

SEPTEMBER 2021



Voice of St. George

SAINT GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
OF THE DESERT

74-109 LARREA ST., PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA



GOD SPEAKS FROM THE CROSS

On Tuesday, September 14th we will commemorate the Exaltation of the Precious and Holy Cross.

Fr. Anthony Coniaris wrote a fabulous book, entitled, *God Speaks from the Cross*. In it, he referred to Bishop Fulton Sheen who, in his book, *The Seven Last Words*, noted that, from the Cross, our Savior uttered the sweet, soft prayer of forgiveness: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (St. Luke 23:34).

Fr. Coniaris quoted these words from Bishop Fulton Sheen:

"At that very moment when the tree turns against [Jesus] and becomes a cross; when iron turns against Him and becomes nails; when roses turn against Him and become thorns; when men turn against Him and become executioners, He lets fall from His lips for the first time in the history of the world a prayer for enemies; 'Father, forgive them;

for they know not what they do.'"

Bishop Sheen's observation that this is the first time in history that any god offered a prayer for forgiveness of one's enemies gives testimony to the fact that Jesus Christ is indeed the only True God of all. He is the only God Who loves us unto death, and Who promises us Eternal Life with Him. Orthodox Christians confess this truth in no uncertain terms as they pray: "Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ, let us worship the Holy Lord Jesus, the only sinless One. We venerate Your Cross, O Christ, and Your Holy Resurrection we praise and glorify; for You are our God, we know no other; it is Your Name we invoke."

From this, Fr. Coniaris continues his thought, in writing the following:

"What comes out when you squeeze a lemon? The answer is that whatever is

inside is what comes out. When we are squeezed, when we are knocked hard by the vicissitudes of life, whatever is inside is what spills out. If it's anger, if it's hatred, if it's bitterness, if it's love, if it's compassion, if it's forgiveness – when we're under pressure – that's what will come out. When Jesus was squeezed so hard on the Cross, what spilled out was what was in Him, the forgiving love of God: 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.' In this one prayer we have the whole Gospel of God's love for us. In this one prayer is packed all the love of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." (pgs. 11-12).

To venerate the Holy Cross of our Savior properly, we need to acquire all of His virtues that add up to divine love and express this love in word and in deed. Asking forgiveness and granting forgiveness is at the heart of being able to express God's love.

Inside this issue

God Speaks from the Cross.....	pg. 1
Indiction Feast...	pg. 2
Spiritual Thoughts.....	pg. 3
New Ecclesiastical Year, Golf Tourny, Bible Study, Sunday School...	pg. 4
Church & Wellness, Philoptochos News.....	pg. 5
AHEPA News..	pg. 6
Parish Calendar.....	pg. 7

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Such virtues as faith in our God; humility before God; patience, peacefulness, chastity, charity, truthfulness, self-control, and gratitude allow us to express Christ-like love.

Let us all commit ourselves to acquiring these virtues, through prayer and the Grace of the Holy Spirit, as we begin our Ecclesiastical New Year.

+FR. THEODORE

**REFLECTION FROM HIS EMINENCE,
METROPOLITAN GERASIMOS FOR THE
FEAST OF INDICTION 2021**

Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

On September 1, when the Church begins the new ecclesiastical year, we commemorate the day as the Day of the Protection of the Environment. His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew has championed this issue of ecological awareness and environmental healing for the entirety of his thirty-year ministry as our Ecumenical Patriarch. He has called us to repent and change our relationship to the created world to one that heals the damage already done and allows for it to be sustained and renewed for future generations. He has asked us to pray for the environment when we chant, *“Corruption comes into being through thoughtlessness; therefore, take pity on Your creation and grant prudence, also granting to all reconciliation, salvation, and divine mercy. (Aposticha, Vespers for the Day of the Protection of the Environment).*

Over this summer, we have seen the effects of human disregard and thoughtlessness for the natural world. Whether it has been the water shortages, the terrible heat waves, the fires here in the western United States and elsewhere in the world, our world is loudly calling out to us to become agents of restoration. What kind of natural world will our children inherit if this year is just a prologue of the years ahead? How many more fires or droughts must we experience before we come to our senses?

Our Ecumenical Patriarch has been challenging us to take action to work to restore the balance to the natural world – our only home. Thus, as we begin this new ecclesiastical year, our first individual

act should be to pray for the created world, asking our Lord to give us the strength and resolve to work together to solve our ecological crisis. I would also encourage each of our parishes to offer the Vespers for the Day of Protection of the Environment, and in the coming days to offer programs to educate ourselves about the ecological crisis, and our Orthodox understanding about creation. Our parishes should initiate projects to clean and restore areas in their communities and to include ecologically friendly practices like recycling, solar power, and using biodegradable products.

This new ecclesiastical year begins when all of us are discerning the rhythms of our lives at home, at work, at school, and at church in light of this recent surge in the pandemic. Policies and practices seem to be changing daily. Finding the balance of appropriate church activity and safety against the coronavirus is our main priority. Each parish is responding to local situations and our Metropolis guidelines to the best of its ability.

The new ecclesiastical year always offers hope to us because a page is being turned where we can deepen our commitment to Christ and His Church. As Orthodox Christians, each day is a new opportunity to draw closer to Christ. But we are not meant to live as Christians apart from a community. There is an ancient saying, “You cannot be a Christian alone.” Through our fellowship, prayer, mutual support, and life together as Christians we grow closer to Christ as we grow closer to one another.

My beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord, let us take up the call of a new ecclesiastical year, to heed the call of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to care for the environment. Let us strive with each day of this new year, as we pray at every Divine Service, to commend ourselves and one another, and our whole life to Christ our God.

May God bless you!

+METROPOLITAN GERASIMOS,
Holy Metropolis of San Francisco

SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

by Deacon Euthym

"Just as people do not enter a war in order to enjoy war, but in order to be saved from war, so we do not enter this world in order to enjoy this world, but in order to be saved from it. People go to war for the sake of something greater than war. So we also enter this temporal life for the sake of something greater: for eternal life. And as soldiers think with joy about returning home, so also Christians constantly remember the end of their lives and their return to their heavenly fatherland." ...St. Nicholas of Serbia

What a beautiful analogy! To love war is self-serving and mercenary. To enter into war in order to be saved from war is the highest calling, because one who does that risks their life for the sake of others. We can enter this life in a self-serving manner, or live for a higher calling, eternal life in communion with the living God, Christ Himself. It is interesting that the Church refers to those Christians in the world as the Church Militant and those who have fallen asleep in the Lord as the Church Triumphant. We are at war with the evil one, with our passions and with temptations while we live in the world. We seek to return to Paradise through God's mercy and grace, where we can rest in His love for eternity.

When a priest takes out the particles from the prosphora for the repose of the departed and after he receives Holy Communion, he says, "O Lord, by Thy most pure Blood forgive the sins of all those commemorated today! As you see, this is the most perfect prayer and the greatest sacrifice that we can offer up for our loved ones who have departed to God..." Elder Thaddeus (Strabulovich) of Vitovnica

The Eucharist is central to our faith. We pray for the living and departed, we ask for forgiveness of our sins, we partake of the very body and blood of Christ so that He abides in us and we in Him. When the Virgin Mary fell asleep in the Lord (we commemorated her Dormition on August 15h), the apostles would set aside a piece of the offering bread (prosforo) for her at the Eucharistic

meal as they set aside the Lamb for Christ...eventually after the consecration of the gifts, this becomes the very body of our Lord. This "setting aside" is continued this day, not as a place at the table, but on the paten when the priest prepares the gifts for consecration at the proskomide. Embossed is the seal in a triangular shape representing the Virgin Mary with 12 small indentations representing the 12 apostles. We ask for their intercessions for all of the living and departed which we commemorate during the proskomide. The early church practice is still very much alive in today's service. 2,000 years of intercession by the Theotokos on our behalf for those we commemorate, living and departed this life. The church has been in "koinonia" (communion) with the saints for over 2,000 years, this communion takes place in the Eucharist. This is why Liturgy is important, this is where we "connect" spiritually with all those we care about and those who we are in conflict with, living and dead. So that we can all be together in paradise with Christ for eternity. Let us then look forward to each opportunity to "meet" at the chalice, to be in communion with each other and with Christ Himself.

"He who attains love cannot fall..." St. Macarius the Great

It is important for us to always remember that without love there is no salvation, no true relationship with God, no real relationships with others, no joy, no hope, no compassion. Love is the foundation for all true relationships. God is love. If we do not have love, we do not know God. We cannot combat sin without love. We can't really pray without love. We honestly cannot bear ourselves without love. Let us seek love rather than perfection. Perfection and holiness follow love. If we wish to attain paradise then we have to clothe ourselves in love. Love first, ask questions later.

SEPTEMBER 1st: THE NEW ECCLESIASTICAL YEAR

The Emperor Julius Caesar established a calendar based on the solar year. It is known as the "Julian Calendar." In the modern era, the Julian Calendar was revised and it is now known as the "Gregorian Calendar," which is still based on the solar year.

Civilizations in the ancient world would use a calendar based on an agricultural year in which fields are prepared, crops are planted and the harvest is made. This is consistent with the Bible, in which we are reminded that life is harvested so that new life and take root. Thus, the Orthodox Christian Calendar has remained an agricultural calendar, with the beginning of each new year being September 1st.

In addition, for the Roman Empire in general, September 1st was always the beginning of a season for accounting things for taxes to be paid to the state.

Hopefully, with September 1st this year we will all prepare to become a new crop of people helping to create a good and prosperous society.

We always know that real time is God's time. One hymn that is important to God's time and the Church's time is expressed in the following hymn chanted during our September 1st Church Services: *"Creator of the universe, setting time and seasons by Your sole authority, bless the cycle of the year by Your Grace, O Lord, guarding our rulers and your nation in peace, through the intercession of the Holy Mother of God, and save us."*

—MATTHEW DAVIS

COVID-19 UPDATE— With the recent rise in Covid cases, we are encouraging parishioners and guests to wear a mask regardless of vaccination status. If you feel ill, please stay home until you receive medical clearance to be out and about. A third Covid vaccine (a.k.a., the "booster shot") is rolling out in September. Contact Fr. Ted and/or Deacon Euthym to discuss any spiritual or medical concerns pertaining to the lingering presence of Covid.

ST. GEORGE GOLF TOURNAMENT

We are most grateful to God for those who have begun donating items for the silent auction, which will take place at the **St. George Golf Tournament awards dinner**. We are also very much appreciative of those golfers who have chosen to participate in the golf tournament. **Now** is definitely the time to begin forming four-somes! The golf tournament will be held on **Saturday, September 25, 2021** at the **Desert Willow Golf Resort in Palm Desert**. The awards banquet will feature a **Traditional Greek Dinner** beginning at **6:00 p.m.** at our **St. George parish hall**. Registration forms are available on our special website: <https://go-stgeorge.org/Events/Golf/>.

BIBLE STUDY — With the new Ecclesiastical Year, our Bible Study efforts will be expanding. Along with the current Bible Study that takes place on **Tuesday mornings at 10:00 a.m. with Fr. Ted**, an evening Bible Study will take place on **Thursday evenings at 6:30 p.m., with Deacon Euthym**, beginning on **Thursday, September 16th**. We look forward to everyone's participation in our overall Bible Study program. In that we study the Bible from the perspective of writings and interpretations of our Orthodox Christian Saints throughout the history of our Church, dating from the Holy Apostles themselves, *The Orthodox Study Bible will be used extensively. Please visit our parish bookstore to obtain a copy of The Orthodox Study Bible.*

SUNDAY SCHOOL— **Sunday School begins Sunday, September 19th**. We will be inviting all parents, grandparents and Godparents to a special meeting so that they can become familiar with the theme and curriculum for this new school year. Students are to attend Sunday School every Sunday, and parental involvement is necessary so that the students can be prepared for their lessons. Registration forms will be available on Sunday, September 12th. This year, Sunday School lessons will carry with them the underlying theme of "the principle Christian virtues" for living life as an Orthodox Christian: humility, faith, truthfulness, obedience, charity, chastity, peacefulness, self-control, and gratitude.

CHURCH & WELLNESS: Spiritual Renewal

The Ecclesiastical Year is a liturgical year, which is virtually the same throughout history. It contains 12 major Feast Days, all of which are dedicated to the honor of the Holy Mother of God and to Christ our God. We live the events in their lives as if they are taking place *now*. These Major Feast Days are: 1) *The Nativity of the Holy Mother of God (September 8th)*; 2) *The Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14th)*; 3) *The Presentation of the Holy Mother of God in the Temple (November 21st)*; 4) *The Nativity of Christ (December 25th)*; 5) *The Circumcision of Christ (January 1st)*; 6) *The Baptism of Christ (January 6th)*; *The Presentation of Christ in the Temple (February 2nd)*; 7) *The Annunciation (March 25th)*; 8) *Palm Sunday*; 9) *Pascha [Easter]*; 10) *the Ascension of Christ*; 11) *Pentecost*; 12) *The Transfiguration of Christ (August 6th)*.

Palm Sunday, the Ascension of Christ, and Pentecost are “movable” Feast Days which are governed by the date on which Pascha [Easter] is to be celebrated in a given year. This date is based on the liturgical rules proclaimed as early as the First Ecumenical Council in 325 A.D. The new Ecclesiastical Year is always a new opportunity for spiritual renewal in preparation for celebrating the Major Feast Days..

At the heart of spiritual renewal is the participation in the Sacrament of Holy Confession at least three or four times throughout the year. Three things are necessary for this Sacrament to be performed:

- 1) A priest who seeks the salvation of the one making his or her confession, rather allowing him or her to fall into despair over guilt. The priest is required to pray for the forgiveness of sins of the person who confesses.
- 2) The “confessee” offers sincere confession of sins. To be considered as *sincere*, *two conditions are necessary: a) ownership of responsibility for committing the sins, and, b) sharing the pain of the consequences that one’s sin has had on others.* “*First, confession is an acknowledgement of our responsibility!...Somehow inside the working of your mind and will, you make a choice for which*

only you can give an answer...Second, confession is a shared pain!...Sharing the pain we have made other people feel does not come easy...” (How Can it Be Alright When Everything is All Wrong?” by Lewis B. Smedes, pgs. 48-49).

3) A serious pledge on the part of the one offering his or her confession to repent, given the spiritual advice and support of the priest. Part of repentance includes “sharing the pain” that we caused to others and experiencing remorse for causing that pain, knowing that, when we cause pain to others, we express our insult against God.

The renewal of our souls, through the Sacraments of Holy Confession and Holy Communion is tantamount to a renewed life for ourselves and for those around us. All of the Sacraments are a lifestyle of confessing our sins and uniting ourselves through repentance and the grace of the Holy Spirit with Christ our God. It is spiritual renewal! Let this year be a year of spiritual renewal for all of us.

+FR. THEODORE

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS



On Monday, August 16, 2021, members of our St. George Philoptochos and AHEPA chapters gathered to serve food to the hungry at the **Coachella Valley Rescue Mission**. **Ronda Latkovic**, President of our St. George Philoptochos Chapter, coordinated this effort with the support of **Fr. Ted**. The "serving line" consisted of **Rhonda Latkovic, Eva Canakis, Presvytera Petula Pantels, Becky Allen, and Debbie Pousen**. **Nick Krespis** took charge of peeling potatoes, and **Nick Latkovic, Fr. Ted, and Dennis McKee** worked to organize the Coachella Rescue Mission pantry.

Margarita Pagoulatos, Rhonda Latkovic, and Debbie Pousen gathered on **Wednesday, September 1st** to distribute dinner entrees to ten of our senior citizens and one family of our church. It is an effort to keep our people connected to our

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PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS, Continued

parish through Philoptochos, since many feel loneliness and isolation, particularly in the atmosphere of Covid. The menu included Greek-style spaghetti with mizithra cheese; turkey sandwiches and potato salad; lentil soup with a roll; salad & garlic bread; fruit and bundt cake. This program will be offered once a month. Fr. Ted expressed that the efforts of our Philoptochos are an inspiration to him, personally, and that he is grateful to be able to support the Philoptochos ministry to those in need.

Philoptochos members will be participating in this year's "Paint El Paseo Pink Walk" to raise funds for cancer care. The "Walk," sponsored by the **Desert Cancer Foundation**, will take place on **Saturday, October 9, 2021** beginning at **8:00 a.m.**, and will "stretch" along El Paseo from Highway 74 to Portola. Plenty of water stations will be placed along the way, along with joyful musical accompaniments. Our Philoptochos Chapter has been an avid supporter of the Desert Cancer Foundations efforts to give financial and emotional support to women suffering from breast cancer, as well as to all cancer patients here in the Coachella Valley.



Coachella Valley Rescue Mission Volunteers: On Monday, August 16th, volunteers from our St. George parish helped serve lunch and organize the CVMR pantry. Pictured from left to right are: Nick Krespis, Presvytera Petula Pantels, Eva Canakis, Dennis McKee, Fr. Ted, Rhonda Latkovic (event organizer), Nick Latkovic, Becky Allen, and Debbie Pousen.



Pictured to the left is our St. George Philoptochos Chapter offering of a "Meals on Wheels" dinner on Wednesday, September 1st. The menu included: Greek-style spaghetti with mizithra cheese, turkey sandwiches, lentil soup with a roll, salad & garlic; fruit cup, and bundt cake.



AHEPA NEWS

On **Wednesday, September 1st**, members of AHEPA Chapter 528 gathered for their first meeting of the Ecclesiastical Year. Spearheading the **"Kick-off" Meeting Food Drive**, members were encouraged to bring donations of food for the hungry. The meeting was actually a dinner meeting, which featured brother **Nick Latkovic's** famous "AHEPA Wine" and his delicious spaghetti with mazithra cheese. **President Wynn Storton** called the in-person meeting to order, with members also joining on "Zoom."

Two prominent agenda items were discussed at length: 1) The roll-out of this year's **Fr. T. P. Theophilos Memorial Scholarship Drive**, and, 2) **The Mid-Winter District 20 AHEPA Conference**, which our chapter will be hosting here in **Palm Desert** on the weekend of **January 22, 2022**. (This will be the very first AHEPA event in the Southwest to "kick-off" the **100 Year Anniversary of AHEPA**). Members of our AHEPA Chapter are most grateful to our St. George Philoptochos members, who are welcoming AHEPA delegates of the Mid-Winter Conference to their **Taverna Night on Saturday evening, January 22nd** as part of the **Mid-Winter Conference** program. The AHEPA 528 members are also supporting our **St. George Golf Tournament on Saturday, September 25th**. A **special committee meeting** will be held under the leadership of **President Wynn Storton** on **Tuesday, September 7th** to discuss details related to hosting the **District 20 Mid-Winter Conference**, in-

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AHEPA NEWS, Continued

cluding the format and lay-out for the Conference **Ad Book**.

The drive to secure contributions and applicants for the **AHEPA 528 Fr. T. P. Theophilos Memorial Scholarship Fund** will begin this fall. Our Chapter looks forward to the continued support of our St. George parishioners.

Members of our AHEPA Chapter agreed to support financial expenses to send our AHEPA President, **Wynn Storton**, to New York to represent our Chapter during the Pastoral Visit to the United States of **His All-Holiness, Patriarch Bartholomew** this fall.

Finally, the AHEPA 528 members joyfully accepted **Fr. Ted's** offer to present a **Bible Study session** before the start of each meeting throughout the year, beginning with the **October**

2021 meeting. The Bible Study will carry the theme of our responsibilities to share God's love in all of our relationships.



On Wednesday, September 1, 2021, members of our parish AHEPA Chapter gathered for their first meeting since the summer break. The meeting featured the beginning of our AHEPA's food drive to feed the hungry. Pictured above from left to right, are: Mary Jean Shannazarian, Jack Shannazarian, Wynn Storton (AHEPA Chapter President), Ana Storton, Nick Krespis, Pete Silas Peterson, and Kyriakos Seraphim.

MID-WEEK CALENDAR - SEPTEMBER 2021

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

Tuesday, September 7th...Bible Study -10:00 a.m. (note the new "Zoom" link for this month: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81329951397?pwd=NTJlK0ppVUc5R2ZtZzBFcTBWVtUvdzO9.>)/ Sunday School Staff Meeting -7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, September 8th...NATIVITY OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS--Orthros, 8:30 a.m./ Divine Liturgy, 9:30 a.m.

Thursday, September 9th...Parish Council Meeting - 2:00 p.m.

Monday, September 13th...Philoptochos General Meeting - 11:00 a.m./Great Vespers -6:30 p.m.

Tuesday, September 14th...EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS - Orthros, 8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy, 9:30 a.m. (Note: Bible Study-11:00 a.m.)

Thursday, September 16th...Bible Study -6:30 p.m.

Saturday, September 18th...**San Francisco Metropolis Philoptochos Conference ("Zoom" format) - 9:00 a.m. -12:00 noon**

Sunday, September 19th...**Sunday School Classes Begin**

Tuesday, September 21st...Bible Study -10:00 a.m.

Thursday, September 23rd...Bible Study - 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, September 25th...**St. George Golf Tournament at Desert Willow Golf Resort - 12:30 p.m. (Shot-gun start)/ Awards Dinner-6:00 p.m. (at St. George parish hall)**

Tuesday, September 28th...Bible Study -10:00 p.m.

Thursday, September 30th...Bible Study -6:30 p.m.



Saint George Greek Orthodox Church Golf Tournament

Saturday, September 25, 2021 | 12:30 PM Shotgun Start | Desert Willow Golf Resort



ENTRY INFORMATION

Saturday, September 25, 2021

- \$175 per player (includes Golf and Awards Dinner)
- 12:30 PM Shotgun Start at Desert Willow Golf Resort
- 5:00 PM Social Hour at St. George Greek Orthodox Church
- 6:00 PM Traditional Greek Dinner at St. George Greek Orthodox Church | Silent Auction and Live Music

INDIVIDUALS AND SPONSORSHIPS

- Individual Player(s) ___ (# of Players) x \$175 \$ _____
- Tee Sponsorship(s) ___ (# of Sponsorships) x \$100 \$ _____
- Traditional Greek Dinner ___ (# of Dinners) x \$35 \$ _____
- Donation \$ _____

Total Amount \$ _____

EVENT REGISTRATION

Name _____

Company/Organization _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

PLAYER NAMES

1. _____ GHIN# _____

2. _____ GHIN# _____

3. _____ GHIN# _____

4. _____ GHIN# _____

REGISTRATION AND PAYMENT

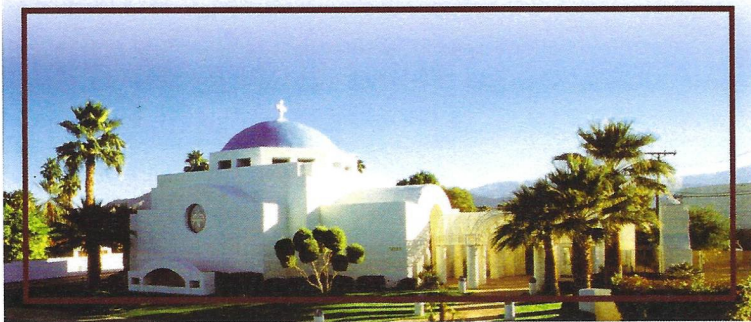
REGISTRATION DEADLINE: SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2021

Sign up online at www.desertwillow.com/StGeorge
Make Checks Payable To:

“Saint George Greek Orthodox Church”

Send Checks and Registration Form to:

PO Box 4755 | Palm Desert, CA | 92261



*St. George Greek Orthodox
Church is inviting you to a
scheduled Zoom meeting.*

Topic: Bible Study

*Time: Sep 7, 2021 10:00
AM Pacific Time (US and
Canada)*

*Every week on Tue,
until Oct 19, 2021, 7 occur-
rence(s)*

Sep 7, 2021 10:00 AM

Sep 14, 2021 10:00

AM