

SEPTEMBER 8, 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 NATIVITY OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS

OUR IDENTITY AS SAINTS

Today, we *combine* our commemoration of the birth of the Theotokos with the upcoming commemoration of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on September 14th.

The record of the Theotokos' birth is handed down to us through Holy Tradition in the Apostolic book of the Second Century: *The Protoevangelion of St. James*. Like everyone of the human race, the Theotokos was born with the Original Sin of Adam and Eve, albeit that Her

birth was in answer to the prayers of Her parents, Joachim and Anna, who were childless. Their advanced age eventually prompted them to dedicate Her to the temple in thanksgiving to God - and, while growing up in the temple, Her soul was being prepared to receive a special calling from the Lord. Obedient to the announcement from the Archangel Gabriel, the Holy Spirit entered Her being, thereby purifying Her soul and body.

Her obedience is the expression of Her
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TODAY'S FEAST DAY: THE NATIVITY OF THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

The married couple, Joachim and Anna, was old and childless. They prayed fervently to the Lord for a child, since among the Jews childlessness was a sign of God's disfavor. In answer to their prayers offered in their unwavering faith in God, this elderly couple was blessed with the child who, because of Her own personal goodness and saintly spirit, would become the Most blessed Mother of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Although the source for the facts of Mary's birth is not among the canonical books of Scripture, we celebrate this Feast Day based on Apostolic Tradition. The Mother of God is born of human flesh and blood from God-loving parents. Upon Her the Holy Spirit descended and, through Her, Christ God was born into the world.

The feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos, therefore, is the Church's observance of the event of Her birth. It is observed in honor of the Holy Mother of God (Theotokos) Herself and of her righteous parents. With this Feast Day, we also acknowledge the very first preparation made for salvation of the world.



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.*

Σήμερα συνδυάζουμε τον εορτασμό της Γεννήσεως της Αγίας Θεοτόκου με την επερχομένη ανάμνηση της Υψώσεως του Τιμίου Σταυρού κατά τις 14 Σεπτεμβρίου. Η καταγραφή της Γεννήσεως της Θεοτόκου στον κόσμο μας παραδίδεται διά μέσου της Ιεράς Παραδόσεως των Αποστόλων, που ευρίσκεται στο Αποστολικό βιβλίο του Δευτέρου Αιώνας: *Το Πρωτοευαγγέλιον του Αγ. Ιακώβου*. Οπως και ο καθέννας του ανθρώπινου γένους, εγεννήθηκε η Θεοτόκος με το *Προπατορικό Αμάρτημα* του Αδάμ και της Ευας, αν και η γεννήσις της Παναγίας ήταν μία απάντηση στις προσευχές των γονίων Της – του Ιωακείμ και της Αννας, οι οποίοι ήσαν άτεκνοι. Τελικώς, αφιέρωσαν την Αγίαν Παναγίαν στον ναόν με ευχαριστία προς τον Θεόν – και, ενώ εμεγάλωσε στον ναόν του Θεού, η ψυχή Της έγινε αγνή, έτσι ώστε να υπακούσει με αγάπη στην αγγελίαν του Αρχαγγέλου Γαβριήλ. Διά της υπακοής Της εισήλθε το Άγιο Πνεύμα στην ψυχήν και στο σώμα Της.

Η *παρθενία* της Θεοτόκου περιλαμβάνει την ψυχήν και το σώμα Της – θαύμα ίσο με τον χωρισμόν της Ερυθράς Θαλάσσης κατά την εποχήν του Μωϋσή, ο οποίος επροφήτευσε την Σταύρωση του Χριστού όταν ανύψωσε τα χέρια του σταυροειδώς επί την Ερυθράν Θάλασσαν, ώστε να περάσουν οι Ισραηλίτες από την σκλαβίαν του Φαραρώ στην <χώραν σωτηρίας.>

Η σωτηρία μας ευρίσκεται διά μέσου της θελοντικής θυσίας του Θεανθρώπου Χριστού επάνω στον Σταυρόν από το Οποίο δίδεται σε εμάς το Τίμιο Σώμα και Αίμα Του διά του Μυστηρίου της Θείας Κοινωνίας.

+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

great love for God. It is not an expression of a simple compliance to duty. She considered it to be an *honor* to be God's servant, which prompted these words from the depth of Her soul: "*Behold, the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to Me according to your word.*" (St. Luke 1:38). With Her words, the Holy Spirit descended upon Her so that She would bring the Savior into the world. In Her purity, She was (and is) physically and spiritually Virgin before Christ's birth; during Christ's birth and after Christ's birth. While this seems unfathomable to us, it is a reality equal to the parting of the Red Sea at the time of Moses, who prefigured the Crucifixion of Christ by raising his arms in the form of the Cross over the Red Sea, so that the Israelites could go from Pharaoh's slavery to the Promised Land.

St. Paul likens the Church to Israel – the Chosen People (Galatians 6:16). It is by way of the Cross that we each have the honor of being among God's Chosen People. *Loving obedience* to our Lord in gratitude for this honor is the only way to serve humanity, following the blessed example of the Holy Theotokos.

The honor of serving Christ our God plays an important role in making up our identities. Popular talk about *self-esteem* is usually based on fantasies about ourselves, or opinions that others have about us. Our fantasies and the opinions of others are usually based on pride-oriented ideals having to do with our economic status; our talents; our heritage, etc. – all of which are, therefore, "worldly." St. Paul, however, tells us that his *self-esteem* is founded on the Cross of Christ, the power of which guided him through life to become a Saint, which is his ultimate identity; for, we know of his identity in no other way than in the fact that he is a Saint of Christ our God. May this become *our* personal identity, as well.

The Holy Spirit emanates from our Lord's Cross. Our true identity at the core comes from the Holy Spirit. As the Holy Spirit descended to the Theotokos, in like manner the Holy Spirit descends upon the Holy Gifts during the Divine Liturgy. The Body and Blood of Christ is given to us from the Cross – and, through the Sacrament of Holy Communion, Christ our God abides in us and we abide in Him, so that, like the Theotokos, we can present Christ our Savior to the whole world.

+FR. THEODORE

SUNDAY SCHOOL REGISTRATION - Sunday School classes return from summer break with the first Sunday of Sunday School being in two weeks: **Sunday, September 22, 2019**. Those who have not already received Registration forms may contact Fr. Ted or Dr. Jim Christopoulos. Over the next few weeks, we want all parents to register their children for Sunday School.

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

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

Verse 1— Remember David, O Lord, and all his meekness. Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah; we found it in the plains of the wood.

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

Verse 2- Glorious things were said concerning you, O city of God.

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

Verse 3- God is in her midst; she shall not be shaken.

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, soston"*

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

Verse 1- The Lord swore to David this truth, and He shall not reject it. I shall set upon your throne one from the fruit of your loins.

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

Verse 2 -There I shall cause to spring up a horn for David; there I prepared a lamp for my anointed.

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

Verse 3 - The Lord has chosen Zion; He chose her for His dwelling.

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

Doxa Patri ke Yio ke Aghio Pnevmati ke nin ke aei ke eis tous aonas ton aonon. Amin. *"O Monogenis Yios ke Logos tou Theou..."*

ANTIPHON III- *Here I shall dwell, for I have chosen her. The Most High sanctified His tabernacle. Holy is Your temple, wondrous in righteousness.*

Sunday Resurrection Hymn: *Efrenetho ta ourania (Tone 3)... (Let all things above in heaven rejoice and let all things below on earth be glad. With all the might and strength of His arm an eternal deed the Lord did perform. Beneath His feet He has trampled down death by death and First Born of the dead has He become. From the womb of Hades has He delivered us and to all the world has granted His great redeeming mercy.)*

Hymn for the Nativity of the Holy Theotokos: *Ee Ghennisis Sou Theotoke...(Your Nativity, O Theotokos, imparted joy to the entire earth, for out of you has risen the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God. He nullified the curse and instead gave His blessing; and causing death to be neutralized, He granted us eternal life.)*

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 : *Ioakim ke Anna onidhismou ateknee-ahs... (Both Joachim and Anna from their sterility's stigma, and Adam and Eve from their mortality's ruin have been set free, O immaculate Maid, by your holy nativity. For this do your people hold celebration, redeemed from the guilt of transgression as they cry to you, "The barren one bears the Theotokos, the nourisher of our Life.")*

Instead of Axion Estin, *"Allotrion ton miteron ee parthenia... (Virginity is a state alien to mothers, and childbirth is foreign to those who are virgins. But in you, Theotokos, have both of these been accomplished. And therefore we of every race on earth unceasingly pronounce you blest.)*

Communion Hymn: *Potirion sotiriou...I will take up the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. Allelouia.*

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Coffee Hour: Stacey Argyros and Eleni Michaels

MEMORIAL - Today's Memorial Service is for the Eternal Life and Salvation of the servants of God, **Steve Michaels (3 years) and Gregory Michaels**, sons **Eleni Michaels and brothers of Stacey Argyros and Michael Michaels**. Also, today's Memorial Service is for the Eternal Rest and Salvation for **Loizos Michaels**, the husband of Eleni Michaels and father of **Stacey Argyros, and Michael Michaels**. We pray for Eternal Life and Salvation for **Steve and Gregory Michaels** and for peace and comfort for **Eleni Michaels, Stacey Argyros and Michael Michaels** and their families.

PHILOPTOCHOS - The **Philoptochos Board** will meet **tomorrow, September 9th at 11:30 AM** in the church hall. The **General Members meeting** will be held **next Monday, September 16th beginning at 11:30 AM** also in the church hall, starting with a light lunch for all attending. Meeting reminder emails or phone calls will be made a few days prior to the General Meeting.

MEMORIAL WALL NAMEPLATE ANNOUNCEMENT --The outstanding nameplate orders for the first phase of the Memorial Wall that were ordered back in May & June are in or near being finished by the manufacturer. We expect to receive them by September 10th and will install them immediately. As we enter the second phase of the memorial wall project, please note that the price of a nameplate is now \$225.00 (up to 25-28 letters) due to the increase in our cost to have them manufactured and sent.

CHANGE IN DATE FOR THE FESTIVAL MEETING! -- Please note that the **Festival Meeting originally scheduled for tomorrow evening at 7:00 p.m. has been RESCHEDULED!** The **Festival Meeting has been RE-SCHEDULED for WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2019 at 7:00 p.m.** See you there!

CONGRATULATIONS TO DESPINA KARALIS - We are thankful to God for **Despina Karalis**, who has been a recipient of our **AHPEA Chapter 528 Fr. T.P. Theophilos Scholarship** in recent years. She is now the **first "4+1 student"** to receive a **Master of Science in Epidemiology** from the prestigious study program of **Quantitative Biomedical Sciences** at Dartmouth University. This is a milestone for the students at Dartmouth.

WEEKDAY CALENDAR

- Monday, September 9th.....Philoptochos Board Meeting -11:30 a.m.
- Tuesday, September 10th.....Bible Study - 10:00 a.m.
- Thursday, September 12th.....Choir Practice - 1:00 p.m./ Parish Council Meeting- 2:30 p.m.
- Friday, September 13th.....Great Vespers - 6:00 p.m.
- Saturday, September 14th.....EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS (strict fasting day)
 - Orthros-8:15 a.m.
 - Exaltation of the Cross-9:15 a.m. (vasiliko plants are welcome)
 - Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

EPISTLE—Galatians 6: 11-18

Brethren, see with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who receive circumcision do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God.

Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

GOSPEL— John 3:13-17

The Lord said, "No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him."