

DECEMBER 12, 2021

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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# THE LADDER

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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.

**DISTRACTIONS & DETACHMENT**

The banquet to which our Savior refers to in His Parable today is Eternal Life in His Kingdom. It seems paradoxical to hear people’s expressions of the desire to “get to heaven,” while at the same time offering up excuses as to why they fail to worship our Lord on Sundays. We must remember that the Liturgy is Paradise!

The excuses offered by those mentioned in our Savior’s Parable are based on distractions -- the oxen; the land; the wife (meaning “family prosperity” by today’s standards). Anxieties over possessions are great distractions in our effort to find

peace. “Family” is a distraction if we place such things as “family honor,” or “family wealth,” as more important than having Christ as a valued member of our family relationships.

The Saints of our Church, down through the ages, constantly spoke about detachment from such things as possessions, pride, and power. By the word “detachment,” they did not mean that we are to live as though material blessings and family relationships were not important. But, when it comes to our personal rela-

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**ST. SPYRIDON THE WONDERWORKER** --Today we commemorate St. Spyridon. He was simple in manner and humble of heart. When he was joined to a wife, he begat of her a daughter whom they named Irene. After his wife's departure from this life, he was appointed Bishop of Trimythos, and thus he became also a shepherd of rational sheep. When the First Ecumenical Council was assembled in Nicaea, he also was present, and by means of his most simple words stopped the mouths of the Arians who were wise in their own conceit. By the divine grace which dwelt in him, he wrought such great wonders that he received the surname "Wonderworker." So it is that, having tended his flock piously and in a manner pleasing to God, he reposed in the Lord about the year 350, leaving to his country his sacred relics as a consolation and source of healing for the faithful. -- Taken from our Archdiocese website: [www.goarch.org](http://www.goarch.org)

Note: We join together as a parish to wish **His Grace, Bishop Spyridon of Amastris**, “Happy Name Day!” as He officiates the Hierarchical Liturgy at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Northridge today. We pray that our Lord God and Savior will continue to bless Him in His ministry and that He grants to him many years -- “polla eti, Despota!”



Ο Δείπνος, τον οποίον αναφέρει ο Σωτήρ μας στην Παραβολή Του σήμερα, είναι η Αιώνια Ζωή στη Βασιλεία Του. Ένα πολύ παράδοξο πράγμα της εποχής μας είναι που ακούμε τον κόσμο να εκφράζει επιθυμίες για να «φθάσουν στον παράδεισο», ενώ ταυτοχρόνως προσφέρουν δικαιολογίες για να μην εκκλησιάζονται τακτικά.

Οι δικαιολογίες που προσφέρθηκαν από αυτούς σύμφωνα με την Παραβολή του Χριστού βασίζονται σε εγκόσμιες φροντίδες που αποτελούν εμπόδια στην πνευματική ζωή του ανθρώπου --τα οποία είναι, οι περιουσίες, οι πολυτέλειες, οι σπιτικές υποχρεώσεις, κ.τ.λ. Φροντίζουμε πιά πολύ για τις κοσμικές επιθυμίες μας παρά για όλα που χρειάζονται προς τιμήν του Χριστού .

Οι Άγιοι της Εκκλησίας ομιλούσαν συνεχώς για την απομάκρυνση από τα εγκόσμια ενδιαφέροντα που σχετίζονται με την υπερηφάνειά μας και τις προσωπικές φαντασίες μας. Με τη λέξη «απάθεια», δεν εννοούσαν ότι πρέπει να ζούμε σαν πως οι υλικές ευλογίες και οικογενειακές σχέσεις δεν έχουν αξία. Αλλά, όταν πρόκειται για την προσωπική μας σχέση με τον Χριστόν έχουν λιγότερη αξία.

Γνωρίζουμε τον Χριστόν διά της χάριτος του Αγίου Πνεύματος. Το να έχουμε το Άγιο Πνεύμα μέσα στην ψυχή μας είναι, όπως θα έλεγε ο Άγιος Παύλος, πολύ καλύτερο από το να είμεθα «μεθυμένοι από κρασί» (όπως σημειώνεται στην προς Εφεσίους επιστολή του), επειδή το Άγιο Πνεύμα είναι ζωογόνο, ενώ η μέθη με κρασί σίγουρα μας εμποδίζει στις προσπάθειές μας να πετύχουμε τον σκοπό της ζωής μας.

+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

tionship with Christ, they are of secondary importance, and, if it comes down to what we attach ourselves to and what we detach ourselves from, our self-attachment is to be with Christ, rather than to our own current illusions or fantasies about the future.

In his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl described his mentality for surviving in a German concentration camp during World War II, during which he searched for meaning in *the moment*. Meaningful relationships of support helped his co-sufferers. Aside from holding on to the meaning of life with others in the moment, nothing else mattered, because, in the concentration camp, there was "nothing else" -- no possessions; no wealth; no family.

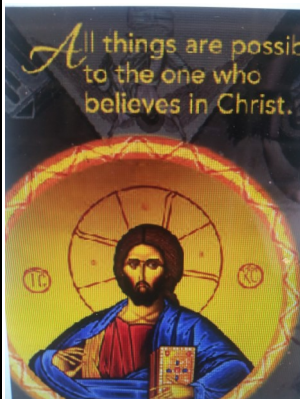
For Orthodox Christians meaning in life also translates into knowing the love of God from moment to moment, with which nothing else can compare. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is, as St. Paul would say, much better than "being drunk with wine" (as noted in his Epistle to the Ephesians), because the Holy Spirit is life-giving. As such, we are inspired to pray for blessings that give meaning and purpose to our lives. "Drunkenness with wine" becomes itself an attachment to one of the major distractions in life --i.e., self-gratification.

In our society today it seems "normal" to justify anxiety and to find relief from marijuana or vogue forms of counseling. But, being alive for and with Christ gives way to true joy. Let us "set aside all worldly care," as is intoned during the Cherubic Hymn, and attach ourselves to God's Word for the sake of peace and salvation.

+FR. THEODORE

**STEWARDSHIP....**"It is by offering our blessings back to God that He will be able to continue His forgiving, healing, liberating, empowering, transfiguring, loving ministry through the Church. For God, Infinite though He is, has chosen to work through us, through our gifts, to continue His saving work in the world today."

-- Fr. Anthony M. Coniaris



**"You are the Voice of Christ in a Changing World."**

-- Archdiocese Office of Stewardship



*"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 -- Ephesians 5:8-19

Brethren, walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret; but when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it is said, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart.

GOSPEL -- St. Luke 14:16-24

The Lord said this parable: "A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many; and at the time of the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for all is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I must go to examine them; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and there is still room.' And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet. For many are called, but few are chosen.'"

**WEEKDAY CALENDAR**

Following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy today, our **Sunday School Christmas Program** will take place. The program is only about 15 minutes and our students will appreciate your support. Also, pick-up items are now available from our **Philoptochos Bake Sale** -- and, finally, today is the day of our **Parish Council Elections for 2022**. See our Election Committee, led by **Nancy Breighner** after church today.

Tuesday, December 14th.....Bible Study -10:00

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83371776876?pwd=UnEzUTRybjkwT2FraW1LSWhlYk9Bdz09>

Wednesday, December 15th...Bible Study - 6:30 p.m. Zoom link:: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86111452564>

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

Parish Council Meeting -2:00 p.m.

Friday, December 17th.....ST. DIONYSIOS OF AIGINA

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