

MARCH 1, 2020

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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# THE LADDER

FORGIVENESS SUNDAY

## Mailing Address:

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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.

## THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

*“Whosoever covers the sin, is one who seeks love; but whosoever repeats the sin, causes division of dear friends.”* (Proverbs 17:9).

This passage from Proverbs suggests that forgiveness is a matter of love. In fact, St. John reminds us that God is love. (1 John 4:7). Forgiveness, therefore, emanates from God’s love for us; from our love for God, and from our love for one another. Thus, without forgiveness, the main feature of our Orthodox Christian Faith—the Divine Liturgy itself—remains difficult to comprehend, regardless of the language used for its celebration. Forgiveness and love are identified

as one and the same. Indeed, the main message of the Gospel and, by extension, the Divine Liturgy, is that we are *worthy* of forgiveness. This is the theme of the Prayer of Thanksgiving that is said following the exclamation, *“Let us give thanks unto the Lord.”* (part of the *Great Eucharistic Prayer.*)

Accordingly, we are to be thankful and, therefore, *worship* Christ our God, as we say, *“It is proper and right to sing to You; bless You; thank You and worship You...You brought us into being out of nothing and when we fell, You raised us up again. You did not cease doing everything until You led us to heaven and*

*Continued on page 2*

**FORGIVENESS SUNDAY** – The first commandment that God gave to man was that of fasting, which Adam and Eve received but did not keep; and not only did they not become gods, as they had imagined, but they lost even that blessed life which they had, and they fell into corruption and death, and transmitted these and innumerable other evils to all of mankind. The God-bearing Fathers set these things before us today, that by bringing to mind what we have fallen from, and what we have suffered because of the disobedience of Adam and Eve, we might be diligent to return again to that ancient bliss and glory by means of fasting and obedience to all the Divine commands. Taking occasion from today's Gospel (Matt. 6:14-21) to begin the Fast unencumbered by enmity, we also ask for forgiveness this day, first from God, then from one another and all creation.

According to St. Symeon of Thessalonika, *“[In the Lord’s Prayer]...the request for forgiveness is contained and all the wisdom and power of the sacred Gospel, for it was primarily to forgive our sins and trespasses that the Word of God, our living Savior, came into the world...Because we sin even after baptism, we pray that He might forgive us our debts if we do not bear a grudge: for God has me as an example, and what I do to others, He does to me.”* and St. Germanos of Constantinople adds, *“God, then, appoints the person who prays to be his own judge.”*



«Οστις κρύπτει παράβασιν, ζητεί φίλιαν, αλλά οστις το επαναλέγει χωρίζει τους στενωτέρους φίλους.» (Παροιμ. 17.9). Αυτή η περικοπή από τις Παροιμίες υποδηλώνει ότι η συγχώρεσις είναι θέμα αγάπης. Ωστόσο, ο Άγιος Ιωάννης μας υπενθυμίζει ότι ο Θεός είναι αγάπη. (1 Ιωαν. 4.7). Η συγχώρεσις, λοιπόν, εξέρχεται από την αγάπη του Θεού για εμάς..από την αγάπη μας για τον Θεό...και από την αγάπη του ενός προς τον άλλον. Έτσι, χωρίς συγχώρεση, το κεντρικό χαρακτηριστικό της Ορθόδοξης Πίστεώς μας – η Θεία Λειτουργία – παραμένει δύσκολο να κατανοηθεί, ανεξαρτήτως από τη γλώσσα που χρησιμοποιείται στην εκτέλεσήν της. Η συγχώρεσις και η αγάπη εν Χριστώ συνταυτίζονται. Μάλιστα, το κεντρικό μήνυμα του Ευαγγελίου - και ως εκ τούτου της Θείας Λειτουργίας - είναι ότι είμαστε άξιοι για την συγχώρεση. Αυτό είναι το θέμα της Ευχαριστιακής Ευχής μετά την εκφώνησιν «*Ευχαριστήσωμεν τω Κυρίω.*»

Υπάρχει μια στενή σχέση μεταξύ της ικανότητάς μας να λατρεύουμε τον Θεό, αφενός, και να συγχωρούμε τους εαυτούς μας και τους άλλους, αφετέρου. Ο αγώνας μας να κατανοήσουμε το νόημα της Θείας Λειτουργίας συνδέεται με τον αγώνα μας να αναζητούμε συγχώρεση από τους άλλους, καθώς και να παραχωρήσουμε συγχώρεση σε άλλους.

Η πίστη μας στη συγχώρεση υπάρχει λόγω της πίστεώς μας στον Χριστό, Ο Οποίος είναι ο Θεός της Ζωής και της Αγάπης. Και, για αυτόν τον λόγο, έχουμε τους αγίους, οι οποίοι προτού έγιναν άγιοι, ήσαν και αυτοί αμαρτωλοί.  
+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

*granted us Your Kingdom to come...[and, therefore], we thank You for this Liturgy...*” Because Christ our God loves us, He forgives us, for which we are thankful. Our struggle to comprehend the meaning of the Divine Liturgy is related to our struggle in seeking forgiveness from others, as well as granting it to others. In short, if there were no forgiveness, there would be no Divine Liturgy.

The Divine Liturgy is our opportunity to *accept* God’s forgiveness, while, at the same time *participating* in the love of God, through which those around us are forgiven. We are not only *worthy* of receiving forgiveness, we are worthy to *participate* in God’s love by *forgiving others*. Participating in this privilege, is a matter of imitating Christ, Who commands us: “*First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*” (St. Matthew 5:24). Hence, the Sacrament of Holy Confession is a necessary preparation for participation in the Divine Liturgy.

Conversely, as St. Paul notes (Romans 13:11-14; 14:1-4), we are *unworthy* to condemn anyone, due to our own imperfections. With the Wisdom of our Savior, we can acquire a vision to watch over our own souls, rather than condemning others, since we will never know how our Lord will turn them to repentance. With this in mind, we can look past the failures of ourselves and others, and seek forgiveness from Christ for ourselves, through repentance (turning back to Christ) and others, through the virtue of love.

Our faith in forgiveness exists due to our faith in Christ our True God. For this reason especially, we have Saints, who before they became Saints, were themselves sinners, forgiven by our Lord, regardless of the opinions of others. This basic truth lies behind the Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian: “*O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, meddling, lust of power, and idle talk. But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love to me thy servant. Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own sins and not to judge my brother, for thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.*”

With these thoughts, we begin the season of Great Lent and the journey toward Pascha.

+FR. THEODORE

EPISTLE -Rom. 13:11-14; 14:1-4  
Brethren, salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. As for the

man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions. One believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats; for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for God is able to make him stand.

## 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, soston imas."*

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

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

**ANTIPHON II:** *"Soston 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:** *"Soston 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:** *"Soston 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:** *To fedron tis Anastasios (Tone 4)... (When the tidings of the resurrection from the glorious angel were 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 forever more and Christ our God has risen from the dead and granted to the world His great mercy.)*

**Hymn for St. George:** *Os ton echmaloton 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 :** *Tis Sophias Odhig-yeh...(O guide to wisdom, provider of prudence, disciplinarian of fools, and defender of the poor; fortify and discipline my heart, O Master. Give me a word, O Word of the Father. For behold, I will not hinder my lips from crying to You: O merciful Lord, have mercy on me who have fallen.)*

**Axion Estin...** page 52 in our Divine Liturgy books.

**Communion Hymn:** *Enite ton Kyrion...(Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest. Allelouia)*

GOSPEL- Mt. 6:14-21

The Lord said, "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not

be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. "



**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**MEMORIAL** – Today’s Memorial Service is for the Eternal Life and Salvation of the servant of God, **Dora Pawlowski (40 days)**, the beloved mother of **Jan Pawlowski**. Also, today’s Memorial Service is for the Eternal Rest and Salvation of the servants of God, **Stamatios and Anna Sarianou**, the beloved parents of **Emily Kayaloglou** (we include also her grandparents and relatives). May our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ grant Eternal Life and Salvation to **Dora Pawlowski** and to **Stamatios & Anna Sarianou**. May He grant peace and comfort to **Jan Pawlowski** and his entire family, as well as to **Emily Kayaloglou** and her entire family. **MAY THEIR MEMORIES BE ETERNAL!**

**PHILOPTOCHOS** - Our 2020 annual membership luncheon is in two weeks! Did you RSVP yet to Tina or Rhonda? The deadline is this week, March 4th!!! We hope to see you there! Philoptochos is sponsoring the meals for **Monday, March 2nd** at the CVRM under the “Business Angel” program. Our Philoptochos Board members will be volunteers on this day.

**ALTAR FLOWER BOUQUETS** - The Altar Flower Bouquets for this Sunday were lovingly offered by:  
– **Chris Delegans** - *“For my Yiayia Triantafilia Hanches, who fell asleep in the Lord at age 99 with her family beside her. She was my ‘second mother.’ My yiayia always loved me unconditionally.”*  
– **Dr. & Mrs. Michael Long** - *“We give Praise, Honor, and Thanks to Our Lord for the newest member to our family “Eloise Mary Overstreet” born on January 20, 2020 proud mother: Ashley Long Overstreet!”*

*Altar Flower Participants: Please check the Bulletin Board in the Parish Hall and confirm your dates for March by contacting Louise Dobbs Barringer (Altar Flower Coordinator).*

**STEWARDSHIP** - We “kicked-off” our 2020 Stewardship program on Sunday, February 9th. We look forward to receiving more Stewardship Cards over time. Receiving Stewardship now as the 2020 year is still beginning will go far in helping to meet the economic needs of our parish going forward.

**MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN**- Our new **Memorial Wall Fountain** has been installed at the corner of our church office edifice opposite the Memorial Wall, which enhances the area for prayer and meditation.

**AHEPA** – Applications for the **AHEPA Fr. T. P. Theophilos Memorial Scholarship** are available online at: [www.ahepa528.org](http://www.ahepa528.org), where information is also posted regarding offering donations for this scholarship fund. Applications must be sent in by **April** so that awards can be granted on **AHEPA Sunday in May**.

**TRIP TO GREECE** - *“The Spring Experience”* -- from May 8-May 26th. Contact **Margarita Pagoulatos** at: **714-308-0266** or **Jose Alfredo Garcia** at: **310-988-3531** and see fliers in our parish hall and the website: [www.margreek2020.com](http://www.margreek2020.com).

**WEEKDAY CALENDAR**

Monday, March 2nd.....FIRST DAY OF GREAT LENT (CLEAN MONDAY)  
Philoptochos Board Meeting- 11:00 a.m. at the Coachella Valley Rescue Mission  
Compline Service-6:00 p.m.

Tuesday, March 3rd.....Bible Study- 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday, March 4th.....Pre-Sanctified Divine Liturgy - 6:00 p.m.

Thursday, March 5th.....Choir Practice - 1:00 p.m.

Friday, March 6th.....Pre-Sanctified Divine Liturgy- 9:00 a.m.  
Salutation Service (First Stanza) - 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, March 7th..... SATURDAY OF SOULS  
Orthros - 8:30 a.m. / Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

## VESPERS FOR FORGIVENESS SUNDAY

*There is no reading*

*from the Psalter.*

**Chanter/Choir:** Lord, I have cried unto You, hear me. Hear me, O Lord. O Lord I cry out to You, hear me when I call out unto You. To You is due praise./ Receive my prayer as incense before You; I stretch out my hands to You as an evening sacrifice. Hear me, O Lord. *(The Deacon censes the icons and the faithful).*

*From the depths I cry out to You, O Lord; Lord, hear the sound of my voice.*

Let us make haste to humble the flesh by abstinence, as we set out upon the God-given course of the holy Fast; and with prayers and tears, let us seek our Lord and Savior. Laying aside all memories of evil, let us cry out and say: we have sinned against You, O Christ our King. Save us as the people of Nineveh in the days of old and in Your compassion make us partakers of Your Heavenly Kingdom.

*If You should mark iniquities, O Lord, Lord, who would be able to be justified? Only from You is found mercy.*

When I think of my works, deserving every punishment, I despair of myself, O Lord. Behold, I have despised Your precious Commandments and wasted my life as did the Prodigal. Therefore, I entreat You: cleanse me through the waters of repentance and, through prayer and fasting, make me shine with light. For, You alone are merciful. Do not reject me, O Benefactor of all, Who is supreme in love.

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

Let us set out with joy upon the season of the Fast, and prepare ourselves for spiritual warfare. Let us purify our souls and cleanse our flesh. As we fast from food, let us abstain also from every passion. Rejoicing in virtues of the Holy Spirit, may we persevere with love, and so be counted as worthy to behold the solemn Passion of Christ our God. And with great spiritual gladness, may we behold His Holy Passover.

*(The Priest, Deacon and Altar Boys gather at the solea in front of the Royal Gates with the censer and candles)*

**Deacon:** Wisdom. Arise!

**Clergy and Chanters:** O gladsome light of the Holy Glory of the Immortal Father, the heavenly, Holy, blessed Jesus Christ! Having come to the setting of the sun and having seen the evening light, we praise God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is proper that at all times we sing a song of praise in measured melody, O Son of God, Giver of Life. Behold, the universe sings to Your glory.

**Deacon:** The evening Prokeimenon.

Chanters: Turn not away Your face from Your servant, for I am in trouble; hear me speedily: hearken unto my soul and deliver me.

-Let Your salvation, O God, be a source of help for me.

Turn not away Your face from Your servant, for I am in trouble; hear me speedily: hearken unto my soul and deliver me.

-Let the poor see it and be glad.

Turn not away Your face from Your servant, for I am in trouble; hear me speedily: hearken unto my soul and deliver me.

**All the Faithful Together:** Lord grant that we may be kept this evening without sin. Blessed are You, O Lord, God of our fathers. Praised and glorified is Your Name forever. Amen. Let Your mercy be upon us, O Lord, even as we set our hope on You. Blessed are You, O Lord, teach me Your Commandments. Blessed are You, O Master, let me understand Your Commandments. Blessed are You, O Holy One, enlighten me according to Your Commandments. Lord, Your mercy endures forever; do not reject the work of Your hands. Praise is due unto You; worship befits You; glory is owed to You: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

**Deacon:**

- Let us complete our evening prayer to the Lord...

- Help us; save us; have mercy upon us and protect us by Your grace....

- *(The remaining completion Litanies are exclaimed by the Deacon.)*

## FORGIVENESS VESPERS, page 2

**Priest:** For You are a good and loving God and to You we give glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages.

**Priest:** Peace be unto all.

**Deacon:** Let us bow our heads unto the Lord.

**Priest:** *Lord our God, You inclined the heavens and descended for the salvation of all people. Look upon Your servants and Your inheritance. They have bowed down before You the awesome, yet compassionate Judge, not looking for human help, but awaiting Your mercy and in anticipation of Your redemption. Preserve them at all times; during this whole day and evening, as well as throughout the impending night and protect them from every enemy; from all adverse powers; from vain imaginations and from evil thoughts.*

May the might of Your Kingdom be blessed and glorified of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages.

**Chanters:** Your grace has shone forth, O Lord, it has shone forth and given light to our souls. Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the season for repentance. Let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light, that having sailed across the great sea of the Fast, we may reach the Third-Day Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of our souls.

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

The ranks of angels glorify You, O Mother of God, for You have given birth to Him Who is God and Who dwells with the Father and the Holy Spirit, Who created the angelic hosts out of nothing by an act of His Will. Pray to Him, All-Pure Lady, to save and illumine the souls of those who with true worship sing Your praises.

**Priest:** Now, O Lord, let Your servant depart in peace according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the presence of all people: a light to enlighten the Gentiles and glory for Your people, Israel.

**All the Faithful:** Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.(3) Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of the ages.

All-Holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, be gracious to us in our sins. Master, forgive our transgressions. Holy One, consider our weaknesses and heal them, for Your Name's sake. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

**Priest:** For Yours is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

**Chanters:**-Hail, Theotokos, Virgin, Mary full of grace, the Lord is with You. Blessed are You among women and blessed is the fruit of Your womb: for You have given birth to the Savior of our souls.

*Glory...*O Baptist of Christ, be mindful of us all, that we may be delivered from our iniquities: for unto you is given grace to pray for us.

*Now and forever...*Pray for us, O Holy Apostles and all Saints, that we may be delivered from peril and afflictions: for you are fervent advocates before the Savior.

-Beneath Your tender mercy we take refuge, O Theotokos: despise not our prayers in times of distress, but deliver us from peril, for You alone are Pure and alone You are blessed.

**Priest:** THE DISMISAL PRAYERS -*The priest then asks the faithful to venerate the icons and to exchange one-by-one to each other the "kiss of peace", saying, "Forgive me."*

CATECHETICAL HOMILY  
AT THE OPENING  
OF HOLY AND GREAT LENT  
+ BARTHOLOMEW  
BY GOD'S MERCY  
ARCHBISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE - NEW ROME  
AND ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH  
TO THE PLENITUDE OF THE CHURCH,  
MAY THE GRACE AND PEACE  
OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST,  
TOGETHER WITH OUR PRAYER, BLESSING AND FORGIVENESS  
BE WITH YOU ALL

\*\*\*

We offer hymns of thanks to the God of love as once again we enter Holy and Great Lent, the arena of ascetic struggle, fasting and abstinence, of vigilance and spiritual awareness, of guarding our senses and prayer, of humility and self-knowledge. We are commencing a new and blessed pilgrimage toward Holy Pascha, which has "opened for us the gates of paradise." In Church and as Church, as we behold the Risen Lord of glory, we all journey together along the way of deification by grace that leads to the heavenly goods "prepared by God for those who love Him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

In the Church, where "the eternal mystery" of divine Economy is realized, all things have their unwavering theological foundation and pure soteriological reference. The incarnation of God and the deification of man are the pillars of the Orthodox faith. We move toward our eternal destination in the love of Christ. Our God, Who is "always for us," can never be reduced to some "higher power" enclosed in transcendence and the grandeur of almightiness or its holiness. Instead, He is the pre-eternal Word of God, Who "assumed our form" in order to invite humankind to the communion of His holiness, of the genuine freedom. Man, who from the beginning "has been honored with freedom," is invited to freely accept this divine gift. In the divine-human mystery of salvation, our synergy also functions as a witness in the world of the blessing that we have experienced – "what do you have that you did not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7) – through the love for the 'brother.'

Holy and Great Lent is par excellence a period of experiencing this freedom bestowed by Christ. Fasting and ascesis do not comprise a discipline imposed externally, but a voluntary respect of ecclesiastical practice, obedience to Church Tradition that is not a sterile letter but a living and life-giving presence, a permanent expression of the unity, sanctity, catholicity and apostolicity of the Church. The language of theology and hymnography speaks of "joyful sorrow" and "the spring of fasting." This is because authentic asceticism is always joyful, springful and bright. It knows no dualism or division; it does not undermine life or the world. "Depressive ascesis" that leads to an "aridity of human nature" has nothing to do with the spirit of Orthodoxy, where the ascetic life and spirituality are nurtured by resurrectional joy. In this sense, fasting and ascesis contain an alternative proposal for life before the promised false paradise of eudemonism and nihilistic pessimism.

Another essential element of Orthodox ascetic spirituality is its social character. The God of our faith is "the most social God," "a God of relations." It has rightly been said that the Holy Trinity is "the negation of loneliness." The individualization of salvation and piety, the transformation of ascesis into an individual achievement, overlook the Trinity-centered essence of the ecclesial event. When we fast for ourselves and according to our whim, then fasting does not express the spirit of the Orthodox tradition. Spirituality is the life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit, Which is always "a spirit of communion." The genuine Orthodox spiritual life always refers to the ecclesial dimension of our existence and not to some "spiritual self-realization."

In adhering to the dedication of this year by the Holy Great Church of Christ to “the pastoral renewal and due concern for our youth,” we call upon our Orthodox young men and women to participate in the spiritual struggle of Great Lent in order to experience its anthropological depth and liberating spirit, to understand that Orthodox asceticism is a way of freedom and existential fulfillment in the context of the blessed life in the Church, whose core is to “speak the truth in love.” Our Orthodox youth is called to discover the holistic character of fasting, which is praised in the Triodion as “the commencement of spiritual struggles,” as “food for the soul,” as “mother of all good things and all virtues.” It is not simply an abstinence from certain foods, but a struggle against self-love and self-sufficiency, a sensitivity toward our suffering neighbor, and a tangible response of support. It is a Eucharistic use of creation, existential fulfillment, communion of life and solidarity. Asceticism, fasting, prayer and humility convey the fragrance and light of the Resurrection, from which they receive meaning and direction. As the quintessence of ecclesial life and its eschatological orientation, the Resurrection inseparably links the ascetic life with the Divine Eucharist, the sacrament of foretaste of the ineffable joy of the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The fact that the Divine Eucharist is preserved as the center of the life in the Orthodox Church is associated with the fact that the Resurrection is the foundation of our faith and the bright horizon of our ascetic spirituality as well as of our good witness in the world.

With these thoughts, we humbly invoke upon all of you the mercy and blessing of the God of love, so that we may pursue the race of Holy and Great Lent with devout heart, reach the saving Passion of Christ our God and, glorifying His ineffable forbearance, shine brightly for the feast of His splendid Resurrection that leads us from death to endless life.

Holy and Great Lent 2020  
 ++ BARTHOLOMEW of Constantinople  
 Fervent supplicant for all before God

<b>St. George Greek Orthodox Church of the Desert</b>		
<b><u>Preliminary 2020 Festival Financial Report</u></b>		
	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
<b>Festival Income</b>		
Advertising.....	\$8,505.00	\$3,400.00
Booth Fees.....	\$11,500.00	\$10,250.00
Pre-Sales & Donations.....	\$2,807.00	\$3,016.00
Saturday Income.....	\$86,527.10	\$69,508.12
Sunday Income.....	\$109,967.15	\$78,398.60
Post-Festival Sales.....	<u>\$500.00</u>	<u>\$5,014.70</u>
<b>TOTAL FESTIVAL INCOME.....</b>	<b><u>\$219,806.25</u></b>	<b><u>\$169,587.42</u></b>
<b><i>Preliminary Un-Audited Amounts</i></b>		
<b>NICK A. KAPERONIS,</b>		
<b>Parish Treasurer</b>		



MARCH  
14



**LADIES PHILOPTOCHOS  
MEMBERSHIP LUNCHEON  
PLEASE JOIN US!**

**Kontaxis Residence**

**Sat. Mar. 14th at 11:30 am - 2:00 pm**

**Address: 38225 Vista Del Sol, Rancho Mirage (see map on back)**

**RSVP - BY PHONE OR EMAIL TO TINA OR RHONDA  
BY MARCH 4TH, 2020**

tel.: Tina 409-431-9516 or Rhonda 714-875-4661

email: [tveroulis@aim.com](mailto:tveroulis@aim.com), [r.s.fleminglatkovic@gmail.com](mailto:r.s.fleminglatkovic@gmail.com)

RSVP BY MARCH 4TH, 2020