

JANUARY 12, 2020

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

**74-109 Larrea Street
Palm Desert, California 92260**

Website: www.go-stgeorge.org

Email: stgeorgepd@aol.com



THE LADDER

THE SUNDAY AFTER THE THEOPHANY

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.

LONELINESS IS CAUSED BY SIN

The last words of today's passage from St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians are: "...[Let us] attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God..." (Ephesians 4:13). At the same time, we find these words from today's Gospel reading: "...For the people who sat in the land of darkness and the shadow of death, a light has arisen." (St. Matthew 4:16). In some way, these two phrases are deeply united in terms of the spiritual life of Orthodox Christians: 1) unity of faith, and, 2) the light of Christ.

Sin isolates the individual to a chilling degree, creating great loneliness. For

this reason it seems to serve as an obstacle for one to confess his or her sin. Shame makes one feel as though he or she is not like other people, and they feel alone as if sitting in "darkness and death."

In truth, most sins are sins commonly committed by people in the "normal world." However, this does not justify any individual for committing any sins. Indeed, while many sins may be "O.K." in the "normal world," you or I are still not "O.K." – as if we are free from the turmoil that sins create in our own daily lives. There are many

Continued on page 2

HOLY CHRISMATION--Holy Chrismation is the Sacrament through which the seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit is imparted to the people of the Church. The use of Holy Chrismation Oil in the life of the Church comes from the Bible: "*The Lord said to Moses: 'Take the finest spices-12 pounds of liquid myrrh; 6 pounds of sweet-smelling cinnamon; 6 pounds of sweet cane; 12 pounds of cassia. Add one gallon of olive oil and make a sacred anointing oil, mixed like perfume.'*" (Exodus 30: 22-25) [measurements in modern units]. Our Ecumenical Patriarch, together with bishops of the Holy Synod, performs the Service of Blessing of Holy Chrismation Oil. (A priest is not to perform this Sacred Church Service.) The Chrismation Oil is then imparted to the priests of parishes throughout our Holy Patriarchate through their respective Archbishops and bishops.

Holy Chrismation Oil is used in the Orthodox Church: 1. To anoint the newly baptized Orthodox Christian Faithful through the Sacrament of Holy Chrismation (based on Acts 8:15-17: "*When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit...Then Peter and John placed their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit*"). 2. Non-Orthodox Christians are received into Orthodoxy through anointing with Chrismation Oil. 3. Orthodox church edifices are consecrated through anointing with Chrismation Oil.



Τα τελευταία λόγια της σημερινής περικοπής εκ της Επιστολής του Αγ. Παύλου προς τους Εφεσίους είναι: <...[Ἄς] καταντήσωμεν οἱ πάντες εἰς τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ...εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ.> (Εφ. 4: 13). Ταυτοχρόνως, εὐρίσκουμεν αὐτά τα λόγια ἀπὸ τὴν σημερινὴν Ευαγγελικὴν περικοπὴν: <...Ὁ λαὸς ὁ καθημέρνος ἐν χάρα καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου φῶς ἀνέτειλεν αὐτοῖς.> (Ματθ. 4:16). Κατὰ κάποιον τρόπον, αὐτὲς οἱ δύο φράσεις εἶναι βαθιὰ συσχετιζόμενες ἀπὸ τὴν ἀποψη τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου πνευματικῆς νοστοροπίας.

Τίποτα δὲν κάνει τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἀκόμη πιὸ ἀπομονωμένο ὅσο ὅταν αμαρτάνει. Ἡ αμαρτία ἀπομονώνει τὸν ἄνθρωπον σὲ ἓνα πολὺ ψυξικὸ βαθμὸ. Γιὰ αὐτὸν τὸν λόγον μπορεῖ νὰ υπάρξει ἐμπόδιον στὸν ἄνθρωπον νὰ ἐξομολογηθεῖ.

Ἡ ντροπὴ κάνει ἀνθρώπους νὰ αἰσθάνονται πως δὲν εἶναι σαν ἄλλους καὶ γιὰ αὐτὸ νοιώθουν τὴν μοναξιά σαν πως κάθονται σὲ <χώραν καὶ σκιᾷ τοῦ θανάτου.>

Ἀλλὰ, ὅλοι αμαρτάνουν γιὰ τοὺς ἰδίους λόγους ἐπειδὴ ὅλοι παλεύουν τὶς κοινὲς ἀνθρώπινες ἀδυναμίες. Ἡ σημερινὴ Ευαγγελικὴ περικοπὴ μας υπενθυμίζει ὅτι ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀρχισε τὴν διακονίαν Του με αὐτά τα λόγια γιὰ ὅλον τὸν κόσμον:

<Μετανοεῖτε! Ἦγγικε γὰρ ἡ Βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.> (Ματθ. 4:17).

Ὅλοι ἔχουν τὴν ἀνάγκην γιὰ νὰ μετανοήσουν. Γνωρίζοντας αὐτὴν τὴν πραγματικότηταν ἐρχόμεθα στὴν ἐνότηταν τῆς πίστεως με ἀγάπη. Ἡ μοναξιά μας διαλύεται μπροστὰ στὴν κοινήν διακονίαν μας ἐν Χριστῷ, ὁ Ὅποιος χαρίζει στὸν καθέναν ἰδικὰ τάλαντα γιὰ νὰ πραγματοποιηθεῖ τὸ Θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ. +Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

people who commit the same crimes. As “normal” as they may seem, they are still *not* O.K.

I remember, being a “popping fresh,” newly ordained priest, hearing confessions of students of the St. Demetrios Day School in Jamaica, Queens, New York, noticing that all of their confessions were virtually the same, such as: “I don’t listen to my parents...;” “I fight with my brother and my sister...;” “I took somebody’s lunch money...;” “I cheated on my tests...” – the list goes on. Yet, I can verifiably say that none of the students stood out as “freaks.” Even if they each felt alone in their sins, they were united in the participation of the Sacraments. They were part of one student body -- and more, they were children of parents who made up the “Body of Christ” as members of the Greek Orthodox Church.

I found myself doing two things: 1) reassuring each student that they were not sub-human, and, 2) pressing them to mature as persons through the effort of repentance. Their participation in the Sacrament of Holy Confession was based on *their unity of faith*, as St. Paul notes in today’s passage from his Epistle to the Ephesians. And, while none of them were “freaks,” each one was unique in his or her ability to comprehend the effect that his or her behavior had on other people and on the relationship with our Savior. Each one went his or her own way toward repentance *according to their own gift*, given by the Grace of the Holy Spirit.

Taking the opportunity to repent, people so often find themselves no longer sitting in the “darkness and the shadow of death,” but, in the “Light [that] has dawned.” They are no longer *alone* among most who are “united” in the “normalcy” of sin, while living privately in the “shadow of death,” but they are in *companionship* with loving people who are “diverse” in their unity of love for one another and for Christ our God, Who is the *Light of the World*.

With this “diversity” of God’s unique blessings to individuals, united in the love of Christ, we can appreciate the other person as God’s gift to us and we can sacrifice of ourselves for their salvation with thanksgiving to God. The experience of “unity in diversity” is to be lived in the daily life of the Orthodox Church and shared with the whole world around us.

+FR. THEODORE

GODPARENT SUNDAY – Next Sunday, January 19th is our **Sunday School Godparent Sunday**. We ask our parents and Godparents to partake of Holy Communion with their children and Godchildren and attend class with them on this day.

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

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

Verse 1-- In the exodus of Israel from Egypt, the house of Jacob. Judah became His sanctuary.

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

Verse 2- The sea saw them and fled, the Jordan turned back.

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

Verse 3- What is it to you, O Sea, that you fled, and to you, O Jordan, that you turned back?

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- I have loved, because the Lord shall hear the voice of my supplication. For He inclined His ear to me, and in my days I shall call upon Him.

Refrain: "Soson imas Ie Theou, O en Iordhani ipo Ioannou vaptistheis, psallontas si alleluia."

Verse 2 - The pains of death surrounded me; the dangers of Hades found me.

Refrain: "Save us, O Son of God, Who was baptized in the Jordan by John; we sing to You, Alleluia."

Verse 3 - The Lord is merciful and righteous, and our God has mercy.

Refrain: "Soson imas Ie Theou, O en Iordhani ipo Ioannou vaptistheis, psallontas si alleluia."

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

ANTIPHON III- Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endures forever. Let the house of Israel say that He is good, for His mercy endures forever. Let the house of Aaron say that He is good, for His mercy endures forever. Let all who fear the Lord say that He is good, for His mercy endures forever.

Sunday Resurrection Hymn: Ton 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 the Sunday After Theophany: En Iordhani Vaptizomenou... (As You were baptized in the Jordan, O Lord, then the worship of the Trinity became manifest, for the voice of the Father bore witness to You, naming You the Beloved Son; and the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the certainty of the word. O Christ God, who appeared and illumined the world, glory to You.)

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 : Epephanis simeron ti ecoumeni... (You appeared today to us on earth, O Master, and Your light was signed on us who cry aloud to You and say with understanding, O Christ our God: You came and shone forth, O Light unapproachable.)

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 -- This week's Festival baking schedule is as follows: tyropita and spanakopita – Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. each day. Philoptochos General Meeting: Friday, February 17th at 11:30 a.m.

OATH OF OFFICE-- Today the 2020 Parish Council members will have the Oath of Office immediately following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy: **Becky Allen, Paul Carkonen, Tony Dalkas, Linda Kallis, Rhonda Latkovic, Chris Maletis, Nick Kaperonis, Pete Snarskis, Tina Veroulis.**

TRIP TO GREECE –Our teacher of Modern Greek for Adults ("Survival Greek"), **Margarita Pagoulatos**, will be leading two group excursions to Greece: "**The Spring Experience**" -- from May 8th to May 26th and "**The Fall Experience**" -- from September 18th to October 6th. All who are interested in participating in these excursions are encouraged to speak with **Margarita Pagoulatos** at: **714-308-0266** or **Jose Alfredo Garcia** at: **310-988-3531** and see the enclosed "Spring Experience" flier.

GREEK SCHOOL – The Spring semester for lessons in Modern Greek ("Survival Greek") will begin on **Tuesday, January 21, 2020**, with classes being held at our parish hall from **6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.** Registration is now open to adults by contacting **Margarita Pagoulatos** at: **714-308-0266**.

FESTIVAL - The **deadline for all ads and sponsorships to be added to our 2020 Festival Program Book is January 20th!** That means that this is the final week for everyone to acquire Festival ads and sponsorships toward the success of this year's Festival. "Festival Program Ad & Sponsorship Forms" are available in our parish hall. We are now signing up **volunteers to help with baking, set-up and manning of Festival stations.** Review the enclosed "**Volunteer for the Festival Form**" and see **Jim Christopoulos** in our parish hall to **sign up.**

AHEPA SUPER BOWL PARTY -- Join the "**Super Bowl** " **Squares.** At the end of each quarter of the big game, prizes will be awarded to those who have taken a "square" showing the most accurate score. Join for **\$10 per square.** See the AHEPA table in our parish hall and also the enclosed flier.

WEEKDAY CALENDAR

Tuesday, January 14th.....Bible Study - 10:00 a.m.

Thursday, January 16th.....Choir Practice -1:00 p.m.

Friday, January 17th..... **ST. ANTHONY**

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

Philoptochos General Members Meeting - 11:30 a.m.

Saturday, January 18th.....**ST. ATHANASIOS THE GREAT**

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

EPISTLE: Eph. 4:7-13 -- Brethren, grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." (in saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

GOSPEL: Mat. 4:12-17 --At that time, Jesus heard that John had been arrested, He withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth He went and dwelt in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, toward the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned." From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

SAINT GEORGE 2020 GREEK FESTIVAL SPONSORSHIP & AD PROGRAM

Event Dates: Sat. & Sun., February 22nd - 23rd, 2020

Terms: Cash/Check/Credit

Attached is my check in the sum of:

Date: _____ \$ _____

Sponsorship/Ad Choice: _____

Sponsorship/Ad Choices Available in 24th Annual Greek Festival Booklet:

Sponsorship Level: (includes full page (8.5 x 11) **color** ad in program booklet, company logo in Festival Ad Program, signage at festival admissions gate & Sponsorship listing on Festival Website)

Sponsor Level ----- \$ 1000

Advertising Choices: (includes black & white ad in program booklet)

Full Page (8.5 x 5.5) ---\$ 500

Half Page (4.25 x 5.5) ---\$ 275

Quarter Page (2.125 x 5.5) ---\$ 150

Personal Name Listing ---\$ 35

Business Name: _____

Contact Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

Authorized Signature: _____

Make checks payable to:

St. George Orthodox Church

P.O. Box 4755

Palm Desert, CA 92261

Phone: (760) 568-9901

Email: 2016stgeorgegreekfest@gmail.com

Fax: (760) 568-9492

Print personal ad below:

Absolute DEADLINE for Copy: January 20th, 2020

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

SUPPORT THE 2020 GREEK FESTIVAL

(with a \$35.00 Personal Ad)

Please review the "example" personal ad page from another Greek Orthodox Church Festival that we are planning for our festival ad book.

For a \$35.00 donation, your family/name will be published on the page. Make checks payable to Saint George Church, memo festival ad. Fill out an ad form with how you want your family/name to appear on the page.

Deadline: January 12th, 2020

Please see Rhonda Latkovic or Tina Veroulis with any questions.

Rev. Fr. Andrew & Pres. Karen Lesko
V. Rev. George & Elaine Manneh
The Fields Family
Kara Egger
Barbara Phebus
M & D Fields Bakery
The Gaskins Family
The Moulis Family
The Hadjis Family
The Hitte Family
The Bouras Family
The Ingram Family
The Ronalds Family
The Vassilakis Family
Thelma Katsiyiannis
George & Mary Barbas
Dimitris & Maria Thiveos
Mr. & Mrs. Peter Roumpos
Dimitrios & Ioanna Alexopoulos
Leon & Leanda Stavros & Family
Tony and Effie Christoforou
Karen, Anthony & Katerina
Chris, Frances, Peter & Patricia
Zisis Kaniouras
Michael H. Hatzidakis
Saranti Hatzidakis
Fierros Hatzidakis
Dance - Daniel Anay
Hondouli - 10000 Emecula Parkway, Ter
Billy Hatzidakis - Guitar/Piano Lessons (323)

EXAMPLE

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Volunteer for the Festival

February 22nd & 23rd 2020

What Kind of Person Are You?

In this world there are four kinds of people: Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody.

There was an important job to be done and Everybody was asked to do it. Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did.

Somebody got angry about it because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Somebody would do it, but Nobody realized it wouldn't get done by Anybody. It ended up that not only was the job not done, but Everybody accused Somebody, and Nobody accepted the responsibility.

Moral: Everybody's job is Anybody's. Nobody can be Somebody unless they are willing to do Anybody's work.



Please sign up to volunteer in the church hall after liturgy on any Sunday. You may also complete the information on the back and leave it with Jim Christopoulos or Father Ted. Finally, you may email or call Jim at goofy_328@yahoo.com (note “_” between goofy and 328) or 760-902-8460. God bless!

For those of you who are unable to volunteer, but want to help support the festival, you may want to consider “sponsoring” a shift. For a donation of \$60, you can sponsor a paid worker. If interested, please see Jim or Father Ted.



Festival Volunteer Form

Saturday & Sunday, February 22nd & 23rd 2020

»Name: _____

»Phone Number: _____ »Email Address: _____

1. Availability (Please check all that apply):

a. Set Up the Week Prior to Festival _____

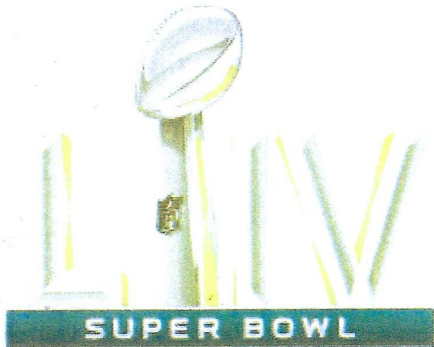
b. Saturday 2/22 _____ 10:30-3:30 _____ 3:15-8:15

c. Sunday 2/23: _____ 10:30-3:30 _____ 3:15-8:15

d. Tear Down the Week Following Festival _____

2. Please check off all areas that you would like to volunteer (we will try to place you in one of these areas, if possible).

Area	Chairperson(s)	Check if Interested
Set-up/Tear down	Doug Lyons	
Front Gate	Lou & Penny Karagianis	
Back Gate	Jim Christopoulos	
Greek Store	Rhonda Latkovic	
Kafenio	Margarita Pagoulatos	
Kids Area	Melissa Hawkins	
Loukoumathes	Krisann & Euthym Kontaxis	
Parking Lot Bar	Nick Krespis	
Courtyard Bar	tbd	
Dinner Line	Athena & Pete Snarskis	
Gyros	George Argyros & John Petalas	
Cooking	George Argyros & John Petalas	
Appetizers	Jim Christopoulos	
Yiayia's Attic	Chris Deleganis	
Accounting/\$ Run	Nick Kaperonis	
Kitchen/Food Run	George & Stacy Argyros	
Pastries	Ladies of Philoptochos	
Parking Lot Carts	Jim Christopoulos	



AHEPA 528 3rd ANNUAL

SUPER BOWL PARTY



FUN FOR EVERYONE

We will have doors open at 2:30 pm.
Game starts at 3:30 pm

Saint George Greek Orthodox Church
74109 Larrea St Palm Desert, CA 92261
\$20 Donation requested (*kids, no charge*)
Refreshments and fun provided!



<https://www.facebook.com/AHEPA528/>

Livestream after each Quarter to announce winner!

\$10 pool squares available

Donate online, AHEPA528.ORG

ALL PROCEEDS FROM THE EVENT WILL GO TO SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Please make any checks to AHEPA Chapter 528 or donate online

*Scholarship awards benefit members of
Saint George Church and the AHEPA 528 Family*

SUPER BOWL
FEB 2nd 2020

\$20 DONATION

and you get

- 1 Square in the Football Pool
- Refreshments
- Appetizers
- Live Game
- Cash Prizes

\$10 pool square*

**After first donation*

**REFRESHMENTS
AND FUN
PROVIDED!**



PLEASE SEE BROTHERS

**WYNN STORTON,
HARRY LOUKATOS,
PETE PETERSON or
NICK KRESPIS
FOR FURTHER DETAILS**

CONTACT@AHEPA528.ORG

760.832.2825



SUPER BOWL

EACH SQUARE COST \$10.00

50% of Pool to winners.

**Remainder 50% goes toward
George Tcharos Scholarship**

20% at 1st Quarter

20% at 2nd Quarter

20% at 3rd Quarter

40% at Final Score

**** Empty squares go to Scholarship program**

Pool numbers selected at start of game

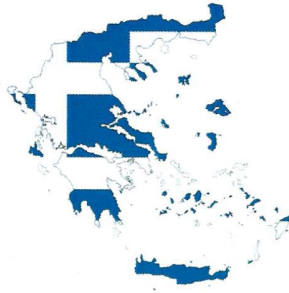
Winners can be announced by text

but will also be on Facebook live.

Text Wynn at 760.832.2825 for your numbers.



<https://www.facebook.com/AHEPA528/>



GREAT TRIP ACROSS GREECE

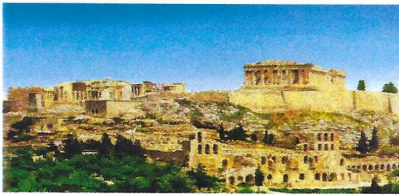


TWO 19-DAY TOURS AVAILABLE:

SPRING EXPERIENCE: **MAY 8 2020 TO MAY 26 2020**

AUTUMN EXPERIENCE: **SEPTEMBER 18, 2020 TO OCTOBER 6, 2020**

PALM SPRINGS – GREECE – PALM SPRINGS

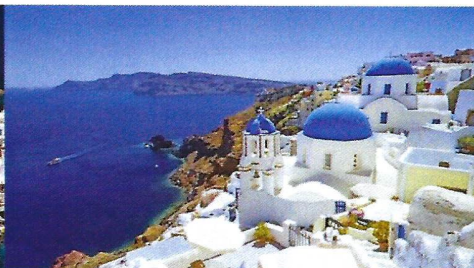


- **ACROPOLIS**, THE GREAT CITADEL OF **ATHENS**
- ❖ **METEORA**, IS A ROCK FORMATION IN CENTRAL GREECE HOSTING ONE OF THE LARGEST AND MOST PRECIPITOUSLY BUILT COMPLEXES OF EASTERN ORTHODOX MONASTERIES, SECOND IN IMPORTANCE ONLY TO MOUNT ATHOS.
- ❖ **DELPHI**, TEMPLE OF APOLLO, SANCTUARY OF DELPHI, PYTHIA
- ❖ **OLYMPIA**, SMALL TOWN IN ELIS ON THE PELOPONNESE PENINSULA, WHERE THE ANCIENT OLYMPIC GAMES WERE HELD.
- ❖ **ARGÓLIDA**, CORINTHIAN CHANEL, MICENAS EPIDAURO
- ❖ **MYKONOS**, THE EMBLEMATIC ISLAND WITH ITS MARVELOUS BEACHES
- ❖ **TINOS ISLAND**, THE SPIRITUAL GREEK ORTHODOX CENTER
- ❖ **SANTORINI**, THE MOST FAMOUS OF THE CYCLADES ISLANDS IN THE AEGEAN SEA
- ❖ **KEFALONIA**, THE LARGEST OF THE IONIAN ISLANDS IN WESTERN GREECE. HOME OF THE MONASTERY OF SAINT GERASIMOS

PRICE INCLUDES:

HEALTH INSURANCE

BAGGAGE INSURANCE



Reserve your space ASAP!

Complete Information at:

WWW.MARGREEK2020.COM



**Archpastoral Message of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon
Sanctity of Life Sunday
Sunday, January 19, 2020**

To the honorable Clergy, venerable Monastics, and pious Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America,

From ancient times, all who have believed in the One God have believed that He takes special care in the formation of each human being. As God Himself expressed to Jeremiah: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you (Jeremiah 1:5)."

In the moment of conception in the mother's womb, a human being comes into existence. Yet even before being conceived and formed, this human being is known by God. God exists outside of time, and already knows and loves each one of us personally, knowing what we will do and who we will become both in this life and in eternity. As Solomon proclaims, "God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living. For he created all things that they might exist (Wisdom of Solomon 1.13-14)." God wants us to be alive, and certainly, this is why we must speak against abortion and its legalization in our country: it is in opposition to God's loving plan to bring a human being into the world to live.

For just as He consecrated Jeremiah a prophet so that he might speak God's word, God brings each human being into the world with a unique purpose of speaking a unique word to the world, to reveal something to the world that will bring it closer to Him. Our lives are intended to be a period of sanctification, each one of us helping in the salvation and sanctification of our neighbor, and in this way being sanctified ourselves. Whatever occupations we have, together with the universal human callings to be loving children, siblings, parents or friends, can thus be holy and life-giving. For the purpose of all of our lives' activities is ultimately to become sanctified images of God by imitating God in caring for others. Because of this, we must give every human being the opportunity to live their life and work toward sanctification, just as we have been given that opportunity.

And what does this work of sanctification look like? Keeping in mind that David instructs us to "turn away from evil, and do good" (Psalm 33:15), we must begin to sanctify ourselves and the world by preaching the truth about evil, just as Jeremiah did. Above all, we reject Cain's first sin of murder, in all of its loathsome forms: murder against the unborn, murder through violence, murder by starvation or deprivation, and murder of the ill and elderly. We also reject greed, lust, and selfishness, and we reject harming others, being dismissive of others, and hating others. We then "do good" by being imitators of God in caring for one another, by speaking the truth in love, and by emptying ourselves for the sake of others. Remembering that "this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life" (John 6:40), we couple our efforts of care for humanity with a call to the world to believe in the Son of God, Jesus the Savior of the human race, who was "given as a ransom for all," because His Father "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:6, 4).

Yet we know that despite our efforts to do good, each of us falls at times and does evil. But with incredible compassion, our God who knew us before we were formed in our mother's womb still loves and respects us. He still loves each and every human being, despite our faults and mistakes, even those who have made terrible mistakes and have worked evil.

Thus, if we recognize that our purpose in this life is to become images of God, we must also forgive, help, pray for, and love all those who have committed wrong. In imitation of our loving God, whose mercy is immeasurable, we too must love those who have been involved in the evil of abortion, showing mercy and com-

passion to the poor, desperate, and confused parents who have committed abortions, and praying fervently for the repentance of abortion doctors and advocates everywhere. We must love them and forgive them their sins, knowing that God loves all of humanity and is willing to forgive all sins.

At the same time, we cannot allow any excuse for abortion. We firmly believe that a new person comes into being in the moment of conception, and because of this, we must ever strive to prevent abortions from happening, making sure our local communities know of the many Christian-supported pregnancy crisis services available to unprepared and confused young parents. In turn, our churches must ever be willing to love and help such parents and their unborn children.

Thus, this year, as we mark the sorrowful 47th anniversary of the legalization of abortion, we remember to hate the sin of abortion, and to make every effort we can to stop it from happening, while loving the misguided and confused ones who have been involved in abortions, knowing that God is willing to forgive all transgressions. In this way, we fulfill the purpose that God has given us in this life to become His images and presence in the world, while helping others – unborn and born alike – to have that same opportunity to come to “the knowledge of the truth” and fulfill their own lives’ God-intended purposes. For this “truth,” as we all should be reminded of again and again.

With love in Christ,

++Tikhon Archbishop of Washington Metropolitan of All America and Canada,

O.C.A.