

JANUARY 5, 2019

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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THE LADDER

THE SUNDAY BEFORE THE THEOPHANY



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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.

HOLY BAPTISM IS A LIFE-STYLE

Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, in his book, *The Mission of the Church in Today's World*, speaks of the tension that exists in St. Paul's admonition to be *in the world, but not of the world*. His admonition has always been at the same time a challenge that every Apostolic Christian has had to face -- and, as such, a challenge that the entire Church of Christ has always had to face. In essence, being *in* the world has always been a good thing. It means that we are alive in a world that has been created by a loving God and, as such, is *good*.

Being *of* the world, however, is a state

of a tragic choice, because it means that that we are *not of* God. As such, the world in our minds does not belong to God, but it is *ours*, without God. Rather than viewing the world as a beautiful creation that reveals the glory of Christ our God, the world is viewed as "supply" for consumption -- no longer viewed as paradise, but as a fountain of wealth for personal pleasure and simple "zombie" existence of the living dead.

Following the Baptism of our Lord, the Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness to be tempted by the

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THE KINDS AND FORMS OF HOLY BAPTISM -- For Orthodox Christians, there are at least three *kinds* of baptisms that are part of our way of life: 1), there is the performance of the Sacrament of Baptism itself; 2) there is the "baptism by blood" -- i.e., martyrdom -- which is not limited to martyrdom by physical death, but which includes our self sacrifice for the salvation of others, and, 3), our participation in the Sacraments of Holy Confession and Holy Communion -- given for the "forgiveness of sins, and life everlasting." Indeed, the Sacrament of Holy Confession is also known as the Sacrament of Repentance, by which we are baptized in our own tears of repentance, turning from sin and living a life of Christian virtue. (reference: Metropolitan Ierotheos of Nafpaktos, *Major Feast Days of Christ*, pg. 108).

In addition, there are three Canonical *forms* of Baptism:

- 1) The Rite of Baptism in Church in the Baptismal Font.
- 2) Clinical Baptism - a "death-bed" Baptism of a terminally ill patient, who cannot be removed from medical hospice/hospital support systems. The Priest baptizes by sprinkling Holy Water in the Name of the Holy Trinity.
- 3) Emergency Baptism of an infant near death. A Baptized Orthodox Christian can lift the baby three times in the air in the Name of the Trinity.



Μετά που εβαπτίσθηκε ο Χριστός στον Ιορδάνη, το Άγιο Πνεύμα Τον οδήγησε στην έρημο γιά να αντιμετωπίσει τους πειρασμούς του διαβόλου. Κρυμμένο πίσω από τον κάθε πειρασμόν από τους τρεις είναι η νοοτροπία του διαβόλου να καταστρέψει τον κόσμο ως θύμα της αυτο-λατρείας του, σύμφωνα με την ιδέα ότι ο κόσμος δεν ανήκει στον Θεόν – ο κόσμος, τάχα, είναι δικός του. Τέτοια νοοτροπία είναι καρπός επιλέξεως, όμως, και, μάλιστα, από εκεί έρχεται στον κόσμο η κακία, και, μαζί με την καταστροφή της Εικόνας του Θεού μέσα μας, έρχεται και η καταστροφή του κόσμου.

Οι φιλόσοφοι και οι επιστήμονες πάντοτε εκορόϊδευαν τους Χριστιανούς που κηρύττουν ότι όταν ο Χριστός εβαπτίσθηκε στον Ιορδάνη, η ανθρωπότης και ο κόσμος ολόκληρος ξανα-δημιουργήθηκαν. Αλλά ξεχνούν ότι χωρίς νερό δεν υπάρχει ζωή στον κόσμο. Ας ξανά διαβάσουμε την Αγία Γραφήν: *«Έν αρχή έποίησεν ο Θεός τον ουρανόν και την γήν. Η δέ γή ητο άμορφος και έρημος... και Πνεύμα Θεού έφέρετο επί τής επιφανείας των υδάτων...»* (Γεν. 1:1-2).

Με το Βάπτισμα του Χριστού αποκαλύπτεται η Αγία Τριάδα-Πατήρ, Υιός, και Άγιο Πνεύμα-και πάλι το Πνεύμα <αιωρείται> πάνω στα ύδατα φωτίζοντας πάνω στον Χριστόν σε μορφή Περιστεριού και ο κόσμος ξανα-δημιουργείται καθώς το Πνεύμα <αιωρείται> πάνω από τον Ιορδάνη — το ίδιο Άγιο Πνεύμα που οδήγησε τον Χριστόν στην έρημο έτσι ώστε να είναι ο Χριστός μαζί μας σε εποχές των δικών μας πειρασμών, αν μόνο αποκαλούμεν το Όνομά Του.
+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

devil, who, in turn tempted Him with three temptations -- to turn stone into bread; to tempt the love of God for self-glory, and to assume power over the kingdoms of the world. Hidden behind each of these temptations is the devil's mentality of consuming the world for self-glory as if it does not belong to God. The stones of the world -- the gold and diamonds -- are worthless, since we are not created to live by "bread" alone, but by the very Word of God. The temptation for Christ to cast Himself down in order to see if the angels would rescue Him, is akin to our own insincerity as Christians before God; for, while choosing to live carefree, self-centered lives, we often find ourselves praying for God to rescue us from the problems that we create for ourselves by not living in the reality of Christ's constant presence. Finally, choosing to seek power and wealth by ruling the kingdoms of the world, would make us enemies of God -- for there is only One Kingdom on heaven and on earth according to the Lord's Prayer. It is God's Kingdom.

Given an understanding of the nature of the temptations of Christ, we can understand from where evil enters into the world and, along with the corruption of the Image of God within us, there comes the corruption of the world.

Philosophers and scientists have always laughed at Christians for saying that when Christ was Baptized in the Jordan, humanity along with the whole world was re-created. But, they forget that, without water there is no life -- no world. Go back to the Book of Genesis 1:1-2: *"In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth. The earth was without form and was a desert place and...the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the water."* With Christ's Baptism, the Holy Trinity is revealed --Father, Son and Holy Spirit--and again the Spirit "hovers" over the waters, lighting upon Christ in the form of a Dove. All of creation is renewed as the Spirit "hovers" over the waters of the Jordan -- the same Holy Spirit that led Christ into the wilderness so that Christ our Savior can be with us in times of our own temptations, if only we call out His Name.

May the New Year be Spirit-filled as we seek our own spiritual renewal by living in the daily presence of Christ our God, thereby making the Sacrament of our own Baptism a life-style of Christ-centered values.

+FR. THEODORE

SUNDAY SCHOOL RESUMES TODAY-- We welcome our students back to their Sunday School classes today. Please note that "Godparent Sunday" will be observed two weeks from now: Sunday, January 19th.

HYMNS FOR THIS SUNDAY'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, 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 ek Parthenou tech-theis, 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 was born of the Virgin; 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 ek Parthenou tech-theis, 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: To fedron tis anastaseos kirygma (Tone 4)... (When the tidings of the Resurrection from the glorious angel was proclaimed unto the women disciples and our ancestral sentence also had been abolished, to the Apostles with boasting did they proclaim that death is vanquished ever more and Christ our God has Risen from the dead and granted to the world the Great Mercy.)

Hymn for the Sunday Before Theophany: Anefereto pote, o Iordhanis potamos...(Jordan River once turned back when Elisha struck its stream with his mantle in the wake of Elias's ascent; and the water was parted to the one side and to the other. And thus the fluid stream became a dry way for him, a symbol and truly a type of Baptism, by which we now pass over the streaming passage of the present life. And Christ appeared at the Jordan River to sanctify the waters.)

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 : En tis rheethreis simeron tou Iordhanou... (To the flowing streams today of River Jordan comes the Lord and cries aloud to John the Baptist, and He says, "Be not afraid to baptize me now; for I have come to save Adam, the first-formed man.")

Axion Estin - page 52 in the Divine Liturgy books

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS



PHILOPTOCHOS -- Today, our Philoptochos members will be passing a special tray in support the St. Michael’s Home for the Aged which is a ministry of our Holy Archdiocese. Also, Philoptochos calls on all to help this week with the beginning of our 2020 Festival preparations. Baking begins on Wednesday, January 8th.

ALTAR FLOWERS --The Altar Flower Contributor, and Dedication for this Sunday is as follows:

--Mrs. Annette Lewis - *For my husband Skip’s birthday; “I can’t image my world with out you”! Eternal rest.*

...Mrs. Louise Dobbs Barringer - Birthdays are a day of reflection...to celebrate who you are and who you will become. I give God all the Glory and Praise for my ‘Big Day’!

...**Note: There are only two Altar Flower availabilities - March 1, 2020 ,and May 31, 2020! Remember your love ones by dedicating a beautiful bouquet of flowers in memory of, anniversaries, graduations, etc. Your gifts are appreciated, we thank you!**

FESTIVAL MEETING- Tomorrow and Tuesday, help is needed to **set up for Festival baking**, which will **begin on Wednesday, January 8th**. Help from everyone and anyone is most appreciated. Start times for Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday is 9:00 a.m. Also, **January 20th is the deadline** for sponsorships and ads for the Festival Program book. **Very important Festival Meeting - Wednesday, January 8th at 6:00 p.m.**

CONGRATULATIONS TO MIA PETERSON!— Congratulations to **Mia Peterson**, daughter of **Mr. and Mrs. Silas “Pete” Peterson**, who has tried out and earned her position on the **Indio District Gymnastic Competition Team!** She worked for an entire year to perfect her routine and **will now be allowed to compete in 2020.**

THE VOICE OF ST. GEORGE & CHURCH CALENDARS- The printed version of the January 2020 *Voice of St. George* is available. We ask that, only for today, only those who do not use email see Fr. Ted after services today to pick up your printed copy of the January 2020 *Voice of St. George*. Also, those who have yet to receive a 2020 Church Calendar may take one copy(1 per household, please) by visiting our parish office.

WEEKDAY CALENDAR

Monday, January 6th.....**HOLY THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD**

Orthros-8:30 a.m. / Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m./Blessing of Water-10:45 a.m.

Tuesday, January 7th.....**ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST**

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

Wednesday, January 8th.....**Festival Baking Begins-9:00 a.m./ Parish Council-2:30 p.m./ Festival Mtg-6:00**

Thursday, January 9th.....**Choir Practice - 1:00 p.m.**

EPISTLE: 2 Tim. 4:5- -8 Timothy, my son, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry. For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing

GOSPEL: Mk. 1:1-8 --The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who shall prepare your way; the voice

of one crying in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.' John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

THE SERVICE OF THE VASILOPITA

Priest: Blessed is our God always, now and forever and to the ages of ages.

Faithful: Amen. (The hymn for St. Basil is chanted. See the front page of today's *Ladder*.)

Priest: Have mercy upon us, O God, in Your great mercy; hear us and have mercy.

Faithful: Lord, have mercy (3 times)

Priest: Again, we pray for all pious and Orthodox Christians; for our Archbishop Gerasimos and for mercy, life, peace, health and salvation – for forgiveness and remission of the sins of the servants of God: the people here present; for all Orthodox Christians who live in this city and parish; for the Stewards and benefactors of this Holy Church.

Faithful: Lord, have mercy (3 times)

Priest: Again, we pray for those who labor and who sing in this holy Church and for our families, spouses, children, parents, brothers, sisters and relatives – and for all of our brotherhood in Christ.

Faithful: Lord, have mercy (3 times)

Priest: Again, we pray for the personnel; the leadership, teachers and the staff of the St. Basil Academy and for their well-being in Christ.

Faithful: Lord, have mercy (3 times)

Priest: Again, we pray for the officers of our Philoptochos Society, who prepared this holy feast; for peace in the whole world and for the stability of the Holy Church and for the unity of all.

Faithful: Lord, have mercy (3 times)

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

Priest: Let us pray to the Lord.

Faithful: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: O Creator of all things and King of ages, the One abundant in mercy and goodness, Who accepted the gifts of the Wise Men in Bethlehem; Who is the Bread of Life and Who came down from heaven and Who puts times and years under Your authority and Who came down from heaven and Who holds our lives in Your hands: hear us as we pray to You on this day of our entrance into the New Year of Your goodness and +bless this bread+ which is offered for Your glory and in honor of our Father among the Saints, St. Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia. Look down from Your Holy Heaven and send down upon us Your heavenly gifts, for we have placed our hope in You, the Living God, unto the ages. Bless the St. Basil Academy and bless all that we do in our homes and in our parish. Enrich our lives and direct our steps to do Your Will, for we do not live by bread alone. Bless us, by the intercessions of Your Most Holy Mother, the Theotokos, our Father among the Saints, St. Basil, St. George the Great Martyr and our Patron Saint – and all the Saints, who have pleased You in every age. Amen.

The priest then prays: "Have mercy upon us, O God according to Your great mercy, we pray to You: hear us and have mercy." "Again we pray for mercy, life, health, peace, forgiveness and salvation for the servants of God..." cutting out a piece of Vasilopita for our Lord, the Theotokos, St. George, our Patriarch, Archbishop, Metropolitan, fellow clergy and the leaders of each parish organization, concluding with the Dismissal Prayers found on page 80 of our Divine Liturgy Books.