



AUGUST 2023

VOICE OF ST. GEORGE

SAINT GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT
74-109 LARREA ST.,
PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA



THE FIFTEEN DAYS OF AUGUST

Inside this Issue

The fifteen days of August – August 1-15 – are dedicated to strengthening our relationship with God. During these first few weeks of August, the Paraklisis Service to the Holy Theotokos is performed in the evenings. (Check our parish calendar for August.) Particularly, as is the case for preparing for Christmas (Advent) and Great Lent, this is a season for Holy Confession and observing as much as possible the Orthodox Tradition of fasting.

The Paraklisis Service

In that the Holy Virgin Mary is the Mother of God (Theotokos), and we are followers of Her Son, Who is God, She is, by extension, our spiritual Mother, as well. The Paraklisis Service held in honor of Her Dormition on August 15th is a prayer service through which we ask for Her prayers for us, acknowledging Her Motherly love for His Holy Church, of which we are members.

Holy Confession

I confess that what I am sharing with you are words to myself, as well. However, they are not my words, but the words of a devoted Russian Orthodox priest, who is worthy of sainthood, Fr. Alexander Elchaninov, from the book, *The Diary of a Russian Priest*.

Accordingly, 1) it is important to search one's own conscience through prayer. *"The more brightly the Light of Christ shines in our hearts, the clearer grows the awareness of our faults...;"* 2) repentance begins with the contrition in our hearts. Many saints have shed tears of sorrow then confessing their own sins. When we are truly sorry for our sins – to the point of tears – we often feel a softening of our hearts, giving way to peace in our souls and freedom from anger; 3) repentance requires that we take personal responsibility for our words and deeds. While everyone is interested in their "rights," people should also be committed to their responsibilities. *"It is very difficult in confession to avoid the temptation of self-justification."* (pg. 237)

Fasting

Like repentance, fasting is an effort. Fasting from certain foods is a spiritual discipline; it is not a dogma. Hence, while we must not press for "official" Church changes to the fasting rules established through the Holy Tradition of the Church, we must also understand that fasting is both a community, as well as an individual effort. As a community, we implement the Orthodox Fast as strictly as possible when gatherings take place on our parish property. The Fasting

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discipline for Great Lent, for example, is observed during our parish "coffee hour" following the Divine Liturgy.

Individuals, however, are to fast *according to their strength*. Those who are hospitalized; homebound in illness; suffering from spiritual or emotional crises, etc., are not expected to strictly observe the rigid fasting rules of the Church. Each of us is to try to "do something," *whatever we can* to observe the fasting discipline of the Church, given our health needs. It is good for one to seek advice regarding his or her fasting ability from a priest.

Fasting in itself is a form of offering ourselves for God's glory, while at the same time training ourselves in the virtues of humility, patience, and love for others. Fasting must be accompanied with personal prayer and worship. Otherwise, it is simply another food diet. The principle of the fasting discipline is primarily based on the circumstances surrounding the Original Sin of Adam and Eve. St. John of Kronstadt said, "*Those who [totally] reject fasting forget from what the fall into sin of the first men proceeded – intemperance – and what the means to counter sin and the tempter were indicated by our Lord when He Himself was tempted in the desert. He fasted forty days and nights. Many do not know – or do not wish to know – that a person most frequently falls away from God through intemperance.*" (Spiritual Counsels of Father John of Kronstadt, pg. 166).

Therefore, let us all welcome the fifteen days of August in honor of the Holy Theotokos by doing our best to worship our Savior by participating in the Divine Liturgy and the Paraklisis Services; by confession and repentance of sins, and by fasting according to our ability. In this way, we will find blessings from our Lord and Savior as we honor the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary.

+FR. THEODORE

SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

by

DEACON EUTHYM

"..The Holy Spirit also has goodness. And the Apostle also taught this when he said: 'Now the fruit of the Spirit is peace, love, joy, patience, goodness.' For who doubts that He is good

Whose fruit is goodness? For 'a good tree brings forth good fruit'." ..St Ambrose

How do we manifest the Holy Spirit who is the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who is present everywhere and fills all things, the third person of the Trinity? Through the fruit of the Spirit which resides in each of us. It is manifested when we avoid sin and is expressed through the "fruits" of the Holy Spirit described above.

"...What God provides has more value than our own intelligence." St Mark the Ascetic

We value intelligence but desire wisdom. True wisdom lies in Jesus Christ, and each of us in the depths of our minds and hearts are always seeking Him. Christ said, "I am the Truth, the Way, the Life". It is our desire to "appear" wise that makes us value worldly intelligence. But, in order to "be" wise, we must be in communion with Christ. "Not I, but Christ in me" as St Paul states. The wisdom of the world is foolishness to God. His wisdom brings us insight into the needs of others, inspiration to elevate those around us, and a desire to serve.

"Love is the only creative force in life; it is the source, the root, the well-spring of all creation. The only reason for the creation of the world and man by God the Creator is His love. God's love can never stand alone; it always seeks an object upon which it can pour itself out, make it joyful and prosperous"....Archbishop Averky

Love is where all good comes from—and God is love, looking to pour His love out on anyone who wishes to receive it. Sin is refusing God's love and mercy. The only unforgiveable sin is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit which is a refusal of God's love and a refusal to confess. Sin is the choice to separate ourselves from God, who alone is good and from which all love comes. Those who refuse to confess, who chose sin, will persecute those who chose God. This is why we suffer in the world when we profess our faith and live not for the flesh but for the Spirit. As Christ said, "be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" and "you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved."

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SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS, Continued

"Why was our Lord transfigured on a mountain and not in a valley? So as to teach us two virtues: love of labor and godly thoughts -for climbing to the heights requires labor, and the heights themselves represent the elevation of our thoughts to the things of God."...St. Nikolai

How hard it is to climb the mountain of spiritual labors and pure thoughts, but what a great reward it is when we arrive at the top, which is communion with God. It is Christ's Transfiguration on Mt Tabor (celebrated on August 6th) and the revelation of his divinity and humanity, that reflects our own "theosis" when we enter a spiritual relationship with Him. It is the Holy Spirit which guides us and inspires us and comforts us along the path. Pentecost is the beginning of that journey, and just as the apostles and the 3,000 received the Holy Spirit on that day, we are called to live apostolic lives as well, sharing the good news inspired by the Holy Spirit.

"A truly honest person indeed will not lower himself to flattery and hypocrisy...beware: flattery is the favorite and universal means...gaining advantages and favor from others."-Met. Gregory

When we are complimented the proper response is "thank God" or "glory to God" so as to avoid falsely building our own ego and also to avoid falling into temptation through the manipulations of others. Flattery is different than thanksgiving for another person's kindness or good work. Flattery implies some extra special characteristic of the individual and leads to egotism. Thanksgiving for another gives glory to God and gratefulness to be used for His glory. We need to look at each other as instruments of God, to be used for His glory. In this way we see the potential for holiness in every person we encounter, not through any special quality they have, but because they are willing to be used by God for the edification and salvation of others.

"...we shall find that after a storm at sea there comes a deep calm." - St. John Climacus

The words, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor

the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him," taken from St. Paul's 1st Epistle to the Corinthians give us insight into the transcendent existence of heaven, which is not a place but a deep relationship with God for eternity. It is this intimate love for God which comes to us after we have received the gift of earthly life and maintained our relationship with Him through baptism, repentance, communion, and yes of trials. Why trials? We exist in a fallen world. Through collective and individual sin we are all subject to suffering, illness, temptation, and conflict. Innocents suffer, death is a reality but Christ promises us something greater, He conquered death and offers us life eternal in Him. My cousin by marriage, my spiritual brother George passed from this life to the enter the life into that which no man has seen, ear heard or heart conceived. He loved so much, gave so much, suffered so much, but in the end, he chose Christ. In the storm of this world, George was a calm island of love. Now his ship has come to port with Christ Himself, comforted and calm, free of pain, sorrow or suffering.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Our Sunday School superintendent, **Athena Snarskis**, emailed the weblink to the parents of our Sunday School students so they can participate in a presentation entitled, "**Parenting From the Heart**" on **Monday, July 17th**, hosted by our Metropolis of San Francisco Family Wellness Ministry. Two very informative presentations were offered: 1) "**Please Understand Me! Connecting with the Inner Life of Your Kids**," and, 2) "**Game Changers: Lessons for Parents From Sports Psychologists**." Replays of these "**Parenting From the Heart**" presentations are available through our Holy Metropolis.

In preparation over the summer months for the **2023-2024 Sunday School Year**, consideration is being given to monthly installments of lessons from **Shereen Marcus**, a parishioner of the Orthodox Christian Church in Washington, D.C., entitled, "**Bridges to Orthodoxy: Connecting Youth to the Orthodox Christian Church**." (BtO) More details to follow. The **2023-2024 Sunday School Year** begins on **Sunday, September 10th!**

2024 ST. GEORGE GREEK FESTIVAL

Preparations for the 2024 St. George Greek Festival are already underway! The Festival is scheduled to take place on the weekend of **February 17th and 18th, 2024.**

As always, we are in need of parishioners to step forth to work as **chairpersons** for the various facets of the Greek Festival, which include set-up and take-down, as well as the oversight of individual food and beverage stations. Those who want to volunteer from now may contact our 2024 Greek Festival General Chairman, **George Argyros.**

ST. GEORGE GOLF TOURNAMENT

Due to scheduling conflicts, the **2024 St. George Golf Tournament is cancelled.** It will resume April 26, 2025. Thank you for your continued support, and we hope to see at this event in 2025.

PHILOPTOCHOS

Our parish Philoptochos continues to support the National Philoptochos summer campaign in the efforts needed to establish Orthodox Campus Ministries for our college students. The Orthodox Campus Ministry is itself a year long ministry, through which our college students can access materials needed to organize an on-campus group at which students can gather for on-campus worship, Orthodox Christian discussion groups, and fellowship. Along with this campaign, the National Philoptochos is at work in the continuous efforts to offer financial support for Hellenic College and Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology.

On the local level, our parish Philoptochos is gearing up for the new Ecclesiastical Year, which begins in September. Mark the following dates on your calendars and prepare to participate in the fellowship and activities of our St. George Philoptochos Chapter:

Monday, September 25th—General Members Meeting

Saturday, October 14th—"Paint El Paseo Pink" Walk-a-Thon in support of breast cancer re-

search.

Monday, October 16th—General Members Meeting.

Saturday, November 11th—"Welcome Back to the Desert" Gala.

More announcements are soon to come!

AHEPA

Wynn Storton, Chapter President, together with brothers **Nicholas Latkovic** and **Ramesy Seikaly** represented our parish **AHEPA 528 Chapter** at the **National AHEPA Family Convention** in Las Vegas, Nevada, which took place on July 23-29, 2023.

Of the main concerns related at the convention were the following: 1) The AHEPA Service Dogs campaign, and, 2) The AHEPA Hellenic History Tournament.

The Service Dogs campaign has been greatly successful. Everyone is asked to continue to support this worthwhile program, which helps Veterans who have been wounded in battle while defending our freedoms. Wynn Storton is very much involved in this program.

The Hellenic History Tournament is an opportunity for young adults to learn as much as they can about the history of Greece and then form teams to compete in "Jeopardy-type" matches. This kind of a program can also be used in religious education venues, whereby young adults can learn as much as they can about our Orthodox Faith, and compete in the same way, much like the "Bible Bowl" that we had in the past.

Along with the golf and basketball tournament, the delegates at National AHEPA Family Convention shared their concerns for the state of Greece and the welfare of our Holy Patriarchate.

On the local level, mark your calendars for **Saturday, September 30, 2023.** Our AHEPA Chapter 528 will be hosting a dinner honoring the "Ecclesiastical New Year" featuring Greek appetizers and Greek cuisine. Details are soon to follow, with announcements being posted weekly in our *Sunday Ladder*.

WHY DO WE WORSHIP GOD THE WAY WE DO?

There have been quite a few of our St. George parishioners who have asked this question: "Why do Greek Orthodox communicants worship the way we do?" In answer, regardless of their nationality, all Orthodox Christian faithful worship our Lord in the same way. It is not just "Greek." It is the *Orthodox Way*, which dates back to the early Church of the Apostles. Indeed, the way that we worship has meaning for us in our efforts to live our everyday lives as followers of Christ.

Those who really want to know why Orthodox Christians worship Christ our God the way we do may join our weekly Bible Study groups on Wednesday evenings, beginning in October 2023. Since the Divine Liturgy is based on Scripture, our Bible Study will also offer an opportunity to find answers to questions about our way of wor-

ship. Until October rolls around, questions may be emailed directly to Fr. Ted at frt.j.pantels@gmail.com. Already, some questions up for answers and discussions are:

1. Why do we light candles when we enter the church?
2. What are the proper times to enter church from the narthex?
3. Why do we use incense?
4. Why do we fast?
5. Why do we have Holy Water?
6. Why do we perform memorial services?

The answers to these questions and more await for our participation in our evening Bible Study which is scheduled to begin in October – and will be hosted in-person and on Zoom.

MID-WEEK CHURCH SERVICES FOR AUGUST 2023

Tuesday, August 1st – **The Fifteen Day Fasting Season in honor of the Holy Theotokos begins.**
Paraklisis Service – 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, August 3rd – Paraklisis Service- 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, August 5th – Great Vespers – 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, August 6th – Holy Transfiguration of our Lord and Savior (Sunday Schedule)

Monday, August 7th – Paraklisis Service – 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, August 9th – Paraklisis Service – 6:30 p.m.

Friday, August 11th – Paraklisis Service – 6:30 p.m.

Monday, August 14th – Vespers – 5:30 p.m.

Tuesday, August 15th – The Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God
Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

Tuesday, August 29th – THE BEHEADING OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST
Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m. (Strict Fasting Day)

Note: Feel free to make an appointment for Holy Confession. Contact Fr. Ted at: (760) 880-5869

PARISH MASTER CALENDAR-- Our parish 2023-2024 Master Calendar planning is underway:
Changes to the Calendar from last year to this year: Sunday of the Holy Doctors; Weekly Bible Study & Orthodox Worship Discussion Group in-person and online; Parish participation in the Archdiocese Clergy/Laity Assembly in San Diego, California; Fall Parish Retreat not confirmed.

- Friday, September 1, 2023 – Ecclesiastical New Year
- **Friday, September 8, 2023 – Nativity of the Holy Theotokos**
- Sunday, September 10th – Sunday School Registration. Sunday School classes will be held on the second Sunday of every month, beginning with this Sunday.
- **Thursday, September 14, 2023 – Elevation of the Holy Cross**
- Sunday, September 17, 2023 – The Daughters of the American Revolution ringing of the bell in honor of “Constitution Week.”
- Saturday, September 30, 2023 – AHEPA “Ecclesiastical New Year” Dinner – 6:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, October 4, 2023 – Weekly “Bible Study & Orthodox Worship Discussion Group” begins. (Wednesdays from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.: in-person and on Zoom)
- Saturday, October 14, 2023 – “Paint El Paseo Pink” event in support of breast cancer research
- Saturday, October 28, 2023 – St. George Fall Parish Spiritual Retreat.
- Sunday, October 15, 2023 – Sunday of the Holy Doctors and “Bring a Friend to Church Sunday”
- Saturday, November 4, 2023- Pan-Orthodox Liturgy at St. Raphael Antiochian Orthodox parish in Thousand Palms – 10:00 a.m.
- Saturday, November 11, 2023 – Philoptochos “Welcome Back” Gala – 6:00 p.m.
- Sunday, November 12, 2023 – Honoring our Veterans of America’s Armed Forces
- **Wednesday, November 15, 2023 – Christmas Fasting Season begins.***
- **Tuesday, November 21, 2023 – Presentation of the Holy Theotokos to the Temple**
- Thursday, November 23, 2023 – Thanksgiving Day
- Sunday, November 19, 2023 - Fall General Assembly (to be confirmed)
- Sunday, December 3, 2023 – Parish Elections
- Saturday, December 9, 2023- Philoptochos Christmas Luncheon (Venue-to-be-Determined)
- Sunday School Christmas Program - (Exact Date-to-be-Determined)
- **Monday, December 25, 2023 – The Nativity of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ**
- **Saturday, January 6, 2024 – Holy Theophany – the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan**
- Sunday, January 7, 2024 - Philoptochos Vasilopita Celebration (To be Confirmed)
- Monday, January 8, 2024 – Preparations for the Greek Festival begin.
- **Friday, February 2, 2024 – Presentation of Christ in the Temple**
- Saturday and Sunday, February 17 & 18, 2024 - St. George Parish Greek Festival

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PARISH MASTER CALENDAR, *Continued*

- **Monday, March 18, 2024 - Great Lent Begins**
- **Monday, March 25, 2024 – Annunciation of the Holy Theotokos/Greek Independence Day**
- Saturday, April 6, 2024 – St. George Parish Lenten Retreat (To be confirmed)
- **Sunday, April 28 - Sunday, May 5, 2024 - Holy Week/Great & Holy Pascha**
- **Monday, May 6, 2024 – St. George Parish Feast Day**
- Sunday, May 12, 2024 – Mother's Day
- Sunday, May 19, 2024 – AHEPA Sunday
- **Sunday, June 23, 2024 – Pentecost Sunday**
- Sunday, June 30 – Thursday, July 4, 2024 - Archdiocese Clergy/Laity Assembly and National Philotochos Convention in San Diego, CA. All Southern California parishes are to help host.

NOTE: Feast Days in blue lettering indicate Feasts in honor of the Theotokos and Christmas Fasting. Feast Days in red lettering indicate Feasts honoring our Lord and Savior and Pentecost.

* The Christmas Fasting season (a.k.a. "The Nativity Fast," or Advent) is not as strict of a fast as is that of Great Lent. Fish is allowed more during this time than during the Lenten Fast. In America, the Fast is "suspended" (by virtue of family customs) for the observance of Thanksgiving. This particular Fasting season becomes more strict after December 12th, when St. Spyridon the Wonderworker is honored. After December 12th, weddings and banquets are not to take place. As is true for Great Lent, the Christmas Fasting season is a time for increased efforts in prayer and worship and for participation in the Sacrament of Holy Confession. +FR. THEODORE

UPCOMING GREEK FESTIVALS

LONG BEACH - Long Beach Greek Festival **September 2-4, 2023**

Assumption Greek Orthodox Church

5761 East Colorado Street

Long Beach, California 90814-1954 lbgreekfest.org Held on Labor Day Weekend, Admission is approx. \$3.

CARDIFF-BY-THE-SEA - Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Festival **September 9-10, 2023**

Sat 10 am - 10pm, Sun 11 am - 9:30 pm

Admission \$3, Children under 12, Active Military and First Responders (with ID) Free; Parking Free at adjacent Mira Costa College (760) 942-0920

cardiffgreekfestival.com | facebook.com/CardiffGreekFest/

3459 Manchester Avenue....Cardiff-by-the-Sea, CA 92007...Authentic Greek food, music, live entertainment and dancing are all presented at the Annual Greek Festival at Cardiff-By-the-Sea.

COVINA: San Gabriel Greek Festival **September 17-18, 2023**

Saint Nectarios Greek Orthodox Church20340 E Covina Blvd.

Covina, California 91724stnectariosgoc.org | facebook.com/SaintNectariosShrine/

The two day fall event – Delicious Greek food like gyros and moussaka, and listen and dance to music, take a church tour, and shop in the vendor marketplace.

**IMPORTANT SPIRITUAL EVENTS AND
EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES HOSTED BY
OUR HOLY METROPOLIS OF SAN FRANCISCO**

YOUNG ADULT CONFERENCE: "FULFILL YOUR LIFE IN CHRIST"

August 31-September 4th, 2023

at the Hyatt Regency Orange County in sunny Orange County, CA.

Highlights of the weekend include engaging workshops, worship, dances, social events, an afternoon at the beach, a formal Hellenic Gala. Make sure to register today! <https://www.sanfran.goarch.org/events/yal-conference-2023-fulfill-your-life-in-christ>

Questions? Email yalconferencereg@gmail.com.

ANASTASIMATARION: THE IMPORTANCE OF SATURDAY VESPERS AND SUNDAY ORTHROS

The Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco Stewardship Ministry invites you to the next presentation of our 2023 Monthly Ministry Series. Please join us on Monday, August 21, 2023 for a special presentation on "*The Anastasimatarion – the importance of Saturday Vespers and Sunday Orthros in our lives*", hosted by **Christopher Hondros**, Chair of the Metropolis Church Music Ministry, and **Ross Ritterman**, Church Music Development Team Lead. They will be joined by guest presenter **Rev. Deacon Justin Bosl** from the Resurrection Greek Orthodox Church in Castro Valley, CA. **Monday, August 21, 2023 – 6:30 p.m. Pacific Time**

For more information, please email metropolis@sanfran.goarch.org or call 415-753-3075.

REGISTER NOW : <https://www.sanfran.goarch.org/events/the-anastasimatarion-the-importance-of-saturday-vespers-and-sunday-orthros-in-our-lives?date=2023-08-21>

Through psalms and hymns from the Anastasimatarion, journey with us as we take you through Vespers and Matins and show how essential these services are in preparing for the Divine Liturgy.