

JANUARY 10, 2021

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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Palm Desert, California 92260

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THE LADDER

SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY; St. Gregory of Nyssa

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.*

LESSONS FROM OUR CANDLE

When contemplating the Prophecy of Isaiah referred to in today's Gospel passage, a perceptive & wise thought was shared with me by one of our parishioners. The Prophecy of Isaiah in question is: "*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.*" (Matt. 4:15-16).

The "great Light," of course, is our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Through the

the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, not only are we changed from people in darkness into people who see the "Great Light," Who is Christ, but we become the Great Light of Christ in the world. That is the meaning of our Baptismal candle.

Our Baptismal candle carries two important messages: 1) as the three properties of heat, light and energy are one flame, so is the Holy Trinity Three Persons – One God; 2) in order to give light, the candle has to "make" sacrifices: the wick has to lose its lus-

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ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA – Saint Gregory, the younger brother of Basil the Great, illustrious in speech and a zealot for the Orthodox Faith, was born in 331. His brother Basil was encouraged by their elder sister Macrina to prefer the service of God to a secular career. Saint Gregory was moved in a similar way by his godly mother Emily, who, when Gregory was still a young man, implored him to attend a service in honor of the holy Forty Martyrs at her retreat at Annesi on the River Iris. Saint Gregory came at his mother's bidding, but being wearied with the journey, and feeling little zeal, he fell asleep during the service. The Forty Martyrs then appeared to him in a dream, inspiring him to repent of his sins. In his life of repentance, he became very diligent in the service of God.

Saint Gregory became bishop in 372, and because of his Orthodoxy he was exiled in 374 by Valens, who was of one mind with the Arians, who preached falsehood. After the death of Valens in 378, Gregory was recalled to his throne by the Emperor Gratian. He attended the Local Council of Antioch, which sent him to visit the churches of Arabia and Palestine, which had been defiled and ravaged by the Arians. He attended the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople in 381. He reposed about the year 395, having left behind many remarkable writings. The acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council call him "Father of Fathers."

– Taken from: www.goarch.org



Όταν μελετούσα την Προφητεία του Ησαΐου που αναφέρεται στην σημερινή Ευαγγελική περικοπή, μια αντιληπτική και σοφή σκέψη μοιράστηκε μαζί μου από έναν από τους ενοριτάς μας. Η εν λόγω προφητεία του Ησαΐου είναι: «*Γη Ζαβουλών και γη Νεφθαλείμ κατά την οδόν της θαλάσσης, πέραν του Ιορδάνου, Γαλιλαία των εθνών, ο λαός ο καθημενος εν σκοτει είδε φως μέγα, και εις τους καθημένους εν τόπω και σκιά θανάτου, φως ανέτειλεν εις αυτους.*» (Ματθ. 4: 15-16).

Το «Μέγα Φως», φυσικά, είναι ο Θεός και ο Σωτήρ μας, ο Ιησούς Χριστός. Διά του Μυστηρίου του Αγίου Βαπτισματος, όχι μόνο αλλάζουμε από το να είμεθα άνθρωποι στο σκοτάδι στο να είμεθα άνθρωποι που βλέπουν το «Μέγα Φως», Ο Οποίος είναι ο Χριστός, αλλά και *γινόμεθα* εμείς οι ίδιοι το Φως του Χριστού στον κόσμο. Αυτή είναι η έννοια του Βαπτιστικού μας κεριού.

Το Βαπτιστικό μας κεριό μεταφέρει δύο σημαντικά μηνύματα: 1) καθώς οι τρεις ιδιότητες της θερμότητας, του φωτός και της ενέργειας αναδύονται από τη μία φλόγα, έτσι και η Αγία Τριάδα αντιπροσωπεύεται: ο Πατήρ, ο Υιός και το Άγιο Πνεύμα – ως «εν Μονάδι.» 2) γιά να δώσει φως, το κεριό πρέπει να «κάνει» θυσίες: το φυτίλι πρέπει να χάσει τη ομορφιά του και να γίνει σκοτεινό, και το «σώμα» του κεριού μειώνεται σε μέγεθος, ως αποτέλεσμα της θυσίας ενέργειας. Η ζωή του Χριστού, καθώς και οι ζωές των Αγίων, ομοιάζουν με την «φυσικότητα» του Βαπτιστικού μας κεριού. Η ζεστασιά, η ενέργεια, και το φως του βαπτιστικού μας κεριού συμβολίζουν επίσης τις αρετές: την αγάπη, την ταπεινότητα και την σοφία. +Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

luster and turn dark, and the “body” of the candle lessens in size, due to the sacrifice of energy which melts the wax. The sacrificial life of Christ, as well as the lives of our Saints, resemble the physical properties of our Baptismal candle.

The warmth, energy and light of our Baptismal candle also symbolize the Christian virtues of love, humility, and wisdom. True love is Christ-like love, which is sacrificial in nature and serves toward the salvation of our own souls, as well as those of the people around us. Humility itself is indescribable apart from the Person of Christ. In Christ, humility goes hand-in-glove with qualities of respect and obedience to God’s Will, through which one’s personal ideas about wisdom fade before God’s Wisdom. Without Christ, humility is nothing more than “shyness,” “low self-esteem,” or “paranoia.”

Humility before our Lord allows us to see our imperfections under the brightness of the Divine Light. It is truly under this Light that we can experience – and then share – the Divine Love with the world around us. One of the Orthodox Christian mystics of our time, Elder Sophrony, often would share this thought: *“Divine Light and the insight that it brings is a matter of it being a gift; it is grace.”*

Our experience in the grace of Divine Light sparks our sincere, heartfelt prayer. As Peter Bouteneff would say, we can only summon ourselves, *“to seek Divine Light and cooperate with it.”* (*How to Be a Sinner*, pg. 42). Our cooperation with the Divine Light gives the flame to our candle. It is our *living prayer*, which enlightens the world around us as much as it changes us. The Divine Liturgy calls us to be grateful to our Lord for being blessed with Divine energy to do His work in the world -- work which is needed, especially today, and which is consistent with our prayers for peace in the world; for our Church and civic leaders; for the fruits of the earth, and for the sick and the suffering. Let us always seek to emulate the Holy Mother of God, as well as all the Saints, as we commit ourselves to Christ our God.

+FR. THEODORE

BIBLE STUDY - Tuesday, January 12, 2020 - 10:00 a.m

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

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86578988907?pwd=cFBoaDg3b25hdTU1L3o1NDV2ay83dz09>

Meeting ID: **865 7898 8907**

Passcode: **919868**

Or, using your cell phone, call: 1 699 900 6833 and dial in the Meeting ID and Passcode numbers. We will be studying the following passages: Hebrews 13: 17-21.

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— Ephesians 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 —ST. Matthew 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."

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MEMORIAL -- Today’s Memorial Service is for the Eternal Rest and Salvation for the servant of God, **William George Barringer**, the beloved husband of **Louise Dobbs Barringer** and **Bill Piggott**, the beloved husband of **Mary Piggott**. May our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ grant Eternal Life and Salvation to the servants of God, **William George Barringer** and **Bill Piggott** and may He grant peace and comfort to **Louise Dobbs Barringer** and **Mary Piggott**, family and friends. **MAY THEIR MEMORIES BE ETERNAL!**

SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES RESUME TODAY – 11:30 a.m. via “Zoom” format.

VASILOPITA – **Today**, following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy our annual **Vasilopita celebration** will take place. The Vasilopita celebration is held throughout our Archdiocese in honor of the **St. Basil Academy**, which is one of the major Archdiocese ministries supported by our **National Ladies Philoptochos Society**.

Tomorrow, January 11th.....Philoptochos Board Meeting -11:30 a.m. (“Zoom” format)

Tuesday, January 12thBible Study – 10:00 a.m. (“Zoom” format)

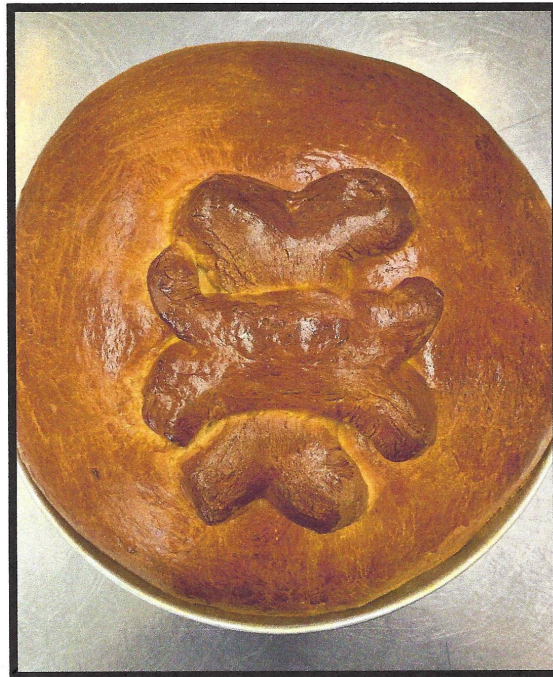
Wednesday, January 13th.....AHEPA Meeting – 6:30 p.m. (“Zoom” format)

Thursday, January 14th.....Parish Council – 2:30 p.m.

ST. GEORGE PHILOPTOCHOS

SUNDAY, JANUARY 10, 2021

VASILOPITA SUNDAY



Vasilopita bread available for purchase after church on Sunday for a \$15.00 donation. All proceeds benefit St. Basil Academy.



NOTE: This Sunday we are asking for donations for the Vasilopita Bread which will be given to St. Basil Academy. We will be providing one slice of vasilopita in a zip lock bag after church services and request a small donation to the vasilopita fund. In addition, we have a small quantity of two pound vasilopita breads for purchase for a \$15 donation. Thank you for your support of our first fundraiser for the 2021 year.