

SEPTEMBER 26, 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.

GOD IS LOVE

“God is love...in this is love perfected with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as He is so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.” (1 St. John 4:18). These words from St. John’s First Epistle have great meaning for all of us.

First, there is no love without God, because, as St. John emphasizes, “God is love.” What is called “love” without God is really something else, such as ownership of someone (or something) and control over them. Without God, love is more something that we want to *have*,

rather than to *give*.

Second, trust in Christ our God and our love for Him gives us confidence when we face Him on our day of judgment. This is not a day for condemnation, but a day for us to enter the Kingdom of God’s everlasting love, as the outcome of having lived this present life with a life-style centered around God’s love for all people, as the result of our own love for God. As such, there is “*no fear in love*,” because in love, we are already with Christ our Savior.

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UNDERSTANDING THE ORTHODOX VIEW OF MARRIAGE – From the Orthodox point of view, the family is a microcosm of the entire Church. As such, St. Paul’s words from his Epistle to the Ephesians are read during the performance of the Sacrament of Marriage, emphasizing the nature of God’s love and our relationship with God and with each other.

In marriage, the man is the “image” of Christ and the woman is the “image” of the Church. This image of the woman being that of the Church is consistent with the thinking that the Mother of God is the Mother of all. The Mother of God is referred to as the “New Eve,” and Christ is the “New Adam.” As Eve was created from Adam’s rib, God ordained that the reverse is to be revered: the “New Adam” is created into flesh from the “New Eve.” Hence, St. Paul reminds us that marriage is the “image” of Christ and the Church. The man is the head of the woman as Christ is the Head of the Church and sacrificed Himself for Her. Thus, the man is to love the woman he marries as Christ gave Himself for the Church...unto death, for salvation. It is only in this respect that the man is the “head” of the woman. Out of gratitude, the woman is to respect the man, as the Church respects Christ. This respect is shown by nurturing the children of God unto salvation. In this regard, marriage is the *context* in which the love of God is to be lived in everyday terms.

+FR. THEODORE



«Ο Θεός αγάπη εστίν...και τετελείωται η αγάπη μεθ' ημών, ίνα παρρησιαν έχωμεν εν τη ημέρα της κρίσεως, ότι καθώς, και ημείς έσμεν εν τω κόσμω τούτω. Φόβος ουκ έστιν εν τη αγάπη.» (1 Ιωαν. 4:18). Αυτά τα λόγια από την Πρώτη Επιστολή του Αγ.Ιωάννου έχουν μεγάλη σημασία για όλους μας.

Πρώτον, δεν υπάρχει αγάπη χωρίς τον Θεό, διότι, όπως τονίζει ο Άγ. Ιωάννης, «ο Θεός είναι αγάπη». Χωρίς τον Θεό, η αγάπη είναι κάτι που θέλουμε να έχουμε για τον εαυτόν μας και όχι κάτι που θέλουμε να χαρίζομεν σε άλλους.

Δεύτερον, η εμπιστοσύνη στον Χριστό και η αγάπη μας για Αυτόν μας δίνει εμπιστοσύνη όταν Τον βρίσκουμε στην ημέρα της κρίσεώς μας. Αυτή η μέρα δεν πρέπει να είναι ημέρα καταδίκης, αλλά μια ημέρα κατά την οποίαν εισερχόμεθα στη Βασιλεία της αιωνίου αγάπης του Θεού, γιατί θα ζούσαμε αυτήν την παρούσα ζωή με την αγάπη του Θεού για όλους τους ανθρώπους, ως αποτέλεσμα της δικής μας αγάπης για τον Θεό. Ως εκ τούτου, «δεν υπάρχει φόβος με την αγάπη», γιατί στην αγάπη, είμεθα ήδη με τον Χριστό τον Σωτήρα μας.

Τρίτον, στο βαθμό που αγαπάμε τον Χριστό όπως μας αγαπά ο Χριστός, συμμετέχουμε στη Θεία Αγάπη που μας ενώνει μέσω της Χάριτος του Αγίου Πνεύματος, προκειμένου να ζήσουμε μια ζωή που ομοιάζει με την «εν Χριστώ» αγαπη, ο ένας για τον άλλον. Αυτός είναι ο λόγος που ο Χριστός είπε στους Αποστόλους Του ότι ο κόσμος θα μας γνωρίζει ότι ανήκουμε σε Αυτόν εαν έχουμε αγάπη ο ένας για τον άλλον.
+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

Third, to the extent that we love Christ as Christ loves us, we participate in the Divine Love that unites us with each other through the Grace of the Holy Spirit. This is why our Savior told His Apostles that the world will know that they belonged to Him if they had love for one another.

In his sixth book of his edition entitled, *The Life in Christ*, the saintly Orthodox theologian Nicholas Cabasilas explains that the law of the Holy Spirit is the law of love. Indeed, the work of the Holy Spirit is to always point us to Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God the Father, Who so loved the world that He sent Him to forgive our sins and grant us Eternal Life. Cabasilas writes, *"It is love which first brought to earth the Giver of the law, and the very body of this Lawgiver is the fruit of lovingkindness...O unspeakable kindness! Not only does He love so greatly, but He so highly esteems being loved by us that He does everything for the sake of this!"* (pg. 172-174). This fact is echoed in the Thanksgiving Prayer of the Divine Liturgy.

Cabasilas then summons the reader to always entertain thoughts about Christ's love, especially if we seek the best and lasting relationships in our lives. He writes, *"If then we rejoice in the best things, nothing could be better than the thoughts of which the subject is Christ and His lovingkindness...Christ is more akin to us not only than our own blood relatives, but even than our parents and our very own selves. Thus, it follows that nothing is more appropriate to the thinking mind than thoughts concerning Christ...From these thoughts no harm can come to human life..."* (pg. 175).

It follows that, if we are unwilling to follow Christ and to connect our thoughts to the love of Christ, there is danger that our love can be tainted with self-centered motives for personal gratification. To the contrary, connecting our thoughts to the love of Christ our God will guide us to always express truly beneficial care and concern for the many people in our lives and for all people throughout the world, for which we can rejoice on the day of our judgment.

+FR. THEODORE

ST. GEORGE GOLF TOURNAMENT WAS A SUCCESS!

We offer thanksgiving to God for the great efforts of **George Argyos** and his golf committee for hosting our successful and jubilant **St. George Golf Tournament** yesterday, which featured a delicious Traditional Greek Style awards dinner and silent auction.

We are also grateful to all of the participants in the golf tournament and the guests who joined in for the awards dinner at our parish hall.

It was an honor to host **His Grace, Bishop Spyridon of Amastris** along with visiting clergy.

More details will be shared next month in our October publication of *The Voice of St. George*.



“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 - 1 St. John 4:12-19

No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. In this is love perfected with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because he first loved us.

GOSPEL - St. John 19: 25-27;21: 24-25

At that time, standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. This is the disciple who is bearing witness to these things, and who has written these things; and we know that his testimony is true. But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

WEEKDAY CALENDAR

Today we welcome **Fr. Constantinos Sisco**, the assistant priest and youth director of the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Tuesday, September 28th...Bible Study – 10:00 a.m. (in-person & “Zoom.” “Zoom” link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81329951397?pwd=NTJJK0ppVUc5R2ZtZzBFcTBWVTUvdz09>.)

Wednesday, September 29th...Bible Study – 6:30 p.m. (in-person & “Zoom.” “Zoom” link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86111452564>.) (Note the change from Thursdays)

PARTICIPATION IN THE DIVINE LITURGY ON SUNDAYS IS THE EXPRESSION OF LOVE

“I don’t get anything out of the Liturgy!” As a priest I have heard this complaint countless times. The truth is that we do not come to church primarily to get something out of the liturgy. We come to the liturgy to give of ourselves, our possessions, our whole being to God. This is what we do when we place ourselves on the holy table through the prospora, or altar bread, which expresses the giving of our life to God. Only if we first give ourselves to God, shall we be able to get something out of the liturgy. What we will get is the presence of the Lord Jesus within us. We shall carry Him out of the church with us to bring Him as Christ-bearers to others.”

-Where Moth and Dust Do Not Consume, by, Fr. Anthony Coniaris, pg. 30