

NOVEMBER 2020



# Voice of St. George

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

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



## THANK GOD FOR OUR SAINTS

Our Saints serve to remind us of the *experience* of the love of Christ our God. We know Christ as our Heavenly Physician; for, He assumes our spiritual and physical wounds and heals them through Divine Love and Forgiveness. Christ took upon Himself our wounds and continues to carry them into eternity -- the print of the nails and the lanced wound in His side. Christ is our Savior, because He suffers with us in order to heal us. In answer to St. Paul's prayer for healing, Christ responded: *"My strength is made perfect in your weakness."* (2 Corinthians 12:9).

These words characterize the life-style of the Saints, and, speaking of our Saints, we turn our attention to St. Andrew, the "First-Called" Apostle of our Savior, whom we commemorate on November 30th. Interestingly, St. Andrew was one of the Apostles who brought

certain Greeks to Christ, since they had traveled to Jerusalem during the Passover Feast. St. Andrew would later become the Apostle who preached the Gospel to the Greek-speaking world throughout Asia Minor, becoming the Founding Father of our Patriarchate in Constantinople. Yet, the fact that he introduced the Greeks to Jesus has a certain aura to it. The Greeks were the wise people of the Roman Empire, ruled by Greek philosophy and worship offered to false gods.

The world today is not so different than the world of our Lord's time. Ideals, defined by psychology and the sciences, dominate our thinking today in similar ways as did the philosophies of antiquity. *Pax Romana* was still not Paradise, and neither is the world in which we live today, because, without Christ, there is no genuine love for one another.

As Christ was mocked throughout His ministry in our world, today His Saints are ignored as being old-fashioned. Relatively few people study their writings or learn about their way of life. Still fewer make the effort to imitate the life-style of the Saints.

Through them we are reminded that Christ is the True God Who heals the wounds of humanity and overcomes death. All of His miracles are connected with faith in Him and the forgiveness of the sins of those healed. Upon meeting with the Greeks, our Lord proclaimed the following: *"The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified."* (St. John 12:23-24). Indeed, Christ sacrificed of Himself so that we can have life. As co-workers with Christ, we give of ourselves for the salvation of others. Saints commonly called this way of life "the life of Christ." It is a life in which one

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acquires the divine powers of Christ from the Grace of the Holy Spirit. Through the Saints, we see Christ's continued ministry of forgiveness and healing, as He cures our suffering which we have brought upon ourselves, because of sin, the cause of which is our pride, through which we worship ourselves instead of God. In essence, then, we wound ourselves.

Henri J. M. Nouwen, in his book, *The Wounded Healer*, notes that we are like the struggling people of our Lord's era. Many people see their lives as a "dead end." We have truly made our world a frightening place. Dreams of handing over an inheritance to future generations are thwarted by the real possibility that whatever we create will be blown away in a second by some insane, nuclear blast. The planet will be gone! Nouwen describes our world as a "nuclear world," noting, "When man is no longer able to look beyond his own death and relate himself to what extends beyond time and space of this life, he loses the desire to create and the excitement of being human." (pg. 31).

But, the Saints are truly human! St. Andrew is the "First-Called" of the Apostles who preached the Gospel of our Savior, reminding the world that "being human" is to be with Him, Who is the Giver of Life and that the *experience of God's love*, is deeper than philosophy. What awaits us is *salvation*, not simply *survival*.

Thanksgiving Day is a day to be thankful for the lives of our Saints, who constantly provide living examples of God's strength in our weakness.

+FR. THEODORE

## OUR HOLY ARCHDIOCESE

The Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, wanting to strengthen the role of the largest Eparchy of the Mother Church with a new vision and a new Charter suitable for the evolving and changing modern pastoral needs of American society, decided to place the current Charter (2003) of the Holy Archdiocese of America into abeyance. Temporarily, until the issuance of the new Charter, the administrative structures of the Archdiocese, i.e., the Holy Eparchial Synod, the Executive Committee,



the Archdiocesan Council, the Clergy-Laity Assembly, as well as the respective structures of the Metropolises will continue to function as they are.

Archbishop Elpidophoros commented on the decision of the Holy and Sacred Synod.

*"Today we feel especially blessed, because with this decision, the Ecumenical Patriarchate gives us the great opportunity to envision and design our Church together in view of its 100th anniversary. All together, clergy and laity, we will participate in a joint committee with our Patriarchate, and we will develop and complete a new plan with new perspectives on Orthodoxy in America for the next 100 years. With the Ecumenical Patriarchate, we will establish a joint committee to study the current needs and the dynamics of our Archdiocese and prepare the plan for our new Charter... [We] prepare for a new century with new visions to strengthen our ministry and renew Pan-Orthodox cooperation. We are all grateful to the leader of Orthodoxy and the Holy and Sacred Synod that is with him."* The full text of the Patriarchal Communiqué can be read at the following link: <https://www.goarch.org/-/ecumenical-patriarchate-communication-october-2020>

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros convened an extraordinary teleconference of the Holy Eparchial Synod on Monday, October 12, 2020, in order to evaluate these new decisions of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. In addition, the decision was made to ordain to the Office of Bishop the following priests, who are now addressed as "Bishop-Elect," listed in order of their dates of ordination: 1) **His Grace, Bishop-Elect, Spyridon of Amastris** (as priest, Fr. Spyridon Kezios), November 14, 2020; 2) **His Grace, Bishop-Elect, Timothy of Hexamilion** (as priest, Fr. Timothy Bakakos), December 9, 2020; 3) **His Grace, Bishop-Elect, John of Phocaea** (as priest, Fr. John Constantine), December 19, 2020.

**"AXIOS!" HIS GRACE,  
BISHOP-ELECT SPYRIDON of  
AMASTRIS**



It is our honor and privilege to welcome His Grace, Bishop-Elect Spyridon of Amastris to our St. George Greek Orthodox parish of Palm Desert. Not only do we join in joyfully proclaiming "AXIOS" (the Greek word meaning "WORTHY"), but we also are honored that our parish will be the spiritual home of His Grace, since he has recently become a new resident of our Palm Desert community.

His Grace, Bishop-Elect Spyridon will be ordained as Bishop of our Greek Orthodox Church at the Holy Cross parish in Belmont, California on Saturday, November 14, 2020 with His Eminence, Archbishop Elpidophoros and His Eminence, Metropolitan Gerasimos officiating. Deacon Euthym and Fr. Ted have been invited to participate in the ordination services.

His Grace has served our Holy Church faithfully throughout the years, becoming truly a priest serving as a spiritual guide for all the priests of our Metropolis, while also serving the Greek Orthodox parish of St. Nicholas in Northridge, California for many years. As the pastor of the St. Nicholas parish of Northridge, he guided the parish through the years in growing a dedicated flock of parishioners who worked with him to build a Greek Orthodox senior citizens' center and a fully accredited elementary/junior high school.

He has also served in guiding students, staff and administration at our Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Theological School and he is founder of Narthex Press Publishing, which has published thousands of copies of many Orthodox Church liturgical books for use by clergy and laity.

As his new spiritual home, St. George is honored to welcome His Grace, Bishop-Elect Spyridon. This is now his home to celebrate the Holy Sacraments; to worship, pray, and offer spiritual counsel to all.

**SUNDAY SCHOOL**

Our Sunday School program has successfully continued throughout October, as students, staff, and teachers have gathered on "zoom."

Currently, thoughts are being shared surrounding the issues of Orthodox Christian worship and acts of kindness in preparation for the Christmas Feast Day. In fact, in conjunction with our St. George Philoptochos Chapter, our students will be participating in a project showing expressions of kindness through words, such as sharing words of inspiration and hope for those who make up our overall community, and contributing to the food-drive efforts of Philoptochos, through which countless members of our Coachella Valley community are given much needed food. In particular, November 8th and 9th are designated as another food drive, with the goal of providing a great quantity of non-perishable foods for distribution through the efforts of the local "Narrow Door" organization.

Prospects for some sort of a Sunday School "virtual" Christmas program are currently being reviewed and will be announced in separate, individual emails to our parishioners as plans develop.

**FAITH FORWARD**

*Faith Forward* is the stewardship program of our Metropolis of San Francisco for receiving donations to help pay for the costs of Metropolis-wide ministries, which include financial aid to victims of fire and earthquake; the Family Wellness ministry for our clergy and parishioners; education materials for studies in Orthodox theology and the Greek Language, as well as parish development aids. *Faith Forward* gifts will have a greater impact this year due to a generous dollar-for-dollar match of donated funds up to \$125,000 offered by the George and Judy Marcus Family Foundation. Donate before December 31, 2020 to have your donation doubled! Give online at: [www.sanfran.goarch.org/donate](http://www.sanfran.goarch.org/donate)

## CHURCH & WELLNESS

### To Open our Eyes

In our little group of local members of the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) I am reminded to remain humble in the face of our human limitations alone. Our abilities and inabilities, are defined both by our levels of expertise and faith, as well as by the will-power of those being helped. Indeed, the promises of achieving and maintaining our spiritual well-being may well be defined by the strength of our faith in God. Dr. Herold G. Koenig, in his book, *Medicine, Religion & Health*, documents this phenomenon thoroughly, suggesting, "*The way we think, believe and feel can [indeed] affect our bodies.*" (pg. 175).

Paradise is the world of God's love, which, like sunlight, shines on all people at all times and in all places. The only cure for stumbling in darkness is to make the choice to open our eyes to the wisdom of God that is found in reading the Bible. No one can open our eyes for us if we continue to want them closed. In many ways it takes faith to want to open our eyes and face our spiritual flaws that keep holding us back in life. It takes faith to walk with God daily through the streets and lanes of life, as opposed to stumbling around aimlessly, so often placing ourselves in harm's way physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

According to Her very nature, the Church seeks ways to encourage people to open their eyes in order to see the Light of Christ -- the Light of God's love, which is without limits. One thing is clear, however: the ministry of the Church does not include changing Her nature in order to attract those who have no faith. The Church cannot embrace *atheism* in order to sympathize with atheists.

It is true that the Church prays for Her people. But, even our prayers for others are limited by whether or not they also *want* to pray and whether or not, through prayer, they *want* the eyes of their souls opened. In this spirit, Elder Porphyrios, who once quipped, "*Just because I eat my meal, does that mean that your stomach is also full?*"

+FR. THEODORE

## ARCHANGELS MICHAEL & GABRIEL

**November 8th is the celebration of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel and all the Angelic Powers.** Both the Old and New Testaments describe the role of the Archangels in uniting Man to God.



It is the Apostle Paul who describes Archangels the most. To Paul, Angels are messengers of God. The Archangel is outstanding as one who unites us to God in several ways. It was Michael who guarded Paradise, after evicting Adam and Eve, because they disobeyed God. Michael was the one who punished Lucifer and, in Hebrew his name means "who is like unto God." It was Michael who protected Jacob from his brother Esau and who also turned Moses into a prophet who saved the Jewish People. Michael also guided Joshua in his early conquest of Canaan.

Gabriel, a sort of twin to Michael, was the one who brought Man to great glory. He led the Virgin Mary into the role as Mother of God. So, in a sense, it is Gabriel who leads Man into the New Paradise that the Son of God prepares for all of us. In the Old Testament, Gabriel is the prime character who leads Daniel to glory. Gabriel in Hebrew means "God is Mighty." There are other Archangels mentioned in the Old Testament, Raphael is one of many others. The six-winged Seraphim stand close to the Trinity. They blaze with love for God and kindle such love in others. The many-eyed Cherubim are radiant with the light of knowledge about the mysteries of God.

The 35th Canon of the Council Laodicea condemned the worship of angels as rulers of gods of the world. It did, however, affirm their proper veneration and their role in worship and they accompany us in worship in accordance to the Entrance Prayer for the Gospel during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. The Kontakion Hymn of the Church describes them as ministers of God's: "*Chief Commanders of God; ministers of Divine glory; guides for men and the leadership of the Incorporeal, plead for our welfare and great mercy.*"

--MATTHEW DAVIS

## PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS



The Philoptochos General Members meeting for October took place as a hybrid “in-person/zoom” meeting in the effort to involve members who were able to attend the meeting held at our parish hall and those who preferred to follow the proceedings on “zoom.”

Topics discussed included the need to continue Philoptochos food donations for the local population suffering from poverty. Our Philoptochos has designated November 8th and 9th as days on which intense efforts for reaching out to those who are able to provide the extra food needed to meet this local on-going food-shortage crisis. Please see the upcoming fliers in the Philoptochos November publication of *Philo Strong*, advertising this effort.

In addition, our Philoptochos members agreed to help our parish Sunday School program with materials needed for our Sunday School students to participate in a campaign entitled, “*Kindness Counts.*” In this way, students will inspire others to embrace words and acts of kindness, knowing that kindness is truly contagious.

Congratulations to our Philoptochos President, Rhonda Latkovic, who was chosen to receive the Tiffany & Company “Hometown Hero” Recognition Award for efforts with our Philoptochos ladies in helping those in need throughout our Coachella Valley community.



At the Tiffany “Hometown Hero” Recognition: (left-right) Pres. Petula, Fr. Ted, Nick Latkovic, Rhonda Latkovic, Karla & Michael Carroll.

Fr. Ted noted that the Patron Saints of Philoptochos, Sts. Cosmas & Damian, through their intercessory prayers, continue to inspire our Philoptochos members and, especially Rhonda, since they are the Saints of our Church most noted for having freely received

blessings from our Lord and then sharing those blessings with others, without asking for anything in return.

Rhonda gave the following remarks upon receiving this well-deserved recognition:

*“I would like to thank Tiffany & Company, Store Director, Sheryl and Sales Professional Larry for their support and efforts to recognize a ‘Hometown Hero’ during a time where all of us are facing uncertainties and difficulties.*

*Personally, I’m a little uncomfortable being recognized as a ‘hero’ because there are so many people who made it possible for me to be in a position to help others, many that are here and those not here, that are deserving of thanks and recognition themselves...*

*First, I thank our Lord, for it is through Him that all things are possible. I must thank my friend Larry, who enthusiastically supported our food drive efforts and made the nomination to Tiffany – thank you! I must also thank the wonderful St. George community of stewards and friends, that generously made and continue to make food or financial donations to our food drive efforts. I thank the women of our philanthropic organization, the ‘Ladies Philoptochos Society,’ past and present, who tirelessly work to help those in need in our valley, state, and nation. I thank my dear husband, Nick, who consistently helped to deliver many, many loads of non-perishable food to ‘The Narrow Door’ food pantry in Indio – thank you! I thank my priest, Fr. Ted and his wife, Presvytera Petula of St. George Greek Orthodox Church, who support and encourage me and our ladies Philoptochos organization every step of the way. It was Presvytera who first suggested we help ‘The Narrow Door.’ They went from providing meal boxes for 6,000 families per week, pre-pandemic, to over 36,000 post-pandemic (talk about heroes) – thank you both. I want to also thank my encouragers and friends, Michael and Karla. Michael has been a patron of the charitable work we do through our philanthropic group and has earned the name of ‘Stealth Steward’ by our ladies, because of his generosity and support – thank you..*

*I am so grateful for all of you. Thank you again, Tiffany & Company for the “Hometown Hero” recognition.”*

## PARISH NEWS

We continue to welcome parishioners for Sunday worship and for personal weekday visits by appointment. We are observing CDC health regulations, which call for social distancing requirements; the wearing of masks and the use of sanitizers. As a result, those planning to visit for worship, or personal prayer, must call **Fr. Ted or our church office at: (760) 880-5869, or (760-568-9901** in order to be placed on a "list of attendees" and to be appraised of any up-to-date Covid requirements.

Due to the on-going world-wide pandemic, the Parish Council, at the October 28th meeting, voted to postpone the General Assembly and Parish Elections until the Spring of 2021. St. George parishioners will be receiving a mailing throughout November with 2020 parish financial statements, as well as the up-to-date Stewardship and Endowment Fund reports.

A special Parish Council meeting is called for Sunday, November 8th in order to entertain ideas for parish development and fundraising for 2021. One idea is that of applying for rewards from **Amazon Smiles Charity**, a "rewards program" through Amazon returning a percentage of Amazon purchases to designated charities from customers who shop with Amazon. Our parish will qualify for such a program and parishioners can designate our parish as their "charity of choice."

Our St. George **"In-Person Worship" Committee**, led by **Peter Snarskis and Deacon Euthym Kontaxis**, along with our parish ushers, **Becky Allen, Jim Christopoulos, John Petalas, and Tim Hector**, express a special word of appreciation and gratitude to all of our St. George parishioners for their excellent cooperation and compliance with the CDC Covid-19 regulations pertaining to safe practices for worship throughout the past several months. In turn, we all express our gratitude to the "In-Person Worship" Committee and our parish ushers for their outstanding leadership during this Covid crisis.

## AHEPA NEWS



At the AHEPA Chapter 528 Meeting held on October 14th, discussion centered around our "cornerstone ministry of the St. George AHEPA 528 Fr. T. P. Theophilos Memorial Scholarship. Due to Covid, the main fundraisers for this Fund -- the Thanksgiving Luncheon; the Christmas Party; the Super Bowl Party and the AHEPA Booth at the Annual St. George Greek Festival are all cancelled for this year. Therefore, AHEPA members will now be promoting various "virtual" and non-public fundraiser events beginning in 2021. A special appeal is being sent out for donations for our Scholarship Fund so that our Chapter can continue to support our youth in their quests to obtain their college educations. We express special thanks to **Nick Latkovic** and **Carol and Doug Lyons** for their financial support for our AHEPA's T. P. Theophilos Memorial Scholarship Fund. Please send contributions to: AHEPA Chapter 528

43315 Washington A-154  
Palm Desert, California

Online contributions are indeed most welcome:  
[www.ahepa528/scholarship.htm](http://www.ahepa528/scholarship.htm).

The next AHEPA 528 meeting will be on **November 11th at 6:30 p.m. in the "zoom format."**

## CHURCH MAINTENANCE

On behalf of our **Parish Council** and our **Maintenance Chairman, Peter Snarskis**, we thank everyone for supporting the on-going efforts needed to maintain our parish facilities either through "hands-on" help, or through special donations. The new thermostats that have been placed inside our church edifice have been working nicely, and the savings to our parish is about \$1,000 since they were installed about a month ago. Also, surveillance cameras were installed to monitor the "alley-way" leading to our parish parking lot and the west side of our church structure, which monitor the area next door at the Desert Cancer Foundation Center.