

JULY 2021



Voice of St. George

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

74-109 LARREA ST., PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA



OUR LORD'S STILL SMALL VOICE

God spoke to the Prophet Elijah in a still, small voice, teaching us that, in order to hear God's Voice, we ourselves are to be found in stillness and "smallness." *Stillness* is a preparation for obedience, and "*smallness*" is a reminder of the virtue of humility. Events surrounding the moment when Elijah was able to listen to the still, small Voice of God are found in the *Orthodox Study Bible: 3 Kingdoms, 18-19*. (In the *King James Bible*, the narrative can be found in I Kings, 18-19.)

Obedience to God's Will requires humility before God and humility before God is to be found in obedience to His Will. Obediently Prophet Elijah went to the "mount before the Lord." Finally, he heard the Voice of God as a "still, small" voice and was reminded of the very meaning of his life as a servant of God. He proceeded to work for the

salvation of the 7,000 Israelites who were faithful to God.

From Prophet Elijah's life, we learn that God speaks to us in a still small voice that resides in our souls. It is the Voice of our conscience. We need to be still enough and silent enough and listen attentively enough so that we can hear this Voice. Doing so is the effort involving "inner prayer."

God's Voice is indeed the Word of God, Jesus Christ our Savior, Who speaks to our souls by the Grace of the Holy Spirit. St. Gregory of Sinai notes that the Holy Spirit is the still gentle voice that is easily heard when Christ dwells in our hearts. St. Paul wrote that when Christ dwells in our hearts, we are "grounded in love;" for, Christ is the Voice of love within our conscience (Romans 3:17).

This is the Voice that calls us to change for the better;

to repent of our errors; to care about our neighbor with as much care as we care about ourselves. Only in this way will we offer worship to Christ our God in Spirit and in Truth -- and we will honor our fellow human being, who indeed is loved by our Savior.

The complete opposite of stillness in preparation to hear our Lord's Voice is seen in the "noise" of today's 24-hour news casts. In general, this "noise" implies that others are responsible for our happiness or unhappiness -- religious and civil leaders; corporations, and even other countries. In truth, however, you and I are responsible for our happiness or unhappiness, because it is no one else's fault if we do not pray to Christ our God -- prayer being the effort to be still enough and humble enough to listen to the Voice of our Lord from within our souls, which

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we may also call our conscience.

St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite pointed to St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans: *"If it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all people."* (Romans 12:18). He then added these words: *"Guard your conscience so that it does not accuse you with regard to anything, but rests at peace in relation to God, yourself, your neighbor and external things, and especially does not accuse you that you have neglected some Commandment of God."* (Modern Orthodox Saints, Vol. 3, by Constantine Cavarnos, pg. 132).

+FR. THEODORE

REFLECTION FROM HIS EMINENCE, METROPOLITAN GERASIMOS FOR INDEPENDENCE DAY 2021



Each year on July 4 we celebrate the Independence of this great nation, the United States of America. We think of it as a summer holiday, a celebration with parades, backyard barbecues and, after sunset, we gaze at the spectacle of the evening sky with fireworks. When the 56 representatives from 13 colonies met with Congress to declare their independence from England, they opened a new trajectory for humanity with the assertion that "all men are created equal" and that governments are created by the people "deriving their powers from the consent of the governed." The Declaration of Independence is considered one of the most significant documents in our country's history, which led to the Constitution and the Bill of Rights which govern our nation today.

Gaining our independence, our freedom, as a nation, came with opportunities but also presented challenges. Over the years, there have been hard-fought wars, the Great Depression, the recession, terrorism, natural disasters, and even our most recent pandemic. Through it all, we have stood tall, just as Lady Liberty does in the New York Harbor, raising her flame to light the way for us, to never lose hope, and to persevere through all circumstances.

We are not just citizens of this land, but we are also part of the greater Kingdom that God has prepared for us. Saint Paul writes to the Philippi-

ans, *"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ"* (Philippians 3:20). While we have laws that govern us and guide our actions to preserve and protect our freedoms, so does God give us direction for our lives, with the Ten Commandments, and the teachings He imparted during His time on earth. Freedom may seem readily accessible, but it is something to be earned, something to be nurtured, and something for which to be grateful.

In the past nearly 18 months, we experienced what it feels like to have freedom taken from us. For the most part, we were confined to our homes. Kitchens and bedrooms became offices. Computer monitors became our place of worship. The evening news became a harbinger of sadness, relaying statistics of sickness and death. Now, we give thanks that this experience is moving behind us, and we can once again worship as a Body of Christ, giving thanks for the freedom to experience the fullness of the Church through the Liturgy and Holy Sacraments.

As we look to Independence Day and its significance for our nation, let us remember the words of our forefathers who crafted such a powerful message to govern this country, and may our hearts be filled with gratitude as we honor those who fought for our freedom and the freedom of those around the world. Let us also remember an even greater message, that from the Lord Himself, *"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:31). God bless you and may God Bless America!

CONGRATULATIONS TO CONSTANTINA KARALIS – We joyfully express congratulations to **Constantina Karalis**, who received her **bachelorette of arts degree in classic arts** and graduated last month with highest honors from **the University of California of Santa Barbara**. She has been accepted to attend **the University of Southern California** in pursuit of her **masters degree**. Constantina is the daughter of **Mr. and Mrs. Vasileios Karalis** of our parish here in Palm Desert. Many blessings...and, again, congratulations!

CHURCH & WELLNESS
Our St. George Parish Book Store

The difference between Orthodox Christian spirituality and modern psychology is in the fact that Orthodox Christian spirituality is involved with one's connection with God's love and with the love of God for one's neighbor, which, in turn, exhibits true love for others unto salvation. Modern psychology, on the other hand, is self-oriented with the "reward" being proper behavior toward others, who, in turn, exhibit proper behavior toward self, regardless of any love for God. Orthodox, "self-help" is a relationship with the Word of God within us (the voice of Christ spoken through the Holy Spirit) and the help of God in measure with our own will and efforts.

In this regard, books dealing with Orthodox worship and spirituality are enlightening and make for great reading -- including "summer reading."

Now that we are able to attend Church services on a more in-person basis, consider making a visit to our **St. George parish book store**.

Please visit our book store and look for such publications as:

- *Practicing Prayer*, by Alexander Goussetis
- *With All My Breath*, by John Manesis
- *All is Well*, by Albert S. Rossi
- *The Orthodox Way*, by Kallistos Ware
- *Steps of Transformation*, by Meletios Webber
- *Contemporary Moral Issues*, by S. Harakas
- *Thoughts Determine Your Life*, by Elder Thaddeus
- *The Life in Christ*, by Nicholas Cabasilas
- *How to be a Sinner*, by Peter Boutenoff

Books on order:

- *Thinking Orthodox*, by E. Contantinou
- *Tool Kit for Spiritual Growth*, by Evan Armatas

While our inventory for some of these books is low, orders can be placed through our parish book store as we place order for more books to arrive in due time. Indeed, a visit to our parish book store will be rewarding!

+FR. THEODORE

SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS
by Deacon Euthym

"And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for the imperishable crown....." 1 Corinthians 9:25

It is important to remember our goals in life. The Holy Unmercenaries Cosmas and Damian had the goal to freely care for others in order to glorify God and preach Christ. Not all of us have this gift, but we each have the gifts that God has given us. We are called to nurture and cultivate these gifts, but to what end? Clearly love of God and love of others. The "crown" referred to in the passage, is not a perishable oak leaf garland or a medal, or a trophy, or in today's world an athletic endorsement...rather the crown is an eternal, loving relationship with God and others. Love is the glue, the purpose, the eternal flame of our existence and is manifested through our works. God's love allows us to have gifts. Love shows us how to use these gifts for others in order to reveal God's love for us. Love in Christ is the goal for everyone. Just as an athlete sacrifices and trains for the perishable crown, we need to train for the imperishable. Through temperance, faith, and hard work, our spiritual gifts can be developed in order to fulfill what God has in store for all of us. By grace we are saved, but as St James puts it, "faith without works is dead". Let us be diligent in applying our gifts to God's glory.

"But I say to you," the Lord says, "love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute you." Why did He command these things? So that he might free you from hatred, sadness, anger and grudges, and might grant you the greatest possession of all, perfect love, which is impossible to possess except by the One who loves all equally in imitation of God. — St. Maximus the Confessor

Why did the Apostles suffer so much to preach and spread the good news of Jesus Christ? Out of

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SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS, Continued

love. First the Apostles love for Christ, and in imitation of Christ, for all people. Perfect love does not bear grudges, have anger or hatred, suffers persecution, and above all is concerned for the salvation of each person. If we have perfect love we are free from concern, we are patient, we suffer without complaint and finally we seek first the Kingdom of God for ourselves and for others. Let us start with our day today. Can we love each person who enters our life today with our whole heart? Can we preach the good news of Jesus Christ with our hearts filled with His love, not with words but with actions? Let us take the days ahead and imitate the love of the Apostles for all mankind and watch the seed of the few people we touch today and tomorrow, grow and spread to many others.

"There is nothing better than peace in Christ, for it brings victory over all the evil spirits on earth and in the air. When peace dwells in a man's heart it enables him to contemplate the grace of the Holy Spirit from within. He who dwells in peace collects spiritual gifts as it were with a scoop, and he sheds the light of knowledge on others. All our thoughts, all our desires, all our efforts, and all our actions should make us say constantly with the Church: "O Lord, give us peace!" When a man lives in peace, God reveals mysteries to him.."- St. Seraphim of Sarov

Peace and inactivity or laziness are not equivalent. Peace is not a shedding of all responsibilities or efforts or tasks. Rather it is an inner state of grace given to us by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us when we invite Him in and prepare our hearts. It is present no matter our outside activity. We could be on our jobs, on vacation, cleaning the house, working out, attending a Bible study, talking with a stranger, getting coffee, doing yard work, spending time with our loved ones....it should not matter if we have the Holy Spirit. Yes we can be seriously ill, imprisoned, disappointed, rejected, reviled, mocked, disfigured, impoverished and still have the peace of Christ. Grace (the Peace of the Holy Spirit) is independent of circumstances. Let us spend our

efforts in acquisition of grace, of peace, no matter what our circumstances may be.

ST. GEORGE GOLF TOURNAMENT

Everyone is asked to help make our upcoming **St. George Golf Tournament on September 25th** a success! Items are needed for the **silent auction** that will be offered at the awards banquet following the tournament.

Items can be works of art, golf equipment, pre-paid dinner reservations, pre-paid golf rounds, tickets for travel, dinner ware, decorative table settings, electronic accessories, and the like.

Please start collecting silent auction items next month (August) so that items can be prepared and priced. Also, please call our parish office, or Fr. Ted regarding dates and times for these items to be brought to the church.

Registration material for participating in the golf tournament will be sent out in the near future.

AHEPA NEWS

Delegates at the AHEPA District 20 Conference held last month voted to hold their **Mid-Winter Conference in Palm Desert in January 2022** (the specific date to be determined).

This will be the first official AHEPA event in southern California to usher in the year 2022 -- the 100th Anniversary of the National AHEPA Organization.

Our AHEPA Chapter 528 will meet in September to confirm the date and begin the planning schedule for hosting this District 20 Mid-Winter Conference. Also, ideas for special philanthropic projects will be considered.

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS



The **Coachella Valley Rescue Mission** has opened up again for volunteers to help the homeless, which is great news. Currently masks are required to be worn for any volunteer work. We have selected **Monday, August 16th** as a volunteer day at the Coachella Valley Rescue Mission. This day was selected to honor the Most Holy **Theotokos**, whose **Dormition is celebrated on Sunday the 15th**. The volunteer hours are from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM on Monday morning. We need a total of 8 volunteers. Contact **Rhonda Latkovic**, or **Fr. Ted** to volunteer for this important ministry.

Save the Date for Paint El Paseo Pink Walk: The Desert Cancer Foundation will once again sponsor the annual **Paint El Paseo Pink Breast Cancer Awareness Walk on Saturday, October 9th, 2021. Pre-Registration opens July 1st**. The registration fee for this walk helps raise funding for local cancer patients needing assistance. The walk was cancelled in 2020 due to the pandemic. This year the "Paint El Paseo Walk" will be bigger and better than ever! Our Philoptochos Chapter participated in 2019 and we had a fun time! Please join us this year and help make our group even larger than before. Please "save the date" for this great cause that helps our local community. More info to follow.

Our Philoptochos will be publishing a **new directory in September!** Those who have not yet sent in their membership for this year, please do so by **August 1st** in order to be included in this new and up-dated directory. Mail membership checks to:

St. George Greek Orthodox Church
P.O. Box 4755
Palm Desert, California 92261
Attention: Philoptochos

ST. PARASKEVI OF ROME

During the early centuries of the Church era, Christians were seen as a "sect" that did not worship Greek and Roman gods.

St. Paraskevi was born near Rome during the reign of Emperor Hadrian (117-138). She was raised by Christian parents who were Greek. The word "paraksevi" is a Greek word meaning "preparation." Hence, the Day of Preparation about which we read in the Gospels is the day when the Jewish faithful would prepare themselves for the Sabbath. With her name being "Paraskevi," she would be dedicated to preparing others to give glory to Jesus Christ in all of her daily activities.

After the death of her parents, St. Paraskevi gave away all of her possessions and became the leader of a community of young women and widows. She was known to pray especially for those who suffered from a loss of vision. Her zeal for teaching the Gospel and her life of prayer inspired many, yet also drew the attention of the new Emperor, Antoninus Pius, who had her arrested. Refusing to give up her faith in Christ, she was placed in a vat of boiling oil, which splattered into Antoninus' face, blinding him. Through her prayers, however, he miraculously regained his sight.

When Marcus Aurelius ascended the throne as Emperor, persecution against Christians intensified, since a plague arose, striking the people of Rome. Marcus Aurelius blamed the Christians, and when St. Paraskevi was arrested by the governor Tarasius, she was brought to the Temple of Apollo. Upon entering, she made the Sign of the Cross and the Temple shook, damaging the idols. Tarasius immediately had St. Paraskevi beaten and then beheaded.

St. Paraskevi is prominent among the Christian miracle-working Saints. Icons often depict her with a set of eyes, as she is the Patron Saint of those suffering with vision problems. **Her Feast Day is July 26th every year.**

--MATTHEW DAVIS

A HAPPY 90th BIRTHDAY FOR EVE MEEK

On **Sunday, July 4th**, our parishioners honored **Eve Meek** on the occasion of her **90th birthday**.

Eve has been a long-standing member of our dynamic Philoptochos Chapter and, over the years, she served as a key member of the St. George Philoptochos Chapter Board of Directors. She also served with great dedication as a member of our Parish Council. On another note, Eve was the very first chairperson of our St. George Endowment Fund in the formative years during its establishment.

Congratulatory comments were shared by St. George Philoptochos President, **Rhonda Latkovic** and **Fr. Ted** as parishioners joined in the luncheon in her honor and enjoyed a "4th of July" birthday cake in celebration of Eve's birthday and our national holiday.



Pictured above (left to right): Eve Meek and her daughter, Catherine Meek; Eve's best friends, Annette Lewis and Annette Laskaris.

G.O.A. ADULT LEAGUE CONFERENCE

Under the auspices of the Greek Orthodox Archdi-

ocese of America, young adults (ages 18-35) have come together to form the **Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Young Adult League (Y.A.L.)**. The very first Y.A.L. conference was held in Long Beach, California in 2019, with the **blessings of His Eminence, Archbishop Elpidophoros of America** and **His Eminence, Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco**, who were also in attendance.

Due to Covid-19, the Y.A.L. met online in 2020. However, now the **Y.A.L. Conference** will take place as an in-person event from **September 2 - September 6, 2021** at the **J.W. Marriott Desert Ridge Resort and Spa** in **Phoenix, Arizona**. Registration is now open and the forms needed to register, along with the schedule of Conference programs and other related details can be found online by accessing our Holy **Metropolis of San Francisco Young Adult League website** at: <https://sanfran.goarch.org/events/2021-yal-conference>. **General Registration deadline is: July 17, 2021.**

PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW TO VISIT U.S.A. --- With unsurpassed joy, we announce on the Feast of the Glorious Twelve, the **Apostolic Visit of His All Holiness Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch to the United States, October 23 - November 3, 2021**. This Visit, the first in twelve years, will commence the day following the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Election of His All-Holiness as Ecumenical Patriarch, and include the same anniversary of His Enthronement on the venerable See of the First-Called Apostle Saint Andrew on November 2nd. The Apostolic Visit will inaugurate the Centennial Celebration of the founding of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (1922 - 2022), which will be observed next year across the country.

MID-WEEK CHURCH SERVICES – JULY 2021

Tuesday, July 20th.....ST. PROPHET ELIJAH -- Orthros-8:30 a.m. / Divine Liturgy -9:30 a.m.

Monday, July 26th.....ST. PARASKEVI THE RIGHTEOUS MARTYR OF ROME
Orthros-8:30 a.m./ Divine Liturgy -9:30 a.m.

Tuesday, July 27th.....ST. PANTELEIMON THE GREAT MARTYR AND HEALER
Orthros-8:30 a.m./ Divine Liturgy -9:30 a.m.