



JANUARY 7, 2024

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

74-109 Larrea Street

Palm Desert, California 92260

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- Fr. Theodore Pantels,
M.Div. Proistamenos
(Pastor)
- Deacon Euthym
Kontaxis, M.D.,M.Div.

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 LADDER
SUNDAY AFTER HOLY THEOPHANY / ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST



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 19:1-8

In those days, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism." And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve of them in all. And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, arguing and pleading about the kingdom of God.

GOSPEL— St. John 1:29-34

At that time, John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, for he was before me.' I myself did not know him; but for this I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." And John bore witness, "I saw the Spirit descend as a dove from heaven, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him; but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

SYNAXIS OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST – Today, the faithful gather to commemorate the ministry of St. John the Baptist. This "gathering together" is called synaxis in Greek. The word synaxis is basically a liturgical word, meaning that the faithful gather specifically to honor St. John by way of worship – participating in Vespers, Orthros, and the Divine Liturgy that is celebrated in memory of his ministry in baptizing our Savior in the River Jordan. Other times throughout the year when St. John is honored liturgically include: his Nativity on June 24th and his beheading by Herod on August 29th. +FR. THEODORE

### Liturgical Notes for Today

At the Entrance of the Gospel: 1) **Entrance hymn:** 1) *"O Christ, the angelic powers appeared at Your tomb, the guards were as dead, and Mary stood by the grave, seeking Your sacred body. You destroyed Hades, yet remained untouched by it. You encountered the Virgin and, through her, bestowed Life. "Glory to You who have risen from the dead!" /Αγγελικαὶ δυνάμεις...*

2) *"Lord, when You were baptized in the Jordan, the veneration of the Trinity was revealed. For the voice of the Father gave witness to You, calling You Beloved Son, and the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the certainty of His words. Glory to You, Christ our God, who appeared and enlightened the world." /Ἐν Ἰορδάνῃ Βαπτιζομένου...*

3) *"The just are recalled with songs of praise. But for you, O Forerunner, the Lord's testimony is enough. For you proved yourself more honored even than the Prophets, since you were found worthy to baptize in the river the One you had foretold. Thus, having more than upheld the truth, you had the joy of preaching, even to those in the underworld, the good news: of God manifested in the flesh, who takes away the sin of the world and grants us His great mercy. "/Μνήμη Δικαίου...*

4) *"Since you are a deliverer of captives..." [Hymn of St. George]/Ὡς τῶν αἰχμαλώτων ἐλευθερωτῆς...*

5) **Kontakion:** *"You appeared to the world today, and Your light, O Lord, has left its mark upon us. With fuller understanding we sing to You: "You came, You were made manifest, the unapproachable light." /Ἐπεφάνης σήμερον...*

Note: Instead of "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us," we chant: *"All who were baptized in Christ have put on Christ, Alleluia." / Ὅσοι εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε...*

Instead of "Axion Estin...", we chant: *"O my soul, magnify the ever-virgin Maid who from the curse has redeemed us... O all spotless Bride, surpassing comprehension are the wonders of your childbirth, blessed Mother! Through you obtaining comprehensive salvation, we bring you a gift in striking up this worthy hymn of gratitude to you our Benefactress. "/Μεγάλονον ψυχῆ μου...*

### THE VOICE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS

During the Divine Liturgy that is celebrated on the eve of Epiphany, we are reminded that St. John the Baptist, whom we commemorate today, preached repentance as a way of life. At the time, his preaching was characterized as a "voice in the wilderness." Even today, the "voice" of repentance, which lies at the heart of our Church's ministry seems to be "a voice crying in the wilderness."

A dove brought Noah an olive branch of reconciliation with God after the great Flood. Now, the Holy Spirit descends as a Dove to reveal Christ, Who grants our reconciliation with God, offering us the opportunity to grow in the Spirit through a lifestyle of repentance. This voice of Christ is expressed by our Holy Church in the world today. Yet, it is often still considered to be "old-fashioned."

However, truth can never be "old fashioned," because it is always what it is – the truth. The truth of God's Love is planted into our souls from the time of conception. It is the voice of our conscience, which for us, on an individual basis, too often appears to also be a "voice crying in the wilderness."

Humility before God allows us to grow in wisdom, which is a by-product of repentance. Repentance means that worship, good deeds and the preaching of Christ's Holy Church become priorities in our lives. Such a lifestyle is not one of *challenging* the Church's teachings, demanding that the Church "changes with the times" so as to express false love to those who now condone expressions which in Apostolic times were considered to be sinful, such as blasphemy and many forms of disrespectful or immoral behaviors. A lifestyle of repentance is one of *embracing* the Church's teachings as the Voice of Truth and the Salvation for all people.

+FR. THEODORE

Κατά τη Θεία Λειτουργία που τελείται την παραμονή των Θεοφανείων, υπενθυμίζουμε στον εαυτόν μας ότι ο Άγιος Ιωάννης ο Πρόδρομος, του οποίου την μνήμη τιμούμε σήμερα, εκήρυξε τη μετάνοια ως τρόπο ζωής. Στην εποχή του, το κήρυγμά του χαρακτηρίστηκε ως «φωνή βοώντος εν τη ερήμω». Ακόμη και σήμερα, η «φωνή» της μετανοίας, που είναι η ουσία της διακονίας της Εκκλησίας μας, φαίνεται να είναι «μια φωνή βοώντος εν τη ερήμω.»

Ένα περιστέρι έφερε στον Νώε ένα κλαδί ελιάς που εσυμβόλισε τη συμφιλίωσή μας με τον Θεό μετά τον Κατακλυσμό. Τώρα, το Άγιο Πνεύμα κατεβαίνει «εν είδει Περιστεράς» για να αποκαλύψει σε εμάς ότι ο Χριστός είναι ο Θεός, που χαρίζει τη συμφιλίωσή μας με τον Θεό, προσφέροντάς μας την ευκαιρία να αναπτυχθούμε εν Πνεύματι μέσω ενός μετανοημένου τρόπου ζωής. Αυτή τη φωνή του Χριστού εκφράζεται από την Αγίαν μας Εκκλησία προς τον κόσμο σήμερα. Ωστόσο, η Εκκλησία συχνά εξακολουθεί να θεωρείται ως «ασυγχρόνιστη».

Μάλιστα, η αλήθεια δεν μπορεί ποτέ να είναι «ασυγχρόνιστη», γιατί είναι πάντα αυτό που είναι – η αλήθεια. Η αλήθεια της Αγάπης του Θεού φυτεύεται στις ψυχές μας από τη στιγμή της συλλήψεως. Είναι η φωνή της συνειδήσεώς μας, που για εμάς σε ατομική βάση, πολύ συχνά φαίνεται να είναι επίσης μια «φωνή βοώντος εν τη ερήμω.»

Η ταπεινοφροσύνη ενώπιον του Θεού μας επιτρέπει να αποκτήσουμε τη θεία σοφία, που είναι καρπός της μετανοίας. Η μετάνοια σημαίνει ότι η λατρεία, οι ενάρετες πράξεις και το κήρυγμα της Αγίας Εκκλησίας του Χριστού γίνονται προτεραιότητες στη ζωή μας. Ένας τέτοιος τρόπος ζωής δεν απαιτεί από την Εκκλησία να κάνει «αλλαγές σύμφωνα με τους συγχρόνους τρόπους της κοινωνίας» ώστε να εκφράσει ψεύτικη αγάπη σε εκείνους που δέχονται τώρα εκφράσεις που στην Αποστολική εποχή εθεωρούνταν αμαρτωλές, όπως η βλασφημία και πολλές μορφές ασέβειας και ανήθικες συμπεριφορές. Ένας μετανοημένος τρόπος ζωής είναι αυτός που αγκαλιάζει τις διδασκαλίες της Εκκλησίας ως την φωνή της Αλήθειας και της Σωτηρίας για όλους τους ανθρώπους.

+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

### WEEKDAY CALENDAR

Monday, January 8th.....Festival Baking and Preparations begin – 9:00 a.m.

Tuesday, January 9th.....Bible Study – 10:00 a.m.  
AHEPA Meeting– 6:30 p.m. (Bible Study– 6:00 p.m.)

Wednesday, January 10th..Online Orthodox Christian Catechism – 6:30 p.m.

Friday, January 12th.....Pro-life Film presented by Birth Choice of the Desert at Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church in Palm Desert, CA – 6:00 p.m. (see enclosed flyer)

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**PHILOPTOCHOS** – Today is Vasliopita Sunday! There will be a limited amount of vasilopita available for purchase. **Tomorrow, January 8th** there will be **Philoptochos Board meeting at 11:00 AM**. Also, the **Philoptochos General Meeting** is scheduled for next **Monday, January 15th at 11:30 AM**. In addition, please note the following announcements:

- o **Paint & Sip** is back for January! If you enjoyed the wine bottle painting in November, then you will enjoy painting a Greek vase at our next event on **Sunday, January 21st!** (See flier for details)
- o **Enclosed is a flyer announcing a film regarding the work of Birth Choice of the Desert in saving the lives of pre-born children.** It will be shown at **Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church** in Palm Desert on **January 12, 2024**.
- **SUNDAY SCHOOL** – Sunday School classes will held next **Sunday, January 14, 2024** and on **Sunday, January 28, 2024**. A special Sunday School service project is scheduled for Sunday, January 28th.
- **ONLINE ORTHODOX CATECHISM CLASS - Wednesday, January 10, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.** Those who want may email Fr. Ted at [pdsaintgeorge@gmail.com](mailto:pdsaintgeorge@gmail.com) to receive a link in order to join the online class.
- **AHEPA 528 MEETING** – Tuesday, January 9, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. Prior to the meeting, there will be a Bible Study at 6:00 p.m.
- **GREEK FESTIVAL** – Volunteers, sponsors and donors in support of our 2024 Greek Festival (February 17-18, 2024) are most welcome! Festival flyers are available in our parish hall for distribution throughout the Coachella Valley. **Festival preparations resume tomorrow Monday, January 8th.** See enclosed flyer, "Support our Festival." Note: The next Festival Meeting is: Wednesday, January 4, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.

## HOLY WATER ON THE FEAST DAY OF THEOPHANY

Orthodox Christians most often bless themselves with holy water by drinking it. It is traditional to keep a quantity of it at home, and many Orthodox Christians will drink a small amount daily with their morning prayers. It is also often taken with prayer in times of distress or temptation. The use of holy water is based on the Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the River Jordan, and the Orthodox interpretation of this event. In their view, John's baptism was a baptism of repentance, and the people came to have their sins washed away by the water. Since Jesus had no sin, but was God incarnate, his baptism had the effect not of washing away Jesus' sins, but of blessing the water, making it holy – and with it all of creation, so that it may be used fully for its original created purpose to be an instrument of life.

On the Great Feast of Theophany, holy water is blessed twice: at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy on the eve of the feast, and on morning of the feast itself. After proceeding to the place where the vessel of water is prepared to the singing of appropriate troparia (hymns) of the Theophany there are a group of Scripture readings ( Isaiah 35:1-10; 55:1-13;12:3-6) and 1 Corinthians 10:1-4, culminating in the baptism account from the Gospel of Saint Mark (1:9-11). Taken from: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy\\_water\\_in\\_Eastern\\_Christianity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_water_in_Eastern_Christianity)



***Celebrate the New Year!***  
***Join us for the cutting***  
***of the Vasilopita!***



St. George Philoptochos is ringing in the New Year with our annual Vasilopita cutting on **Sunday, January 7th, 2024** in the Church Hall after Divine Liturgy by Fr. Theodore Pantels. Appetizers & refreshments will be provided. Everyone is welcome! A goodwill offering is greatly appreciated.

We will also have a limited number of Vasilopitas for you to purchase for take home. Each will have a coin inside for good luck in the New Year!

*Enjoy this tradition that symbolizes the sweetness & joy of life everlasting!  
Best wishes for 2024!*



### **Support our Festival!**

**Our festival is just a few months away and, God willing, everyone will have a rewarding experience. We thank our parishioners and friends for your past support and want to take a moment to remind you of all the ways you can help this upcoming year.**

**Volunteering – Volunteers are welcome as of the 18<sup>th</sup> of December for cooking. Such support will be needed up until the festival in February. Please reach out to George or Stacy Argyros to get more information. In addition, assistance is appreciated during the week before the festival to help set up, during the festival and following the festival to assist with cleanup. If you’ve volunteered before and wish to continue, feel free to contact the past chairperson to again offer your assistance. If you’d like to volunteer for the first time or don’t have contact information for the past chairperson, feel free to reach out to Jim Christopoulos at 760-902-8460 or at [goofy\\_328@yahoo.com](mailto:goofy_328@yahoo.com).**

**Sponsorships – Any person can pay for a sponsorship, whether it be to advertise your business or send a personal message. You may also ask friends and/or owners of businesses you frequent to buy a sponsorship. These not only provide financial support for the festival, but are a wonderful way to advertise businesses. Sponsorship donations can be sent to our parish office. For more information, please call our parish office at (760) 568-9901. Make checks payable to “St. George Greek Orthodox Church” and in the memo, write, “FESTIVAL DONATION.”**

**Donations – Unable to volunteer? Sponsorship not appropriate? Another option would be to provide a cash donation. Such a donation would help offset our many expenses.**

**The success of our festival depends on us all. We strive to simultaneously satisfy the needs of our guests as well as to share our hospitality and religion with them. Please help in any way you can. You may contact George Argyros or Father Ted for more information.**



WE INVITE YOU TO OUR

# Paint & Sip

Sunday

01/21/2024 @ 1200 p.m.



HOSTED BY:

**St George Ladies Philoptochos**

74109 Larrea St – Palm Desert, CA 92260

Bring your friends and join us for an afternoon of appetizers, refreshments, wine and painting a beautiful small Grecian vase!

Sign up during Coffee Hour or call  
St. George Church @ 760-568-9901

**\$15**

PER PERSON

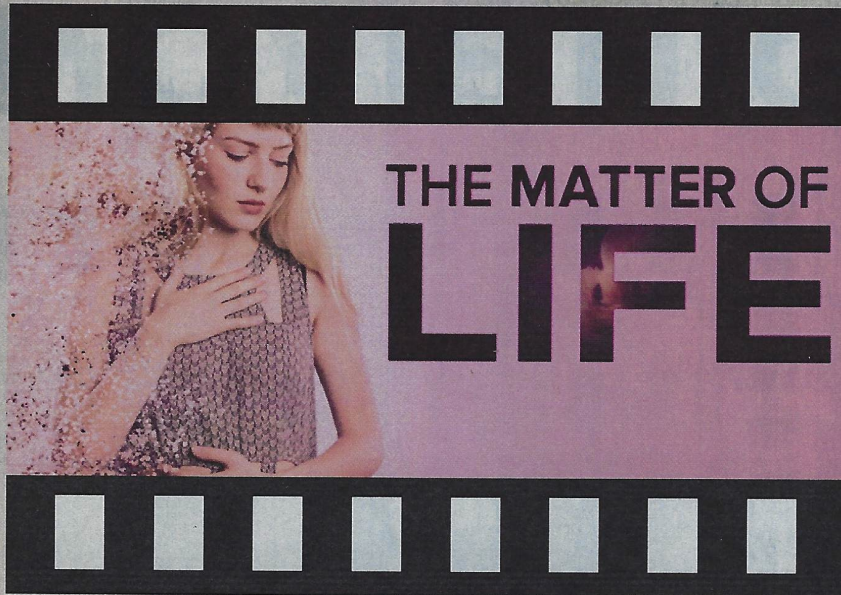
Check out our talented and fun group from our first Paint & Sip Art Event on 11/12/2023. A great time was had by all!





Community

# MOVIE NIGHT



A film that clarifies the most contentious issue of our day.

**JANUARY 12**

DOORS OPEN 5:30PM • STARTS AT 6:00PM

**FREE ADMISSION!**

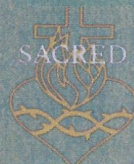
**SACRED HEART CHURCH**

SALTA PASTORAL CENTER GYM

43775 DEEP CANYON RD, PALM DESERT, CA 92260

PRESENTED BY:

**BIRTH  
CHOICE**  
OF THE DESERT



SACRED HEART CHURCH  
Pro-Life Ministry





