

APRIL 24, 2022

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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# THE LADDER

THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD OF CHRIST OUR GOD

**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 "GET-AWAYS"**

We have before us a choice as to where we want to "get away" to: Coachella Fest, or the Church in which we share the joy of Christ Arisen from the dead. Speaking to one visitor from last week's Coachella Fest, I asked, "What did you get out of Coachella Fest?" The answer: "At least I can say that I was there, man."

To which I answered: "What's the point? Has the meaning your life come down to just saying 'I was there, man?'" The real

meaning in life is found in the fact that Christ is *here*, now and forever. Tragically, instead of finding peace and comfort in our Lord, we are tempted to keep on looking elsewhere.

The average cost per weekend at Coachella Fest is \$400 per person. A seven-day trip to Disneyland is \$1,702 per person. If you want to go on yet another "get-away trip," you will need about \$250 per day at Las Vegas.

*Continued on page 2*

**"COME, RECEIVE THE LIGHT FROM THE UNWANING LIGHT AND GLORIFY CHRIST,WHO IS RISEN FROM THE DEAD!"**

Christ is the Light of the world. Because we unite ourselves with Christ through the Holy Sacraments, we are, by extension, the Light of the world. That is why we have our Paschal, Easter Candles. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann explains what it means to be the Light of the world with Christ:

*"Know you not," writes St. Paul to the Corinthians, 'that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have of God and that you are not your own? For you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.' (I Cor. 6:19-20). These words are a real summary of St. Paul's constant appeal to Christians: we must live according to what has 'happened' to us in Christ; yet we can live thus only because it has happened to us, because salvation, redemption, reconciliation and 'buying with a price' have already been given to us and we are 'not our own.' We can and must work at our salvation because we have been saved, yet it is only because we are saved that we can work at our salvation. We must always and at all times become and be that which – in Christ – we already are: 'you are Christ's and Christ is God's.' (I Cor. 3:22)."*

-Taken from the book: *Great Lent*, pg. 119



Το πραγματικό νόημα της ζωής ευρίσκεται στο γεγονός ότι ο Χριστός είναι εδώ μαζί μας, τώρα και για πάντα. Τραγικά, αντί να νιώθουμε ευχαρίστηση μέσα σε αυτή την πραγματικότητα, αναζητούμε αλλού το νόημα της ζωής μας.

Ο Σταυρός του Κυρίου σημαίνει ότι εσείς και εγώ έχουμε τις «δεύτερες ευκαιρίες» μας -- κάτι που όλοι λαχταρούμε κάποτε-κάποτε. Η αγάπη Του για εμάς είναι τόσο μεγάλη που Αυτός το θεωρεί τιμή να κατοικεί στις καρδιές και τις ψυχές μας μεταδίδοντάς μας το Άγιο Σώμα και το Αίμα Του, από τον Σταυρό Του, για να ζήσουμε εμείς αιωνίως. Ο θάνατός Του στον Σταυρό είναι η Ανάστασή μας στην Αιώνιον Ζωή με τον Χριστό, ο Οποίος είναι ο Θεός της θείας αγάπης και της ζωής.

Η αναζήτηση να όλο ξεφύγουμε από την πλήξη και τις δοκιμασίες της καθημερινής ζωής δεν είναι τίποτα σε σύγκριση με την αναζήτηση να ζήσουμε την αγάπη που έχει ο Θεός για εμάς και την αναζήτηση να βιώσουμε τη χαρά που έρχεται όταν ανταποδίδουμε την αγάπη του Θεού εκφράζοντας την αγάπη Του στους άλλους. Αυτό είναι το νόημα της ίδιας της ζωής μας! Και το Δοξαστικό της Αναστάσιμης Ακολουθίας μας το λέγει τόσο ξεκάθαρα: «*Είπωμεν ἀδελφοί, καὶ τοῖς μισοῦσιν ἡμᾶς· Συγχωρήσωμεν πάντα τῇ Ἀναστάσει, καὶ οὕτω βοήσωμεν· Χριστὸς ἀνέστη ἐκ νεκρῶν, θανάτῳ θάνατον πατήσας, καὶ τοῖς ἐν τοῖς μνήμασι, ζῶν χαρισάμενος.*»

+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

And, if you want to simply “get away” without really getting away, you might be among the many Americans who collectively spend \$150 billion annually on recreational drugs. With all the money that goes into “getting away,” I suggest that the only meaning in life for many has come down to just that: “getting away just to say, ‘I was there, man.’” But, Christ isn’t “there;” He is *here* in our midst!

If “getting away from it all” has any meaning at all, what people crave for even more is the “second chances” that help us over any regrets of the past. “Second chances” are indeed rich in meaning. Our Lord’s Cross means that you and I have “second chances” to find ourselves in God’s Paradise. His love for us is so great that He considers it an honor to dwell in our hearts and souls by imparting to us *from the Cross* His Holy Body and Sacred Blood so that we can live forever. His death on the Cross is our Resurrection to Eternal Life with Christ, the God of divine love -- and, therefore, the God of life itself.

The quest for “getting away,” pales compared to the quest to experience the joy that comes when we return God’s love by expressing His love to others, which gives purpose and meaning to our lives in the on-going here and now. In fact, that is what life itself is all about for each of us, who have been created in the Image and Likeness of God! The Doxastikon Hymn of the Resurrection Service tells us: “*That we forgive everything for the Resurrection. And thus cry aloud, ‘Christ is risen from the dead, by death trampling down upon death, and to those in the tombs He has granted life.’*”

+FR. THEODORE

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## ST. GEORGE GOLF TOURNAMENT

Only one week away! We need silent auction items for guests at the St. George Golf Tournament Awards Dinner. Certificates for complimentary dinners at a marvelous Palm Desert area restaurant, or for a round of golf at a local golf course make excellent gifts. Make reservations to join...Monday, the Feast Day of St. George, April 25th is the absolute deadline! Please contact Golf Committee Chairman, **George Argyros** to participate and help toward the success of this annual, wonderful parish event.

## AHEPA

The deadline to submit applications for the AHEPA 528 Fr. T. P. Theophilos Memorial Scholarship is close at hand -- May 1st! Now is the time to mail in the completed applications.



## PRAYER FOR READING HOLY SCRIPTURES

*"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 -Acts 1:1-8

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. To them he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God. And while staying with them he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me, for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit." So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth."

### GOSPEL - St. John 1:1-17

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,

and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light. The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. (John bore witness to him, and cried, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, for he was before me.' ") And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

## WEEKDAY CALENDAR

Monday, April 25th... ST. GEORGE THE GREAT MARTYR

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

Tuesday, April 26th....No Bible Study

Friday, April 29th.....THE LIFE-GIVING FONT

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

Saturday, April 30th....**St. George Golf Tournament at Desert Willow Golf Resort -- 12:30 p.m. (tee-off)**

**St. George Golf Tournament Awards Dinner (Traditional Greek Dinner)- 6:00 p.m.**

PATRIARCHAL ENCYCLICAL  
FOR HOLY PASCHA

Prot. No. 169

+ B A R T H O L O M E W  
BY GOD'S MERCY ARCHBISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE-NEW ROME  
AND ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH  
TO THE PLENITUDE OF THE CHURCH: MAY THE GRACE, PEACE AND MERCY  
OF CHRIST RISEN IN GLORY BE WITH YOU ALL

\* \* \*

Having run the race of ascetic struggles during Holy and Great Lent and experienced with compunction the venerable Passion of the Lord, we are now filled with the eternal light of His splendid Resurrection, wherefore we praise and glorify His transcendent name, exclaiming the joyfully message to the whole world: "Christ is Risen!"

The Resurrection is the nucleus of the faith, devotion, culture and hope of Orthodox Christians. The life of the Church – in its divine-human, sacramental and liturgical, as well as spiritual, moral and pastoral expression and in the good testimony about the grace that has come in Christ and about the expected "common resurrection" – incarnates and reflects the annihilation of the power of death through the Cross and Resurrection of our Savior, along with the liberation of humankind from "enslavement to evil." This Resurrection is witnessed by the Saints and Martyrs of the faith, by the doctrine and ethos, but also the canonical structure and function of the Church, along with the sacred churches, monasteries and venerable sites, the godly zeal of the clergy and the unconditional commitment of those who have given their "having" and "being" to Christ as monastics, together with the orthodox *phronema* of the faithful and the eschatological impetus of our ecclesiastical way of life as a whole.

For us Orthodox, the celebration of Pascha is not a temporal escape from worldly reality and its contradictions, but a proclamation of our unwavering faith that the Redeemer of Adam's race, who trampled death by death, is the Master of history, the eternally "with us" and "for us" God of love. Pascha is the experience of the certainty that Christ is the Truth that sets us free; it is the foundation, existential axis and horizon of our life. "Apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn 15.5). No circumstance, "tribulation or distress, persecution or famine, nakedness, peril or sword" (Rm 8.35) can separate the faithful from the love of Christ. This steadfast conviction inspires and invigorates our creativity and desire to become in this world "collaborators of God" (1 Cor. 3.9). It guarantees that, in the face of every insurmountable hurdle and impasse, where no human solution is conceivable, there is always hope and perspective. "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4.13). In the risen Christ we know that evil, no matter what form it assumes, does not have the final word in the journey of humankind.

However, even as we are filled with gratitude and joy for this supreme value ascribed to the human being by the Lord of glory, we are disheartened before multifaceted violence, social injustice and infringement of human rights in our time. “The radiant message of the resurrection” and our cry “Christ is Risen!” today reverberate alongside the horrendous sound of weapons, the distressing cries of innocent victims of military aggression and the plight of refugees, among whom there are numerous innocent children. We saw with our own eyes all of these problems during our recent visit to Poland, where the vast majority of Ukrainian refugees has fled. We stand and suffer alongside the pious and courageous people of Ukraine that bear a heavy cross. We pray and strive for peace and justice as well as for all those who are deprived of these. It is unimaginable for us Christians to remain silent before the obliteration of human dignity. Together with the victims of military conflict, the “greatest casualty” of war is humanity, which has not managed to eradicate war in the course of its long history. Not only does war not solve problems; it actually creates new and more complex problems. It sows division and hatred; it increases discord among peoples. We firmly believe that humankind is capable of living without war and violence.

The Church of Christ innately functions as an agent of peace. Not only does it pray “for the peace from above” and “the peace of the whole world,” but it underlines the importance of every human effort to establish peace. The principal characteristic of a Christian is “peacemaking.” Christ blesses the peacemakers, whose struggle is a tangible presence of God in the world and depicts the peace “that surpasses all understanding” (Phil. 4.7) in the “new creation,” the heavenly kingdom of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As judiciously emphasized in the document of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, entitled *For the Life of the World, the social ethos of the Orthodox Church*, the Church “honors the martyrs for peace as witnesses to the power of love, to the goodness of creation in its first and final forms, and to the ideal of human conduct established by Christ during his earthly ministry” (§ 44).

Pascha is the feast of freedom, joy and peace. We solemnly praise the Resurrection of Christ through which we experience our own co-resurrection. And we faithfully worship the great mystery of Divine Economy and we share in “the feast that is common to all.” In this spirit, from the see of the Church of Constantinople, which eternally participates in the Cross and Resurrection of our Lord, we address to all of you, most honorable brother Hierarchs and beloved children, our wholehearted paschal greeting, invoking upon you the grace and mercy of Christ the God of all who put Hades to death and granted us eternal life.

At the Phanar, Holy Pascha 2020  
+ Bartholomew of Constantinople  
Your fervent supplicant to the Risen Lord



## GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

### ARCHIEPISCOPAL ENCYCLICAL

Prot. No. 68/2022

#### Archiepiscopal Encyclical on the Great and Holy Pascha

April 24, 2022

Unto the Most Reverend and Right Reverend Hierarchs, Pious Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, Presidents and Members of Parish Councils, Honorable Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Members of Leadership 100, the Day and Afternoon Schools, Philoptochos Societies, the Youth, Greek Orthodox Organizations, and the entirety of the Christ-named Plenitude of the Holy Archdiocese of America.

My Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

*Christ descended alone to the Gates of Hades, He returned taking many spoils of His victory.  
(Verse of the Synaxarion of Pascha)*

What a journey our Lord took for the sake of our salvation! What pains did He not endure? Not only did He descend from the heights of Heaven to earth through his Incarnation, but through His Death on the Cross he descended into the lowest depths of human experience. As we chant on Pascha night: Κατήλθες ἐν τοῖς κατωτάτοις τῆς γῆς – into death itself, even though He is the Author of Life.

This is how the Lord Jesus, Who is the New Adam and the First-Born of the Dead, redeems the mass of humanity. He undergoes a single human life and death; He died alone upon the Cross, forsaken and abandoned. Alone did He descend into Hades, that he might free all those imprisoned there from ages past. By His flesh, which He took from the womb of His Virgin Mother, He assumes the totality of the human race. There is no



person who is not connected to Him through His Incarnation. By living a perfect life in a willing, conscience way, He makes possible perfection for every human being through metanoia, which is as much transformation as it is repentance and turning from selfishness to God. Finally, using the Cross to bridge Heaven and earth, He descends to the lowest depths, to find us and to bring us home to Heaven.

As the Synaxarion affirms: “He returned taking many spoils of His victory.” This is why we cry out with our hearts aflame with joy, even as our candles shine brightly and dispel the gloom of night:

**Christ is risen from the dead, by death trampling down upon death,  
and to those in the tombs He has granted life!**

Therefore, my beloved Christians, let us honor His journey from Heaven to earth, from earth to Hades, and back again for our salvation. Let us embrace one another with love and compassion, forgetting no one and forgiving everyone. Thus, we will rise from the lowest depths of our struggles and challenges, to the celestial heights of God’s glory and life everlasting.

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη! Ἀληθῶς Ἀνέστη!

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

Ὁ Ἀμερικῆς Ἐπίσκοπος

† ELPIDOPHOROS  
Archbishop of America