

DECEMBER 2018



# Voice of St. George

**SAINT GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH  
OF THE DESERT**

**74-109 LARREA ST., PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA**



**Inside this issue**

## COMMUNION WITH GOD

"The Incarnation, is not simply a way of undoing the effects of Original Sin, but it is an essential stage upon man's journey from the divine image to the divine likeness. The true image and likeness of God is Christ himself; and so, from the very first moment of man's creation in the image, the Incarnation of Christ was in some way already implied." (The Orthodox Way, by Bishop Kallistos Ware , pg. 93).

With the Incarnation of Christ, we learn the Will of God, which is Love for every person in the world. In His love, the Cross of Christ nullifies the venom of the serpent in Eden. Also, Adam's resentment for Eve is undone; for, while the woman was made from the rib of Adam, Christ's Body was made completely from the flesh of the Ever-Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit. The 2nd Kathisma of the Orthros Service on the first day following the beginning of

Advent has these words: "O Virgin, from You our Fashioner assumed His own image, that had been broken, and He sympathetically re-fashioned it, O Bride of God. For being compassionate, He united it to divine nature and adorned it with rays of divinity."

It is through the Ever-Virgin Mary that humanity is saved in the Person of God's Only-Begotten Son. The gift of His on-going salvation for us is, however, given by His on-going Incarnation during the Divine Liturgy. The Incarnation of Christ is not simply an historical event, with the Person of Christ confined to a time in history. In the Divine Liturgy, His Incarnation is a living reality in our being and in the present individually and communally. As Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos puts it, "Human nature remains indistinguishable from the divine nature, the God-Man always exists forever. That is

why we can now share the once-visible Body and Blood of the Logos. Partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, we become made of the same Flesh and Blood of Christ." (The Major Feast Days, by Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, pg. 62.)

The beginning of every Divine Liturgy begins with prayerful references to the Nativity of our Lord (a.k.a., "Christmas"). During the "Preparation Service" (the *Proskomidi*), which takes place with the Orthros Service, the priest speaks in prayer, saying: "And the Star came over the place where the young Child was with Mary His Mother...born in a cave and laid in a manger." Also called to mind is His Blood that was spilled when "He was pierced by the lance," as He physically died on the Cross. As the Holy Spirit came to dwell in the body of the Ever-Virgin, the Holy Spirit also comes to dwell

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Mailing Address  
St. George Church  
P.O. Box 4755  
Palm Desert, CA 92261  
Tel: (760) 568-9901  
FAX: (760) 568-9492  
Email: [psdsaintgeorge@gmail.com](mailto:psdsaintgeorge@gmail.com)  
Website: [www.go-stgeorge.org](http://www.go-stgeorge.org)  
-Fr. Theodore Pantels, Pastor--  
-Dcn. Euthym Kontaxis, M.D.

among us at the Altar from which the flesh of Christ our God is united to our flesh through Holy Communion. This union begets in us a *Christ-like mentality*, through which we view everything about our lives as belonging to God. In this union, our souls and our bodies take on divine qualities. The Saints call this *deification* -- i.e., being less "human" and more "divine." In this, we can experience a foretaste of the divine happiness that comes with His Eternal Kingdom, where there is *"no sorrow; no mourning, no sighing,"* as we hear in the prayers of our Church, and which in this present life is *"peace on earth and good will among all."* (St. Luke 2: 14).

As opposed to the relentless pursuit of worldly happiness, which society holds to be sacred, the Church encourages us to "take up our crosses" in the effort to be like Christ. St. Athanasios the Great, in his treatise, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, would say that, because Christ our God took upon Himself human flesh and blood, we partake of the joy of His Eternal Life, as well, *"He is to come again, no more to suffer, but henceforth to render to all the fruit of His own Cross."* (Nicene-Post Nicene Fathers, Ser. 2, Vol. 10, pg. 66).

This is spiritual life, which by itself declares "the moral stand" of the Church on today's moral issues. Compromising our "stand" in favor of worldly values allows the spiritual way of life to become a worldly way of life, in which we ultimately act in "God-less" ways, giving way to evil ways. The blessings of Christmas, however, come from leading a "God-filled" way of life.

+FR. THEODORE

### ADVENT: SEASON FOR FASTING AND HOLY CONFESSION

Fasting is not easy during this season, given the many Christmas parties that are held. We should, however, keep in mind that making our best efforts to observe the fasting discipline is important for our souls. As my beloved friend, **Fr. Charles Lehman** often said: *"At least do something!"* It is also a season in which many call to mind the Sacrament of Holy Confession. Please contact Fr. Ted at (760) 880-5869 to make an appointment.

## THANKSGIVING ENCYCLICAL



Dearly Beloved,

As we are preparing to celebrate our national holiday of Thanksgiving we find ourselves at a very difficult time in our Metropolis, especially for those of us living in California. How can we celebrate as we witness the devastating fires in our State, and the murderous shooting in Thousand Oaks, where so many and so much has been lost? The suffering these tragedies have caused fill us with sadness at a time when our hearts and thoughts should be turning to joy and celebration in the Feast of Thanksgiving.

As Orthodox Christians, thanksgiving and gratitude are part of our life. At many of our liturgical services, but especially in the Divine Liturgy, we give thanks to God knowing that He is the source of every gift. *"For every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from You the Father of lights" (James 1:17a)*. We teach our children to say "thank you" from very young. Being grateful and expressing thanks is a daily activity, not just a behavior we do once a year.

So, even amid the tragedies of the recent days, we will gather with family and friends, over a sumptuous feast and give thanks to Almighty God because *"God is still Good and has not abandoned us"* as Saint Basil the Great wrote (*In Time of famine and drought*, 5) so long ago. We will offer thanksgiving prayers for life and health, for families, friends, and neighbors, for homes and safety, and for material and spiritual blessings the Almighty God bestows on each of us every day of our lives. And as we are grateful and offer thanks, let us use this day to become more mindful of those who have lost so much in recent days, but also those who live daily in conditions of want, of fear and anxiety, in loneliness and isolation, and many other adverse situations.

Our mindfulness should not lead us to *"thank God that we are not like other men"* (Luke 18:11), but to help us to see more clearly what is truly important in life. With that realization, we have

*Continued on the next page ----->*

the opportunity to soften our hearts and open ourselves for acts of mercy and compassion as our Lord commanded so often. Especially now, as we see so much suffering around us, open your hearts and assist those who have lost so much. Grieve with those who have lost loved ones. Support the first responders. Give generously to the parishes and charities that are taking up collections to assist these families. In this way, our Thanksgiving Day becomes a day of deep spiritual significance, one that can encourage us to greater acts of kindness and charity, thus bringing into the world the love of God.

May your Thanksgiving Day be replete with such acts as you actualize the Grace and Mercy of God.

With Love in Christ,  
++METROPOLITAN GERASIMOS

## PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS



**November--** Our General Meeting on November 12 was special with a Book Reading by **Dr. John Manesis**. He has been writing poetry for 30 years and read from his sixth book. He has had his poetry printed in 100 literary magazines. After John read from his book, he signed his books and donated \$5.00 from every book sold to Philoptochos. We now carry his signed books in our book store. Please check them out. Several members prepared lunch of lasagna, asparagus, salad and garlic bread. We had pumpkin pie for dessert. Following the book reading we had a short meeting.

We helped AHEPA this month by selling tickets to their Thanksgiving Lunch on November 18. They had 31 reservations this year. Thank you to **Athena Snarskis** and her team for handling the reservations. Our donations for this month included:

### Local Charities:

- Boys and Girls Club of Indio,
- Birth Choice and High Hope
- DanceGroup (teaching children and adults with Down's Syndrome)
- Street Life - We provided and served

Thanksgiving dinner to 300 homeless in Indio and another 200 were at fed at another park. This was on November 20.

Church: Ladder, Voice and Chair Project

National: Ecumenical Patriarch and Presvyteras Benevolent Fund

**December--**The annual Christmas Bake Sale will be on December 9 and 16. There are no orders taken this year. It will be first come, first serve. We have extended dates to **pick up** your bread and cookies: **Monday and Tuesday, December 10 and 11, Thursday, Friday, December 13 and 14 between the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.** We made cookies on November 26, 27 and 29 and bread will be made on December 3,4 and 6,7. Please come and help package the bread in the afternoon.

Our annual Christmas Lunch will be on December 8 at Desert Horizons Country Club. Reservations are now closed.

We are making the homebound Gift baskets on Wednesday, December 12 at 10:00 a.m. We need volunteers to fill the baskets and to deliver them. Please let **Rhonda Latkovic** know how you can help.

We will be sending an end of year Goody Box to Devon Latzen our adopt- a- student for Christmas/Winter. We will fill the box with our Christmas Card, bread and cookies and other treats.

### Donations:

#### Local Charity

Coachella Valley Rescue Mission.

The President and Board of Directors want to thank our parishioners and members for making Philoptochos a thriving part of the Church this year. Thank you for the donations for our charities and various projects and to the volunteers we need to make our fund raisers successful.

--LINDA KALLIS,  
Philoptochos President

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*PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS, Continued*

Below are pictures from our November General Members Meeting, with **Dr. John Manesis**.



Dr. John Manesis read selections of poems published in his new book, *With Steadied Hands*, during the November Philoptochos General Members Meeting.



His book is currently on sale at our St. George Parish Book Store.

**CHOIR NOTES**

Our parish choir, led by **Annette Laskaris**, is preparing for the liturgical hymns surrounding the celebration of our Lord's Nativity on December 25th.

Choir Practice will be held **every Thursday at 1:00 p.m.** throughout most of December. Those who want to sing with the choir on Sundays and feast days are asked to contact Annette Laskaris. Male voices --especially tenors -- are most welcome.

**AHEPA NEWS**

Special thanks to past **AHEPA Supreme Governor, Don Vanover** who joined in worship at our parish and served as the main speaker for this year's **AHEPA Veterans Day Program**, held on **Sunday, November 11th**.

Also, many thanks to all who supported this year's AHEPA Thanksgiving Luncheon held at the **Towne Center Café** on **November 18th**, and especially to our **St. George Ladies of Philoptochos**, who helped in promoting this most successful event. Many thanks also to **George Argyros** who served the delicious luncheon menu!

Coming up, we are preparing for our annual **Christmas Dinner** on **Wednesday, December 12, 2018**. For details and RSVPs contact **Wynn Storton** no later than **Sunday, December 9th**.

Following the holiday season, we look forward to participating in the **AHEPA District 20 Mid-Winter Conference**, which will take place at the **Assumption Greek Orthodox Church Cultural Center** in **Long Beach, California** on **January 19, 2019**. This conference is hosted by AHEPA Chapter 342 and the Daughters of Penelope Chapter 159. The evening will feature the **AHEPA Western Regional Supreme Banquet**, hosted by our own AHEPA Chapter 528. Participants are planning for overnight accommodations at the **Holiday Inn** at the **Long Beach Airport**. Mark **Sunday, February 3, 2019** on your calendars and plan to join in the annual **AHEPA Chapter 528 Super Bowl Party**, which will be held at our St. George parish hall.

All AHEPA Chapter 528 members are reminded to help publicize our upcoming **St. George Greek Festival**, which will be held on **February 16-17, 2019**. In addition, we need all members to help in the areas Festival set-up and clean-up, as well as specifically setting up and manning our AHEPA 528 Festival Booth.

Pictures from our AHEPA Thanksgiving Luncheon are available on the next page.

## AHEPA THANKSGIVING LUNCHEON

Below are pictures from this year's AHEPA Thanksgiving Luncheon on November 18th.



AHEPA Thanksgiving Luncheon. To the left: Harry Platis, former AHEPA President of an AHEPA Chapter in Washington State. To the right: Wynn Storton, AHEPA 528 Chapter President and AHEPA Western Regional Supreme Governor.



AHEPA Thanksgiving Luncheon: left to right- Bess Manesis, Steve Banke, Nelly Banke, Ann Boukidis-Michas and John Manesis.



AHEPA Thanksgiving Luncheon: left to right - Bess Heinrich, Evelyn Karas, Doug Lyons, Carol Lyons, Lula Valissarakos.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL

We look forward to presenting our annual **Sunday School Christmas Program** to our St. George parishioners on **Sunday, December 16, 2018** immediately following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. As always, our Sunday School students perform an excellent and inspiring spiritual program emphasizing the events leading to the Birth in the flesh of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

On **Saturday, December 22nd**, our Sunday School students will be singing Christmas carols to members of our parish who are homebound or who reside in care facilities.

In offering the Christmas program to our community and by visiting the homebound, our students learn to work together as *one body* in Christ. This is important from the point of view of caring for one another, as well. We can care for others through the virtue of humility, which stands in opposition to the faults of envy or jealousy.

**Deacon Euthym**, in one of his daily reflections this past month, shared these thoughts:

*"It is madness for a Christian to be envious. In Christ we have all received infinitely great blessings." (St. John of Kronstadt). Envy over worldly success or blessings is madness. These are temporary matters and insignificant in comparison to the gift of eternal life. However it is the cause of much strife, sin and suffering...Cain and Abel, Joseph and Potiphar's wife, David and Bathsheba, Judas, the Pharisees...the list goes on. These are examples of envy in the Scripture that illustrate what St. John means...madness. Let us check ourselves especially in this age of social media, where comparisons with others has reached a new level. Envy and depression are consequences of immersion into the lives of others through social media. We would be better off taking the hour of 'surfing' to list our blessings from God and ask for His continued blessings or to find a way to serve and help others. St. John uses the word 'madness,' specifically, because when we become envious it leads to mental instability and poor decision making. So, let us rejoice in the blessings others have and in our own. Only then can we appreciate God's great gift of salvation to us."*



## THE CHURCH & MENTAL WELLNESS

### Is It Healthy to be Humble?

Over much of the 20th Century and into this present one, talk has been all about the importance of *self-esteem* when it comes to mental and emotional health. The word *humility* is rarely heard in its true meaning and, as a "virtue," humility has been viewed by many as a weakness rather than as a strength. So, while progressives and the "enlightened" of our time continue to tout the importance of self esteem, one may wonder about the wisdom of the Church down through the ages in emphasizing the importance of humility. Could it be that the humility actually works to "hold back" the potentials of human beings, who otherwise would forge ahead to accomplish wonders? A closer look reveals that the teachings of our Lord and His Church have been right all along: *humility is good for your health!* Research in sociology and medicine is showing this to be true.

Space here allows us to mention only two works that have come to light giving impetus to the value of humility. In 2017 an Australian Insurance company, N.I.B., concluded a study posted in an article entitled, "Sit Down. Be Humble. Science Says It's Good For You," reporting: "*Being humble has had a bad rap over the last century, with the dictionary defining it as 'the quality of having a modest or low view of one's importance'...Humility is about having the strength to put the greater good above your own personal ambitions or, as Rick Warren once put it, 'Humility isn't about thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.'*" ([www.nib.com.au/the-check-up/healthy-living](http://www.nib.com.au/the-check-up/healthy-living)). Humility has proven to be the main factor in the areas of good business management; good personal relationships and productive volunteerism, benefitting many others.

A few excerpts from Dr. Harold Koenig's classic book, entitled, *Medicine, Religion and Health*, help to add even more clarity to arguments that favor the value of humility to our health: "*Studies of the effects of psychological and social factors on the physical body over the past two and a half decades have re-*

*sulted in the emergence of an entirely new scientific field of research called psychoneuroimmunology...Religious beliefs and practices are the most important way that people cope with illness and the life changes caused by illness and...religious coping was a 'pervasive and potentially effective method' of coping for persons with mental illness, thus warranting its integration into psychiatric and psychological practice."* (pgs.54-62). Koenig uses the word "coping," which is synonymous with the virtue known as *endurance* -- a powerful force and one of the fruits of *humility*, which, Orthodox Christian Saints claim is the *mother of all virtues*.

Humility is at work when the addict or alcoholic says with deep sincerity: "*I am powerless...that 'my life' has become unmanageable and [I have] made the decision to turn my will and life over to the care of God.*" (words adapted from the 12-Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous). As most in the field of rehabilitation would say, these words vocalize the very first step to recovery and health.

On a deeper level, when viewed from the point of view of the Gospel and the spiritual counsels of Saints, humility is a *Person!* St. John of the Ladder points to our Savior's words recorded in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "*Learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls.*" (vs. 29), further explaining, "*Humility [is] a Name and gift from God; for, it is said, 'Learn not from an angel, not from man, not from a book, but from Me, that is, from Me indwelling, from My illumination and action in you...'*" (*The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, pg. 191). In fact, our Savior is the image of extreme humility: "*He humbled Himself, being obedient unto death.*" (Philippians 2: 8).

Taking upon ourselves the Image of Christ, Who humbly took upon Himself our Image made in His Image -- the Creator becoming the creature -- we know that we have the power of God within us all along, because His strength is made perfect in our humility so that we can be *like God*. It's something to think about as we celebrate His Nativity later this month, calling to mind His *humble* birth in a cave, while being laid in a manger.

+FR. THEODORE

## THE 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS: WHAT DO THEY MEAN TO US?

During this season, we often hear "holiday tunes" that focus on Christmas. One of these songs "the 12 days of Christmas" that leads to the height of receiving and giving gifts throughout the season. It is interesting that in the Greek language the word for Christmas is a plural word: "Christougena," or, "Christmases," as in 12 days.

In reality the so-called 12 days of Christmas have a liturgical basis. The feast day of Christmas liturgically is called the Nativity of Christ. The Nativity of Christ is celebrated on December 25. Following this great feast day we have several liturgical feast days leading up to the baptism of Christ on January 6. These include: the Synaxis of the Theotokos, the feast day of St. Stephen the first martyr; the Sunday after the Nativity (at which time we commemorate the ancestor David the king, Joseph the betrothed, and James the brother of the Lord, along with the 14,000 holy innocents who were slaughtered by Herod); the circumcision of Christ on January 1, followed by the eve of Theophany on January 5 (which is a fasting day) and the Baptism of Christ on January 6. So, from December 25 to January 6 there are the 12 days of the feast, interrupted by one day of strict fasting on January 5.

If we were to include the Sunday before Christmas as the whole part of the celebration of Christ's Incarnation, then of course, there are more than 12 days of spiritual reflection related to the Incarnation of Christ. On the Sunday before Christmas we read the Gospel of St. Matthew who explains that the chosen people are inheritors of God's redemption as His people. The reality of "Messiahship" is made clear with the long list of ancestors leading up to the Incarnation of Christ. Most of the blessed images of Christ's Nativity come to us through the Gospel of St. Luke. And here we have the images of the humility of his birth into the world. This is the real Christmas gift: God's Only-Begotten Son came to redeem all of mankind!

I always like to gravitate to the 14,000 Holy Innocents slain by Herod. There were many thousands who died in order to make a life for the dying king bearable. If anyone doubts this, remember that Herod had two of his sons and one of his wives killed in order to make his rule "secure". I think about the victims of abortion with the slaughter of the Innocents.

With the circumcision of the Lord on January 1 the reality of Christ's coming in the flesh while honoring the law of the Jewish people comes into focus. Christ also received his name, Jesus, on that day. It so happens that on January 1st we also commemorate the memory of St. Basil the Great. The lives of both St. Basil the Great and St. Nicholas of Myro speak of *giving* rather than *receiving*.

January 5 is a fasting day calling to remembrance the humility of Christ who deigned to take on human flesh for our salvation. This act on the part of our God is known as his **extreme humility**, which continues throughout His ministry and up to His death on the Cross. His ministry for our salvation begins with his Baptism in the river Jordan which is celebrated the following day on January 6. The prayers that are read for the blessing of the waters on this day remind us of the double feast: the Incarnation of Christ and the renewal of humanity through his Baptism. That Christ is God who renews us is affirmed by the voice of the Father proclaiming Him to be His well-beloved Son and with the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of the Dove.

The truth is that no human gift can compare to the great gift of God himself. God gave Himself to us as an offering to change our reality. Only if we accept the reality of God's great gift and sacrifice can we understand Christmas. This is the reality of the 12 days of Christmas. It is a reality for each and every one of us. May the love of God, Who shares His love, be a real calling to all of us during these days of Christmas!

--MATTHEW DAVIS

## HIS EMINENCE, METROPOLITAN JOSEPH TO VISIT ST. RAPHAEL ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

His Eminence, Metropolitan Joseph of the Antiochian Orthodox Church of New York and All of America will be visiting the St. Raphael parish in Thousand Palms on December 8 and 9, 2018. The schedule for the weekend of December 8th and 9th is as follows:

### Saturday, December 8, 2018:

Reception of His Eminence, Metropolitan Joseph and Great Vesper Service - 5:00 p.m.

### Sunday, December 9, 2018:

Orthros- 9:00 a.m.

Hierarchical Divine Liturgy-10:00 a.m.

Parish Banquet at the Archangels Michael and Gabriel Romanian Orthodox Church hall in Palm Springs- 12:30 p.m.

## PARISH COUNCIL UPDATE

Nick Kaperonis had previously distributed the newly drafted "**Financial Procedures Document**" for the Board members to review and come up with questions or suggestions. He invited **Cherise Everett**, our accountant to attend this meeting and to answer any questions Board members might have. **Tina Veroulis** introduced Cherise to the Board. Cherise informed the Board that they worked on this document over the summer to make sure that all financial areas were clearly defined. She asked if Board members had questions or concerns. **Becky Allen** responded that the document was well done, very thorough and thanked both of them for their hard work. Nick Kaperonis thanked Cherise for coming. The Parish Council voted to adopt the document.



**Father Ted** informed the Board that he had received a **letter from the Metropolis that the 2019 Commitment to the Metropolis will remain the same as it was in 2018**. The Board now can proceed preparing the 2019 budget. **Nick Kaperonis** and **Rhonda Latkovic** will work on the budget

and present it at the December meeting for approval.

The upgrade for the parish hall was discussed. The new parish hall Chairs-and-Tables Project is completely paid and are now set up in our parish hall. Sliding doors will be installed in order to join the parish hall to the courtyard. The Architectural Glazing Company was selected for the job. They have recommended a construction company to do the preparation work before the doors are installed. The contractor is Tim Hamm and will charge \$1,880.00. This amount will include the city permit. The city requires an installation of 3 outdoor lights. The doors are 8x8 with a 4 foot opening. The company recommended that all doors open the same direction, right to left from the outside and left to right from the inside. The price is \$7,074.36 and it includes screen doors.

The new church carpet to be installed was also selected by the Parish Council. The cost will be \$9,283.60. Nick Kaperonis said that a \$4,500 payment is needed before ordering the carpet. Funds for these projects would be drawn from the J.P. Morgan Accounts.

In addition, **Lula Valissarkos** showed the progress that was made in producing the new red Altar coverings for our St. George parish.

As the 2019 Budget is being prepared, funds are to be budgeted for the installation of a new air conditioning/heating unit for the Desert Cancer Foundation, our tenants next door to the church.

Finally, discussion was entertained pertaining to topics to be presented at the **Fall General Assembly Meeting** to be held on **Sunday, December 9, 2018**. It was noted that General Assembly announcements would be mailed to parishioners two weeks prior to the General Assembly with the agenda, year-to-date financial report and the Proposed 2019 Parish Budget to be enclosed in the mailing.



## PET BLESSING EVENT

Our **Pet Blessing** Event was changed this year to the later November 3rd date in the hopes the weather would be milder. And the weather did not disappoint! It was a lovely morning and we set up hoping for 20-25 attendees.

Unfortunately, we ended up with only seven attendees from our church plus representatives from two local non-profit groups: **Paws & Hearts, Animal Assisted Therapy, Richard Waxman, and Loving All Animals, Lynn Lockwood.**

Richard and Lynn each gave a short presentation about their organization and the services provided by them to the local community. Richard spoke about the improvement of wellness with individuals in long term care who are visited by their organization offering pet therapy. Improvements to both emotional and physical health are often noted.

Lynn spoke about the SOS (Seniors Offering Support) to temporarily foster dogs for an average of two weeks before they are adopted by their "forever" family. For a senior, who is alone, on a fixed income, and loves dogs, this program can be a perfect way to gain the companionship of an animal, albeit temporarily, with no expenses incurred (the organization reimburses the foster "pet-parent").



Richard Waxman (standing) gives a talk about the therapy-giving qualities of pets.



Lynn Lockwood explained the process of adopting pets from "Loving All Animals."

Refreshments were available including spanakopita, cupcakes, etc. and a pet "Doggy bag" was given to each attendee. Pastries and bread were sold with \$75.00 donated to our Ladies Philoptochos group from their sale.

We wish to thank **Steve Banke** and "little **Stevie**" for helping Father Ted with the Pet Blessing service. Stevie did a fantastic job of reading the many prayers of the service. In addition, our thanks to **Pauline Latkovic**, who greeted attendees and passed out the "Doggy bags", and to **Pat Dalkas** who baked the bread for Philoptochos. A thank you to **Angelo Veroulis**, who helped set up the tables and chairs in the courtyard. And of course our thanks to all who attended the blessing event this year, including **Emily Tcharos, Kathy Amos** and her friend, and **Doris Elmo**, who was the winner of a beautiful gift basket!

Due to the low attendance, we will have to take a hard look at whether this event should be planned for next year.



To the left, Doris Elmo enjoys the affection of her pet dog, Mack, while attending this year's Pet Blessing event.

**ST. GEORGE BOOK STORE** -- Visit our St. George book store during the month of December. Popular books that are now available are: *The Orthodox Way*, by Bishop Kallistos Ware; *Our Thoughts Determine our Lives*, Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnika; *Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy*, by Stephen Damik. We have several books of poetry written by one of our own parishioners, entitled, *With Steadied Hands*, by Dr. John Manasis.

*With Steadied Hands*, along with any other books and/or icons would make fine Christmas presents for loved ones. We can also order Orthodox religious items or books upon request.

## STREETLIFE PROJECT THANKSGIVING DINNER FOR THE HOMELESS

This will be the second year in a row that we have donated, transported, and served the Thanksgiving Dinner to the homeless in our east valley location in Indio at Miles Park in conjunction with the non-profit **StreetLife Project** group.

Thanks to the monetary donations from several "undercover angels" in our community, we were able to have a turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy, and green beans dinner prepared for 300-350 people. **George & Stacy Argyros**, as busy as they are with the running of two local restaurants, prepared the meal for our volunteer group, which is no small task, and we offer them our thanks! Other volunteer organizations assisting brought rolls and pumpkin pies, coffee, and water.

It took four vehicles to transport the food and other items needed to serve the homeless. Those individuals that stepped up to transport essentials to & from the event were **Tina & Angelo Veroulis, Crystal Maganas, Harry Platis, Father Ted, and Rhonda Latkovic**.

Upon arriving at the Miles Park location on Tuesday, November 20th, the group proceeded to unload cars & set-up the food containers onto tables. We were so thrilled to see a large amount of volunteers from our community on hand to assist with the event! Volunteers wore our church aprons and various jobs were assigned to all with some volunteers handling the dishing of the food onto plates, some volunteers taking the plates and serving the homeless, who were seated at tables, and other volunteers following along cleaning up and bagging garbage.

Father Ted gave the opening prayer for all before dinner was served and then we jumped into action! We finished around 8:00 pm, took a group photo, which is posted on our church website, and headed home.

Compared to last year's crowd, the number of homeless fed was slightly less, estimated at 280-300 total. However, there were several trays of

leftovers that the **StreetLife Project** volunteers took to two more locations that evening, telling us that all the food was gone by the end of the night.

We wish to offer our sincere thanks to everyone who volunteered for this worthwhile cause. Again, we were overwhelmed with the support of all the many volunteers, too many to name here, who came out to support this effort.

We are planning to provide 600 + iced & decorated sugar cookies for the two Christmas dinners planned by the **StreetLife** group on **December 18th and 20th in both Indio & Palm Springs locations**. If you would like to assist, we will provide the cookies, the icing, and sprinkles and plan to meet at noon in the church hall on **Friday, December 14th** to complete decorating the cookies. A light lunch will be provided. RSVP to **Rhonda Latkovic** if you wish to help out.

The homeless are also in need of new toys for children and warm clothing items like socks, ski caps, gloves, and scarves for both children & adults. A donation box will be set up in the church hall for anyone to drop off their donation prior to December 16th.

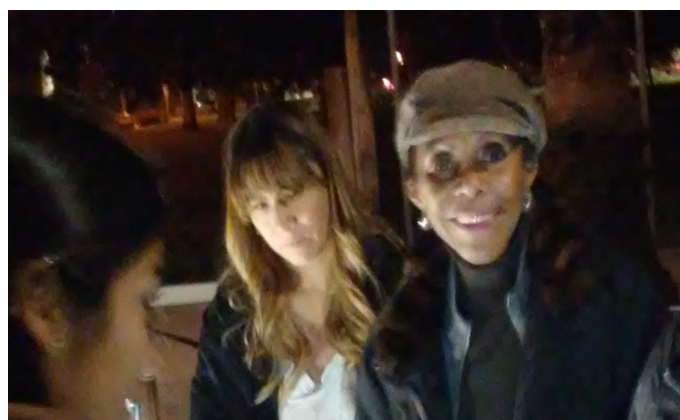


See next  
page





PICTURES FROM: STREETLIFE PROJECT THANKSGIVING DINNERS



Previous Page: Group picture of St. George Streetlife volunteers. Left picture: (left to right) Maria Zahariadou and Parish President, Nick Krespis. Right picture: (left to right) Mr. and Mrs. Peter Peterson, Harry Platis.

On this page, clockwise from top: John Petalas, Nick Krespis, Tina Veroulis. Louise Dobbs Barringer with Streetlife helper. Paulette Carkonen, Joan Panopoulos, Lula Valissarakos, Stephanie Christopoulos. Peter Peterson, Eric Del Gato. Nadia Hector, Julie Makriannis. Thania Panopoulos (taking plates of food, serving tables).



To the left: Rhonda Latkovic, St. George Parish Stewardship Chairperson and parish liaison with the Streetlife ministry and the organizer of this event.



## COLORING BOOK GROUP

The **Adult Coloring Group** met on Friday, November 9th in the church hall. The ladies enjoyed a lunch of croissant sandwiches, Cesar salad, hummus and crackers, with apple pie for dessert. After lunch, coloring commenced and a raffle was held. approximately ten ladies were in attendance for this session.

Our next **Adult Coloring session** is planned for **Friday, December 14th at noon**. The lunch theme will be "Holiday Treats"! We plan to finish up icing and decorating 600 sugar cookies that will distributed to the **homeless on Tuesday, December 18th in Indio and Thursday, December 20th in Palm Springs**, in conjunction with the **StreetLife Project** group we have been helping over the past year.

See the enclosed flier for more details. Please RSVP for the December session by **Sunday, December 9th to Rhonda Latkovic**.



Above: Group photograph of participants at the November Coloring Book Group luncheon and meeting. Along with coloring books featuring selections of portraits and scenic views, coloring Books featuring Byzantine Iconography are also available.



Coloring Book Group: The November meeting and luncheon featured "Thanksgiving" cuisine: croissant sandwiches, Cesar Salad, hummus and crackers with apple pie for dessert.

## GREEK FESTIVAL UPDATE



An important **Festival Meeting** is scheduled for **Wednesday, December 5, 2018** at our parish hall at **7:00 p.m.**

Topics to be discussed include:

1. Chairpersons of Festival stations
2. Publicity
  - fliers
  - social media
  - newspaper advertisements
  - T.V. /Radio announcements
  - Banners for public display
3. Arrangements for parking and transporting Festival attendees.
  - locations of available neighborhood parking lots.
  - transportation carts on El Paseo
4. Sponsorships and ads/ Program "booklet"
5. Baking and Set-up Schedules
6. Equipment inventory
7. Permits and Health Inspector's Requirements.

Please note the "St. George 2019 Festival Sponsorship and Ad Program" enclosed in this month's *Voice of St. George Newsletter*.

## STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY

Our first **Stewardship Sunday for the 2019** fiscal year will be held on **December 9th, 2018**. At this time, the **new 2019 stewardship packets including pledge cards**, introductory campaign letters, and tri-fold brochures will be available for all Saint George stewards. The theme for the 2019 calendar year is, **STEWARDS OF OUR FAITH: "All things are possible to the one who believes in Christ."**

We will be distributing the 2019 Stewardship packets in the church hall after the Divine Liturgy service on December 9th. Any packets not picked up on this day will be mailed to our parishioners.

We would like to have the new pledge card completed & returned to the office or to **Rhonda Latkovic by January 20th, 2019**. On this day, during the service, Father Ted will bless the stewardship cards that are placed in the offering tray.

Our fiscal Stewardship goal for 2019 is \$125,000.

If you have any questions or comments, or would like to become a member of the Stewardship team for 2019, please see **Rhonda Latkovic**, Stewardship Chairperson.

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Our **2018 Fall General Assembly** will be held on **Sunday, December 9, 2018** in our parish hall following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. In order to participate fully in the proceedings, one must be a member of our St. George parish in good standing and be up to date with his or her 2018 Stewardship Pledge. If anyone has questions regarding his or her status, please contact Fr. Ted as soon as possible.

The agenda for this General Assembly Meeting:

1. Call to Order Opening Prayer
2. Confirmation of quorum
3. Selection of Assembly Chairperson
4. Selection of Assembly Secretary
5. Minutes of Spring General Assembly meeting
6. Financial Report

7. Proposed 2019 Budget
8. Stewardship Report
9. Endowment Fund Report
10. Auditing Committee
11. Maintenance and improvements
12. Festival
13. Selection of Election Committee
14. Selection of Auditing Committee
15. Parish Council Nominations
16. Adjournment and Closing Prayer

## UPGRADE OF THE PARISH HALL

The Parish Council has been discussing plans for upgrading of the church hall going on two years now. Last year the new tile floor was laid and it has made a huge improvement to our hall in both form and function.

We recently purchased 100 new upholstered chairs for the hall. We were able to purchase them at wholesale, and they are a great value at \$35 each. We were blessed to receive many donations to cover the cost of all the chairs and we will also be purchasing a few new round tables to replace ones that are getting a little worn around the edges.

Our next hall project, that is scheduled to be complete before the festival, is the addition of three, eight foot sliding glass doors on the back wall of the hall. The existing windows are to be removed and the sliders will be installed. The sliders are custom-made and the project cost will be \$9000. With these new sliding glass doors, the vision of having a hall that can open onto our open space courtyard will be realized. This will be as asset when we have events like dinners, dances, and parties.

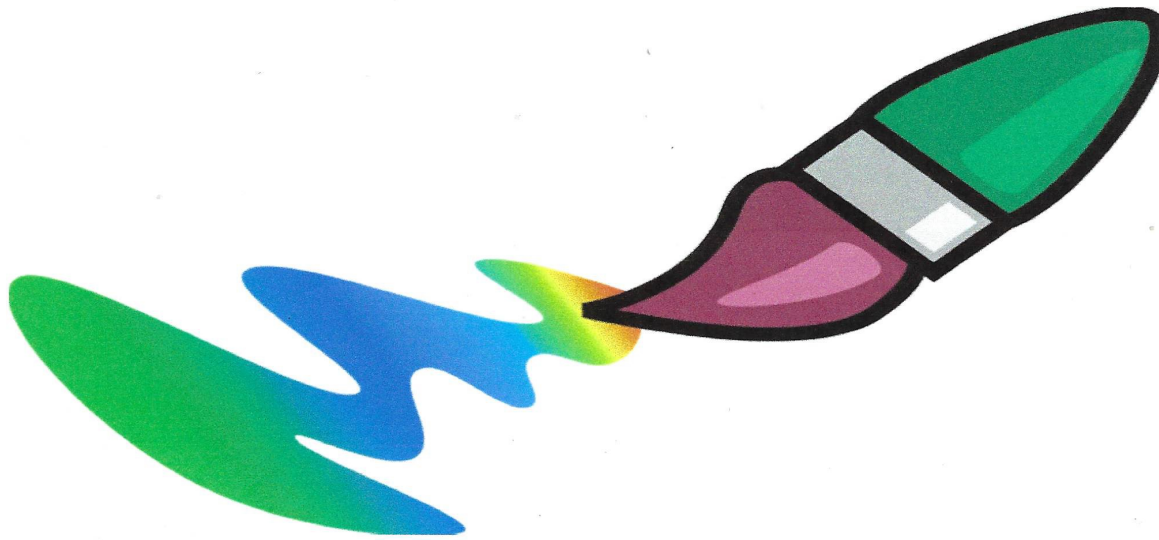
In the future (2-3 year plan), we are looking at upgrading the ceiling tiles in the hall along with the lighting, the bar countertop area, and adding a covered patio overhang along the back outside wall.

# DECEMBER 2018

St. George Greek Orthodox Church of the Desert  
 74-109 Larrea St. / P.O. Box 4755  
 Palm Desert, California 92261  
 web: [www.go-stgeorge.org/](http://www.go-stgeorge.org/) email: [pdsaintgeorge@gmail.com](mailto:pdsaintgeorge@gmail.com)  
 Telephone: (760)568-9901 / FAX: 9760) 568-9492

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Sunday Schedule Orthros-8:30 a.m D. Liturgy-9:30 a.m. Sunday School-10:30 a.m.						1
2-14th Sunday of Luke Ep. Eph.6:10-17 Gos.Luke 18:35-43	3 Philoptochos Board Mtg-1 p.m.	4 Bible Study-10 am.	5 Festival Meeting. 7 p.m.	6-ST. NICHOLAS Orthros-8:30 am D. Liturgy-9:30 Choir Practice- 1 p.m. Parish Council-2:30 pm	7	8 Philoptochos Christmas Luncheon -11:30am At: Desert Horizons Country Club
9-10th Sunday of Luke Ep.Gal. 4:22-27 Gos.Luke 13:10-17 -Stewardship Sun. -Philop.Bake Sale -Gen. Assembly	10	11 Bible Study- 10 am	12 ST.SPYRIDON Orthros-8:30 am D. Liturgy-9:30 Philoptochos Gift-Basket Assembly-10:30 AHEPA -6 p.m.	13 Choir Practice- 1 p.m.	14 Coloring Book Group-12 noon	15
16-11th Sunday of Luke Ep. Col.3:4-11 Gos.Luke 14:16-24 -Christmas Prog. -Phil. Bake Sale -Parish Elections	17- ST. DIONYSIOS Orthros-8:30 a.m. D. Liturgy-9:30	18 Bible Study- 10 am	19	20 Choir Practice- 1 p.m.	21	22
23-Sunday Before The Nativity Ep. Heb.11:9-10; 32-40 Gos. Matth. 1:1-25	24-EVE OF THE NATIVITY Royal Hours-8:30 am D.Liturgy -9:30 am	<b>25-NATIVITY OF OUR LORD</b> <b>Orthros-8:30</b> <b>D.Liturgy-9:30</b>	26	27-ST.STEPHEN THE MARTYR Orthros-8:30 am D. Liturgy-9:30	28	29
30-Sunday After The Nativity Ep.Gal. 1:11-19 Gos.Matth. 2:13-23	31	<b>JANUARY 1</b> CIRCUMCISION OF THE LORD ST. BASIL Orthros-8:30 a.m D. Liturgy-9:30 <b>New Year's Day</b>	<u>JANUARY 2</u>	<u>JANUARY 3</u> Choir Practice- 1 p.m.	<u>JANUARY 4</u>	<u>JANUARY 5</u> EVE OF THEOPHANY Hours -8:30am D. Liturgy-9:30 am Great Agiasmo Strict Fasting Day





# **ADULT COLORING SESSION & LUNCHEON**

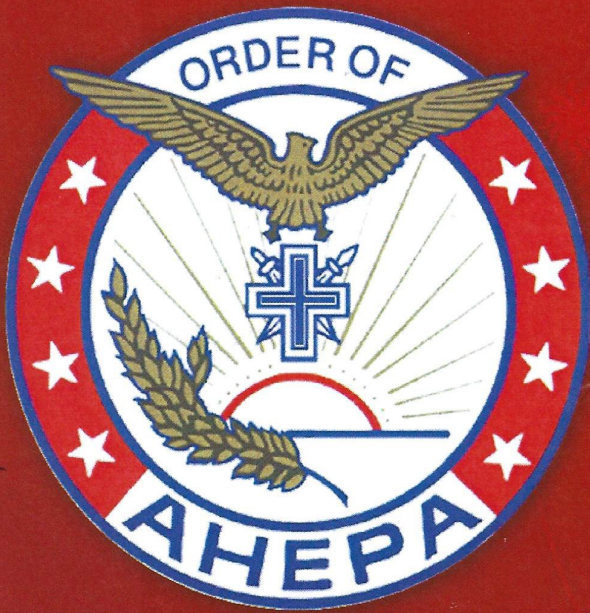
**When: Friday, December 14th @ 12 PM-2 PM**

**Where: St. George Church Hall**

**RSVP: By Dec. 9<sup>th</sup> to Rhonda Latkovic**

**Our next luncheon & adult coloring session will be Friday, December 14<sup>th</sup>. Lunch will be served at 12:00 PM. A raffle will be held. A \$5.00 minimum donation is requested. Coloring supplies provided. We will be icing sugar cookies for the homeless for the Streetlife Christmas Dinners in Indio & Palm Springs. Please join us!**





# CHRISTMAS SUPPER

12/12/2018

6pm at

Norma's Italian Kitchen

42418 Bob Hope Dr, Rancho Mirage, CA 92270

RSVP today

[Ahepa528.org](http://Ahepa528.org)

[Contact@ahempa528.org](mailto:Contact@ahempa528.org)

CHAPTER 528



# SAINT GEORGE 2019 GREEK FESTIVAL SPONSORSHIP & AD PROGRAM

**Event Dates: Sat. & Sun., February 16th - 17th, 2019**

Terms: Cash/Check/Credit

Attached is my check in the sum of:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsorship/Ad Choice: \_\_\_\_\_

## Sponsorship/Ad Choices Available:

Sponsorship Levels: (includes full color ad on outside back of Festival Program, Sponsorship listing on Festival Website, festival admission tickets, & goody bag)

**Gold Sponsor Level - Corporate logo with name ----- \$ 1000**

**Silver Sponsor Level - Corporate logo with name ----- \$ 500**

Advertising Choices: (includes black & white ad inside Festival Program, listing on Festival Website)

**Corporate - Corporate logo with name ----- \$ 300**

**Personal - 2-line message with name ----- \$ 150**

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

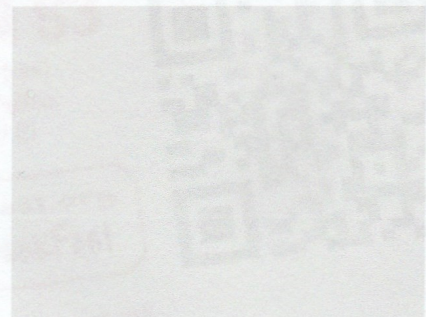
City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Authorized Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to:  
St. George Greek Orthodox Church  
P.O. Box 4755  
Palm Desert, CA 92261  
Phone: (760) 568-9901  
Email: [pdsaintgeorge@gmail.com](mailto:pdsaintgeorge@gmail.com)  
Fax: (760) 568-9492

Print personal ad below:



**Absolute DEADLINE for Copy: January 20th, 2019**

Electric submission of camera ready corporate logos & names are accepted in most formats.