

OCTOBER 25, 2020

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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THE LADDER

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P.O. Box 4755
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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 CONVERSION EXPERIENCE

The "conversion experience" of St. Paul on the road to Damascus reminds us that we are imbued with the ability to respond to God's love and change our mindset and way of life from "self-centeredness" to "God-centeredness." While on the surface, St. Paul has a strong sense of worthlessness in terms of being counted among the Apostles, in reality, Christ gave him great worth as a result of his repentance, by which he changed from being an enemy of Christ to being a friend of Christ.

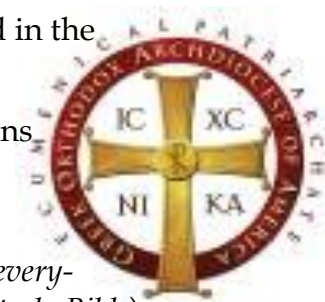
Like St. Paul, we also express humility as we approach Christ - since we pray: *"I believe, O Lord, and I confess that You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God, Who came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief...Make me worthy without condemnation to partake of Your Most Pure Mysteries..."* The sense of self-worth that the Lord gives us should not be understood as a "special privilege". Like St. Paul, we must be humble participants in the community of Apostolic Faith. St. Paul provides an example for

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HOW TO READ THE BIBLE – By reading and studying the Holy Bible, we experience the grace of our Lord. This experience is personal in much the same way as St. Paul's spiritual experience led to his miraculous conversion to Faith in Christ as God.

In his article "How to Read the Bible," citing expressions from St. Tikhon of Zadonsk and the 1976 Moscow Conference with Orthodox and Anglicans on the issue of "the attitude toward Scripture," Metropolitan Kallistos wrote: *"Combining St. Tikhon's words and the Moscow statement, we may distinguish the four key characteristics which mark the Orthodox 'Scriptural mind.' First, our reading of Scripture is obedient. Second, it is ecclesial, in union with the Church. Third, it is Christ-centered. Fourth, it is personal."*

1. Obedience: we receive God's word with wonder and great interest, giving way to an attitude of listening in order to follow obediently.
2. Ecclesial: we have received God's word only through and in the Church.
3. Christ-centered: Christ God is the unifying thread that runs through the entirety of the Bible.
4. Personal: *"He who is humble in his thoughts and engaged in spiritual work, when he reads the Holy Scriptures, will apply everything to himself and not to his neighbor."* (Source: Orthodox Study Bible).



Η λεγόμενη «εμπειρία μετατροπής» του Αγίου Παύλου που πραγματοποιήθηκε στην οδόν προς την Δαμασκό μας υπενθυμίζει ότι είμεθα διαποτισμένοι με την ικανότητα να ανταποκριθούμε στην αγάπη του Θεού και να αλλάξουμε τη νοοτροπία και τον τρόπο ζωής μας από ζωή «εγωκεντρισμού» σε ζωή «Θεοκεντρισμού.» Ενώ στην επιφάνεια, ο Άγιος Παύλος έχει ένα ισχυρό αίσθημα αναξιοτήτος όσον αφορά την καταμέτρηση του μεταξύ των Αποστόλων, στην πραγματικότητα, ο Χριστός τον έδωσε μεγάλη αξία ως αποτέλεσμα της μετανοίας του, διά της οποίας άλλαξε από το να είναι εχθρός του Χριστού στο να είναι φίλος του Χριστού.

Όπως ο Άγιος Παύλος, εκφράζουμε επίσης ταπεινότητα καθώς πλησιάζουμε τον Χριστό - αφού προσευχόμεθα: «Πιστεύω Κύριε, και ομολογώ ότι συ ει αληθώς ο Χριστός, ο Υιός του Θεού του ζώντος, ο ελθών εις τον κόσμον αμαρτωλούς σώσαι, ων πρώτος εimi εγω...αξίωσον με ακατακρίτως μετασχέιν των αγράντων Σου Μυστηρίων..» Η μεγάλη αξία που μας δίνει ατομικά ο Κύριος δεν πρέπει να νοείται ως «διαίτερο προνόμιο». Όπως ο Άγιος Παύλος, πρέπει να βρεθούμε στην «Κοινότητα της Πίστεως», που είναι η Εκκλησία. Ας παρατηρήσουμε ότι, αντί να κάνει ό, τι ήθελε από τον εγωισμό του, υποτάχθηκε ο Άγιος Παύλος στις οδηγίες των Αγίων Αποστόλων, Ιακώβου και Πέτρου.

Ας υποταχθούμε επίσης στην Ιεράν Παράδοση της Ορθοδοξίας, παρόλο που πολλοί σήμερα θέλουν να απορρίψουν τον Χριστό, όπως έκαναν οι πολίτες των Γαραδηνών για τους οποίους ακούσαμε στην σημερινή Ευαγγελική περικοπή.
+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

us in that, instead of doing what he wanted out of his sense of pride, he submitted to the instructions of the Holy Apostles, Sts. James and Peter. In doing so, he serves as an example for us to follow as we navigate our own lives. He illustrates three special spiritual qualities: 1) humility; 2) discernment, and, 3) accountability.

An encounter with Christ in His glory, having arisen from the dead, is truly awesome beyond words, as St. Paul admits in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians (12: 2-4). However, his reaction is one of humility. He considered himself to be the least among the Apostles (1 Corinthians 15:9). In his First Epistle to Timothy, among sinners, he considered himself to be the worst (1 Timothy 1:15).

In humility he sought consultation with the Apostles, Sts. Peter and James. Humility gives birth to the discernment of thoughts and ideas. How can we tell if our experiences, our thoughts, and ideas are of benefit to us or are dangerous for us -- whether of God or not? A good question; for, entire generations of Saints have advised that we are to remember that no one is immune to the "trickery" of the demons; for, their goal is to torment humanity as is seen from today's Gospel passage. Hence, it is humility that gives birth to discernment. In order to discern whether or not experiences, thoughts or ideas are from God we are to turn to the Church for divine wisdom, which is exactly what St. Paul did. Particularly when it comes to properly understanding the meaning of Biblical passages, we can choose to make up our own interpretations, or we can humbly choose to accept and apply the interpretations of the Bible offered by the Church down through the ages from the time of the Apostles.

Discernment is vital to our salvation, because we are accountable to God and to all others around us for what we do (or do not do) with our religious experiences, our thoughts and ideas. Turning to the Holy Orthodox Faith, as we study of the writings and lives of our Saints, we can find guidance in our lives as God's wisdom is imparted to us and we can live a saintly way of life as did St. Paul, and thus give a good account at the awesome Judgement Seat of Christ.

+FR. THEODORE

BIBLE STUDY-Tuesday, October 27, 2020 -10:00 a.m.

Join Zoom Bible Study Meeting by clicking on the following link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86247146688?pwd=UVpsZmx0CHNtaFhrd3QzZVo2ek42QT09>

Meeting ID: **862 4714 6688**

Passcode: **898242**

Or, using your cell phone, call: 1 669 900 6833 and dial in the Meeting ID and Passcode numbers.

We will be studying the following passage: St. Luke 16:19-31.

NOTE: When unable to attend Church Services in person due to state regulations regarding the Coronavirus or personal illness, follow the Divine Liturgy through live-streaming provided by various Archdiocese parishes at: <https://www.goarch.org/live-broadcasts>.



“Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord. Blessed are You at Your throne of the glory of Your Kingdom, seated above the Cherubic angels, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.”

“Shine within our hearts, loving Master, the pure light of Your divine knowledge and open the eyes of our minds that we may comprehend the message of Your Gospel. Instill in us, also, reverence for Your blessed commandments, so that having conquered sinful desires, we may pursue a spiritual life, thinking and doing all these things that are pleasing to You. For You are the Light of our souls and bodies and to You we give glory together with Your Father Who is without beginning and Your all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen”

EPISTLE - Galatians 1: 11-19---Brethren, I would have you know that the gospel which was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it; and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.

GOSPEL - St. Luke 8:26-39--- At that time, as Jesus arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, there met him a man from the city who had demons; for a long time he had worn no clothes and he lived not in a house but among the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him, and said with a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beseech you, do not torment me." For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the

man. (For many a time it had seized him; he was kept under guard, and bound with chains and fetters, but he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the desert.) Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. Now a large herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside; and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them leave. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. When the herdsmen saw what happened, they fled, and told it in the city and in the country. Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. And those who had seen it told them how he who had been possessed with demons was healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gadarenes asked him to depart from them; for they were seized with great fear; so he got into the boat and returned. The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but he sent him away, saying, "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

WEEKDAY CALENDAR

Today.....Sunday School via “zoom” - 11:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon

Monday, October 26th.....ST. DEMETRIOS THE GREAT MARTYR (church cleaning; no services)

Tuesday, October 27th.....Bible Study – 10:00 a.m. – “zoom” format

Wednesday, October 29th...Parish Council - 2:30 p.m.

NOTE: If anyone has a casitas or a 1-bedroom apartment to rent out, please call our church office at: (760) 880-5869, or (760) 568-9901.

Merry Christmas



Dear Parishioners,

Once again, our community of St George Greek Orthodox Church of the Desert will be preparing a Parish Christmas Card. We are certain that all of you will want to participate in this very popular and meaningful Christmas Blessing.

Please join the many families of our parish in expressing Christmas Greetings to fellow members and friends by completing this form. A donation of \$20.00 should be enclosed along with this form and made payable to St. George Greek Orthodox Church of the Desert. You can mail it to P.O. Box 4755, Palm Desert, CA 92261 or give to Tina Veroulis in the office. We would appreciate the return of the form by December 1, 2020

Please print your name, as you would like it to appear on the card on the line below.

Name: _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Amount Enclosed: \$ _____ Deadline: December 1, 2020



St. George Greek Orthodox Church of the Desert

Contact our parish office – 760-568-9901

P.O. Box 4755

Palm Desert, CA 92261