the dead, grant **Demitra** Salvation in Eternal Life and may He grant peace and comfort to her brother **James Panos** and the entire family. **MAY HER MEMORY BE ETERNAL!**

PHILOPTOCHOS – We welcome any of our parishioners to sponsor Coffee Hour throughout the summer. See **Pat Dalkas** to sign up.

SUNDAY SCHOOL - The End-of-the-Year ceremony for this year's Sunday School program will take place next Sunday, June 2, 2019, following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Following the ceremony, as is customary, the Sunday School students and their parents and maybe their grandparents will enjoy an afternoon of lunch and bowling, as they end the school year with fun and fellowship. Please contact Jim Christopoulos for directions and details.

MEMORIAL WALL AND GARDEN - Our plan is to have our Memorial Wall and Garden installed by no later than June 7th. Nameplate orders can still be placed. We have approximately sixteen spaces available. Please utilize the order form located in the church hall or see Rhonda Latkovic to place your order. Currently the price is \$175.00 per nameplate (up to 25 letters max). A Blessing Service and Memorial Service is tentatively planned to take place in the near future to commemorate the wall & garden.

WEEKDAY SCHEDULE

Tuesday, June 4th.....Bible Study - 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday, June 5th.....AHEPA Meeting - 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, June 6th.....THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD
Orthros-8:30 a.m.
Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.
Choir Practice - 1:00 p.m.

"And the blind man said to the Pharisees, 'He put clay on my eyes and I washed, and I see.' Some of the Pharisees said, 'This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.' But others said, 'How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?' There was a division among them. So they again said to the blind man, 'What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?' He said, 'He is a prophet.' The Judeans did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight, and asked them, 'Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?' His parents answered, 'We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself.' His parents said this because they feared the Judeans, for they had already agreed that if anyone should confess him to be Christ he was to be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, 'He is of age, ask him.' So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, 'Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner.' He answered, 'Whether he is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see.'...[Later] Jesus said to him, 'Do you believe in the Son of God?' Then he said, 'Lord I believe!' And he worshiped Him." St. John 9: 15-25,35,38

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.