



FEBRUARY 2023

VOICE OF ST. GEORGE

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



THE PRESENTATION OF CHILDREN IN THE CHURCH

Presenting our new-born children to Christ our God through the Forty-Day Blessing Service in Church is the beginning of educating them in accordance with our Holy Orthodox Christian Faith. Educating our children in the Faith is a three-fold effort: 1) setting the example of Orthodox spiritual life; 2) explaining the Holy Tradition of our Church through family discussions; 3) bringing our children to Sunday Church Services and Sunday School consistently.

As is true for each of us, our children are also the people of God, "temples of the Holy Spirit," as St. Paul stated in his Epistles. As such, we are both inheritors of all God's many blessings and conveyors of God's many blessings -- or, as is so often said, "co-workers" with God.

On **February 2nd** every year, we celebrate the **Presentation of Christ into the Temple**. As our Savior, Christ is also our Law-Giver, He subjected Himself to the Law. The purpose of God's Law is, 1) to draw us closer to God's grace, and, 2) to convey to all the Divine Love.

Taking from the example of Christ our God, Who was presented into the Temple, we present our children into our Church by way of the Forty-Day Blessing Service, through which we pray: "*Lord God, on the fortieth day You were brought as an infant into the Tem-*

ple of the Law by Mary, Your Ever-Virgin and Holy Mother and held in the arms of the righteous Symeon. Will You, as Sovereign Lord, also bless this infant brought here to be presented to You the Author of all...advance it in every good work pleasing to You, and by the signing with the mark of the Cross, will You put to flight every opposing force..."

Let us pray that we ourselves do not unwittingly become the "opposing force" with regard to all that benefit our children by neglecting our responsibilities to follow the teachings of our Church. Saints have said that the greatest fear of all is, not fear of catastrophes, or of illness, but of committing sins, because sin corrupts both us and the next generation.

Dr. John Boorjamra, in his book, *Foundations for Christian Education*, tells us, "*A child discovers what it is to be a Christian by being told what it means, but primarily by experiencing the reality of the living community, whether parish or family.*" (pg. 94). Hence, we have a tremendous responsibility to do all we can to maintain a Sunday School program and to bring our children to Church Services and Sunday School. By comprehending the meaning of Holy Orthodoxy for their lives, children can grow into truly faithful and great servants of God -- becoming saints, if we allow it.

+FR. THEODORE

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SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS by Deacon Euthym

"A tree is known by its fruit; a man by his deeds. A good deed is never lost; he who sows courtesy reaps friendship, and he who plants kindness gathers love." - Saint Basil

"Be ashamed when you sin, don't be ashamed when you repent [To repent means to have a change of heart and mind. It is not simply a feeling of sorrow ,but a psycho/spiritual growth away from evil/death and a turning to God/life]. Sin is the wound, repentance is the medicine. Sin is followed by shame; repentance is followed by boldness [Boldness means to beg God for undeserved mercy]. Satan has overturned this order and given boldness to sin and shame to repentance." - Saint John Chrysostom

"What He was, He laid aside; what He was not, He assumed. He takes upon Himself the poverty of my flesh so that I may receive the riches of His divinity." - St. Gregory of Nazianzus

Here we experience the wisdom of the three hierarchs of the church, Sts Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom whose Synaxis we commemorated on Monday, January 30th. Let us always commemorate these three legends of the faith and heed their beautiful words.

"You don't become holy by fighting evil. Let evil be. Look towards Christ and that will save you. What makes a person saintly is love." - St. Porphyrios

This saying of a modern saint reminds us to avoid focusing on the failings of others, of trying to make the world and others "perfect". Rather he tells us to look towards Christ to receive His grace so we can truly love others, ourselves and remove judgement from our life. The only way to "fight evil" is through love and sincere repentance when we fall. Love's essence is rooted in humility. Humility comes from living a confessional life.

"Prayer is the flower of gentleness and of freedom from anger" - Evagrius the Solitary

I don't think we realize how great an opportunity we have to find peace and freedom from

worldly worries and cares in daily prayer. When we leave everything at the feet of our Lord and ask for His grace in all humility, the Holy Spirit comes to us as the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, Treasury of Good things and Giver of life. We invoke these words in the Trisagion prayers. Let us not look at prayer as a task, but as a necessary relationship with the Source of life and of all good things, a place where we can put away any facades and encounter the Living God.

"The Lord did not come to make a display. He came to heal and to teach suffering men. For one who wanted to make a display the thing would have been just to appear and dazzle the beholders. But for Him Who came to heal and to teach the way was not merely to dwell here, but to put Himself at the disposal of those who needed Him, and to be manifested according as they could bear it, not vitiating the value of the Divine appearing by exceeding their capacity to receive it." - St. Athanasius the Great

We too should imitate Christ in this way. Not make a display in our lives, but to reach out and heal those who suffer. How do we do that? Give what our neighbor can receive and give what is needed for healing, both of body, mind and most importantly of soul. Do not give more than the capacity of the receiver to receive it. In this way we slowly bring people closer to the Lord, not by judging, but by reaching out to those areas in which they are suffering, and to apply the poultice of love as much as they can stand.

"It sometimes happens that a person in despondency thinks to himself that it would be easier for him to be destroyed, or to be without any feeling and consciousness, than to remain any longer in this unaccountably tormenting state of mind. One should try to get out of it as quickly as possible. Beware of the spirit of despondency, for it gives birth to every evil." - St. Seraphim of Sarov

Despondency might be the most vicious tool of the devil. It breeds a lack of hope which can lead to despair. It creates a "what difference does it make" attitude and breeds an apathy that has no love. A way to "get out of it as
Continued on the next page -->

SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS, Continued

possible" as St Seraphim suggests, is through to pathways, internal and external. Internally by quieting the mind and reaching out to God, in thanks, glorifying Him for whatever blessings we can think of past and present. Externally by getting busy helping and reaching out to others so as to take our mind off of our own situation, no matter how bad, and allowing our internal dialogue to take a rest. The devil would like nothing more to delude us that there is no hope. But with God all things are possible and there is always hope. In Scripture the word "hope" is accompanied by patience almost 80% of the time. So let us patiently endure whatever we encounter and combat the spirit of despondency by giving God glory even in the darkest moments and helping and reaching out to others in love.

2023 ST. GEORGE GREEK FESTIVAL

- **Upcoming Greek Festival Meeting:** Monday, February 6th at our parish hall at 4:00 p.m.
- **"Cashlessness":** Almost all of this year's Festival stations will be operating solely on a credit-card basis. Credit card purchases will be processed through the newly installed Clover Credit Card Processing System, through which transactions will be electronically recorded and reported between patrons' accounts and our parish accounts. Chairpersons of Festival stations are invited to learn more about the Clover system by way of a tutorial offered by our parish treasurer, Nick Latkovic.
- **Volunteers:** St. George volunteers are the best! Despite their back-braking sacrifices of time and talent, our parish volunteers have kept pace with Festival food preparations throughout January. Through it all, it has been fun! More pleasant memories of fellowship have been created. The next two and a half weeks will require the same heroic effort of love as we draw near to "Festival time."
- **Underwriting:** Not everyone can physically perform the laborious tasks that are

required for the success of the Festival. For those who would like to be a part of our winning team, **donating toward the costs** associated with our Festival is a huge help. For those who cannot physically work at a Festival station, a donation of \$100 will help pay a worker to work a complete half-day shift (5 hours). We will honor our volunteers and underwriters in a special manner in the near future.

• **Schedule:** The next two weeks are very important. Anyone who has yet to volunteer to help in Festival preparations is asked to come forward; for, the work has fallen to some of the same people who always get things done for our parish. However, relief for them would be a "double blessing," because, not only would new volunteers be able to make sure production is maintained at its current high standard, but those who can volunteer now will help in providing needed rest to those already volunteering, thereby allowing them to maintain their good health.

• **Flyers:** Festival flyers are available in our parish hall and they are ready for distribution throughout neighborhoods and among businesses. Distribution of flyers to hotels during the week just prior to the Festival will be key to our general success!

• **More information:** More information in reference to preparing for our Festival on February 18th and 19th can be obtained by calling our Festival Chairperson, **George Argyros, or, Fr. Ted**

• **Church Services:** In that the "start time" for our Greek Festival is at 10:00 a.m. on both Saturday, February 18th (Saturday of Souls) and Sunday, February 19th, the Orthodox Service on both days will begin at 7:30 a.m., with Divine Liturgy scheduled to begin at 8:30 a.m. so that Festival workers can prepare to open their stations at 10:00 a.m. on both days.

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS

Our St. George Philoptochos members have been sacrificing time and talent to the max in helping for the success of our 2023 Greek Festival. The next few weeks are critical in terms of helping our Philoptochos to help the Church. Please volunteer!

Throughout January, our St. George Philoptochos has continued to work with the Narrow Door in order to provide food and hygiene kits for those in need. Our Sunday School has been instrumental in working with Philoptochos in this regard.

Please circle, **March 11, 2023** on your calendars and plan to join in the Annual Philoptochos Membership event: **"Membership and Aloha."** The **"luau party"** starts at **11:30 a.m. on Saturday, March 11th and conclude at 2:00 p.m.** Make plans to attend! More details to follow.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

One of our best Sunday School students inspires others with her enthusiastic contribution of time and talent, adding prayers and Bible verses to the Philoptochos hygiene kits, which are distributed to the needy throughout our Coachella Valley. Our Sunday School students partner with Philoptochos, who are the "friends of the poor" to help the needy throughout the year.

Our Sunday School "Family Sunday" event held on **Sunday, January 29th** was most spiritually successful. We commend not only the students for their participation, but also their parents. Their participation during the Divine Liturgy in singing along with the congregation as led by our choir was inspiring to all. Many thanks to our two Sunday School **ushers** for their service.

All of our **Sunday School students**, along with their **parents** are invited to join for our Sunday School **"Agiasmo lesson"** on **Sunday, February 12th**, following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. The **Service of the Blessing of the Waters** ("Agiasmo" Service) will be held in our church during the coffee hour, through which we ask for our Lord's blessings upon our 2023 Greek Festival (which will take place the following Sunday, February 19th (and Saturday, February 18th). Fr. Ted will offer a brief explanation about the meaning and purpose of the Blessing of the Waters Service and why Orthodox faithful seek

the blessing of Holy Water for their homes.



Sunday School included prayers and verses from the Bible in helping with the Philoptochos hygiene kits.

AHEPA NEWS

Our **AHEPA District 20 Mid-Winter Conference**, held on **January 28-29th** was a tremendous success. Our own AHEPA Chapter 528 played host, as the conference was held in Palm Desert at the Homewood Suites. Special thanks to the efforts of Wynn Storton, Matthew Holm, Nick Latkovic, and Bill Rellos for their efforts in contributing to the success of this event.

AHEPA Family scholarships were major topics throughout the conference. District 20 leads the pack in terms of providing substantive scholarships. In addition, athletic scholarships are offered by our greater AHEPA Family. To donate to our local AHEPA 528 Scholarship Fund, visit: www.ahepa528.org.

The **February AHEPA 528 meeting** will take place at the parish hall on **Tuesday, February 7th at 5:00 p.m.** Please note the early start, due to discussion related to items for the "AHEPA Booth" at this year's St. George Greek Festival.



Wynn Storton (standing far left) introduces dignitaries to this year's AHEPA Mid-Winter Conference

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AHEPA NEWS, Continued

Pictured above, Christ Kaitson, AHEPA Supreme Treasurer speaks regarding the strong relationship between AHEPA and our Holy Archdiocese at this year's AHEPA District 20 Mid-Winter Conference.



Carol Stathopoulos (DOP District 20 Governor) showcases the AHEPA Family scholarship programs at this year's AHEPA District 20 Mid-Winter Conference.

RESUMING MONTHLY BLESSING OF THE WATERS SERVICES ("AGIASMO")

For a few years now - and particularly prior to the Covid-19 outbreak - we have performed the **Blessing of the Waters Service (the "Agiasmo" Service)** on one Sunday every month.

On **Sunday, February 12, 2023** we will resume this tradition of our St. George parish, because this Sunday of February 12th marks one week before our first St. George Greek Festival in three years, due to the Covid-19 outbreak. This year, we will commemorate the 25th anniversary of our on-going Greek Festivals since the construction of our St. George church edifice.

This first "Agiasmo" Service will also present an opportunity for our Sunday School students to learn about the meaning of this Holy Church prayer service and why we bless our homes. **Fr. Ted** will lead the lesson.

The "Agiasmo" Service, together with the les-

son, will take place in the church shortly after coffee is served for our coffee hour in the parish hall. Everyone is invited to return to the church in order to participate in this Holy Church Service, which will **begin at approximately 11:15 a.m.**

Beginning in March the **monthly "Agiasmo" Service schedule** over the next few months (due to Great Lent, Pascha and Pentecost) will be: **Sunday, March 12th; Sunday, April 2nd; Sunday, May 7th; Sunday, June 11th.** Holy Water will be available for all parishioners to take home following the Church Services.

ST. GEORGE PARISH LENTEN RETREAT

Our St. George parish annual **Lenten Spiritual Retreat** is scheduled for **Saturday, March 18, 2023.** **Fr. Steven Tsihchlis**, the pastor of St. Paul Greek Orthodox Church in Irvine, California will be our speaker. He is the author of the informative booklet, entitled **"A Worshiper's Guide to the Divine Liturgy."** Copies are available in our parish book store. The title of his booklet fits with our overall theme for this year: "Understanding the Divine Liturgy." We ask for **R.S.V.P. by Sunday, March 12th.**

For more information, please note the enclosed flyer and / or contact **Fr. Ted** at church, by email at: firt.j.pantels@gmail.com, or by calling: (760) 568-9901, or (760) 880-5869.

CHURCH SERVICES DURING THE WEEKEND OF THE GREEK FESTIVAL

Our **Greek Festival** this year opens at **10:00 a.m.** on both Saturday, February 18th and Sunday, February 19th. As a result, the schedule of Holy Church Services for this weekend has been fixed as follows:

Saturday, February 18th (Saturday of Souls)

Orthros - 7:30 a.m.

Divine Liturgy- 8:30 a.m.

Memorial Service - 9:30 a.m. (Fr. Ted will bless the Festival Stations with Holy Water between 9:45 and 10:00 a.m.)

Sunday, February 19th

Orthros -7:30 a.m.

Divine Liturgy-8:30 a.m.

THE CLOVER FINANCIAL RECORDING SYSTEM

Financial transactions during our 2023 St. George Greek Festival will be made through the **Clover Financial Recording System**. This will allow our Festival transactions to take place as **cashless transactions**, through use of patrons' credit cards.

All Festival Station chairpersons are asked to learn the operation of this system through a tutorial offered by **Nick Latkovic**. Please contact him to find out when the next tutorials will be offered and /or to have questions answered with regard to operating this system.

In that we are only a few weeks away from the Festival weekend, now is the time to make sure that we are "all on the same page," so to speak.

This system will allow transactions at our Festival to be recorded and reported from the point of purchase directly to our parish accounts, allowing for a receipt to be printed for the credit card user's personal records.

In this way, accuracy will be greatly increased with regard to the finances surrounding purchases made at our Festival. We express sincere thanks in advance to those who volunteer to help make our 2023 Greek Festival a success!

FEBRUARY 2023 CALENDAR

- Thursday, February 2nd.....PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE
Orthros-8:00 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:00 a.m.
- Sunday, February 5th.....SUNDAY OF THE PHARISEE & THE TAX-COLLECTOR
Orthros - 8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.
Presentation by Jonathan Brubaker for the St. Andrew Orthodox Academy during coffee hour
- Monday, February 6th.....Festival Preparations -9:00 a.m. / Festival Meeting - 4:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, February 7th.....Festival Preparations -9:00 a.m. / Bible Study-10:00 a.m.
- Wednesday, February 8th.....Festival Preparations -9:00 a.m.
- Thursday, February 9th.....Parish Council -2:00 p.m.
- Friday, February 10th.....ST. HARALAMBOS
Orthros-8:00 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:00 a.m.
- Sunday, February 12th.....SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON
Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.
Coffee Hour-10:45 a.m.- 11:15 a.m.
Blessing of the Waters Service ("Agiasmo") - 11:15 a.m.
- Monday, February 13th - Friday, February 17th- Final Preparations for our 2023 St. George Greek Festival - 9:00 a.m. each day. (No Bible Study group scheduled)
- Saturday, February 18th.....SATURDAY OF SOULS
Orthros-7:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy -8:30 a.m.
Greek Festival - 10:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.
- Sunday, February 19th.....JUDGMENT SUNDAY (MEATFARE)
Orthros-7:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-8:30 a.m.
Greek Festival - 10:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.
- Saturday, February 25th.....SATURDAY OF SOULS
Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.
- Sunday, February 26th.....FORGIVENESS SUNDAY (CHEESEFARE)
Orthros -8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy- 9:30 a.m.
- Monday, February 27thGREAT LENT BEGINS

American Heart Month

Go Red Sunday - February 5

American Heart Association.



***Cardiovascular disease is the No. 1
killer of women, causing 1 in 3
deaths each year.***



**American Heart Association
www.goredforwomen.org**

02/03/2023



*******St George Festival Register Training*******

The good news is we are expecting +6,000 visitors at our Festival on February 18th and 19th with good weather. This will amount to over 18,000 transactions at our booths.

The 2023 St George Festival will accept Credit / Debit Cards only for payment to improve transactional efficiency, eliminate manual bookkeeping and reduce the security concerns related to handling large amounts of cash.

We are using CLOVER Electronic Registers to process all transactions. These registers are like today's smartphones – ICON driven and intuitive after a short training session. I highly recommend Chairman and Cashiers attend at least 1 Hands On class to be comfortable with the new machines. **See or contact Nick Latkovic with questions.**

As with any new technology, there will be questions during the festival. We will have a roaming "Help Desk" team to assist cashiers with questions during the hours of operation.

CLOVER Cashless Register user's training will occur in the church hall on the following days:

Monday 2/06/23 @ 9 AM and 6:30 PM if requested due to work schedules.

Monday 2/13/23 @ 9 AM and 6:30 PM if requested due to work schedules.

Please contact me at 760-455-9727 to arrange another time if you cannot attend the above sessions. I will also be at the church hall during the next 2 weeks prior to the festival to answer questions as well.



Nick Latkovic

Volunteer for the Festival

What Kind of Person Are You?

In this world there are four kinds of people: Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was asked to do it. Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did.

Somebody got angry about it because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Somebody would do it, but Nobody realized it wouldn't get done by Anybody. It ended up that not only was the job not done, but Everybody accused Somebody, and Nobody accepted the responsibility.

Moral: Everybody's job is Anybody's. Nobody can be Somebody unless they are willing to do Anybody's work.



Please complete the brief form below and leave it at the church office, with Jim Christopoulos or with Father Ted. If you'd like more information, feel free to call the church office at 760-568-9901 or Jim Christopoulos at 760-902-8460. You may also email Jim at goofy_328@yahoo.com.

.....
Name: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

Shift Availability: Saturday 2/18: ___ 9:45-3:00 ___ 3:00-8:15

 Sunday 2/19: ___ 9:45-3:00 ___ 3:00-8:15

St George Sunday School News

Palm Desert, CA

♥ FEBRUARY ♥

(UPDATED VERSION)

Feb 3rd, 2023

Hope everyone is staying healthy and enjoying the weather. We had a great turnout last Sunday for Youth Sunday! So many parishioners expressed how they loved all our families sitting together up front and especially participating with our choir. Maybe we should do that each Sunday? Let me know your thoughts, Fr Ted said he would love that! We learned about the feast day of the Three Holy Hierarchs on Jan 30th and also made 30 Health Kits with special Valentine bags for our Philoptochos Homeless Outreach! Here's what's happening in February!

Sunday, FEB 5th

Sunday School

After Holy Communion all grades will meet near my classroom.

In preparation for our St George Greek Festival our classrooms are now being used for pastry storage and becomes the pastry hub during the festival. Our Philoptochos and others have been working very hard baking, packaging, meal preps, grounds setup etc. Please consider volunteering!

Sunday, FEB 12th

Family Sunday School Event

Fr Ted has invited us all into church for an Explanatory Agiasmos service (Holy Water Blessing). Do an online search below for info about this beautiful service.

Online Search: †
BE THE BEE Episode # 16 Holy Water for the Whole World

Sat/Sun, FEB 18 & 19

GREEK FESTIVAL

Please consider volunteering at any of our booths, especially in the KIDS ZONE!

Contact Kid Zone Chairman

Julia Hays: 760-272-7864

Festival Volunteers

Jim Christopoulos: 760 902-8460

Sunday, FEB 26

FAMILY SUNDAY SCHOOL EVENT RETURNS!

In preparation for the beginning of Lent, on **Monday, Feb 27th**, we are having a special event for Sunday School families!

Fr Ted will help guide us through the many ways families can participate at home, in our communities and with several of our Lenten services! **Helpful resource materials will be distributed!**

If you ever have any questions or concerns please contact us? We're looking forward to our next family gathering! God Bless!

Fr Ted Pantels: 760-880-5869

Presb Petula Pantels: 909-539-7542

Mrs. Athena Snarskis: 219-313-6940

SAVE THE DATE! *** Friday, APRIL 7th**

SUNDAY SCHOOL LENTEN RETREAT (9:00 am -1:30 pm)

This is not on our Holy Friday, but on "American Good Friday" and most students are off school. More info to come, but did someone say we're having a LENTEN ESCAPE ROOM this year!!!

**St. George Greek Orthodox Church's
2023 Lenten Retreat**

Living the Liturgy

with

Father Steven Tsihchlis

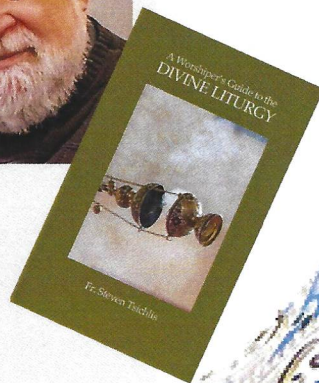
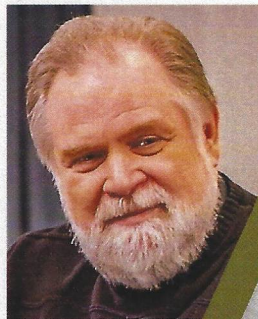
Pastor of St. Paul Greek Orthodox Church, Irvine, CA

Author of *A Worshiper's Guide to the Divine Liturgy*

Saturday, March 18

10:30 AM - 2:30 PM

Lenten Lunch Included



Session 1

10:30 AM - 12:00 PM

"The Lord's Table: How Our
Participation in Liturgy Impacts
Our Lives"

Session 2

1:00 - 2:30 PM

"Living the Liturgy: Eating and Drinking
the Lord Jesus"



A freewill
donation of
\$10
is appreciated

To Register:

pdsaintgeorge@gmail.com | 760-568-9901

74-109 Larrea Street, Palm Desert, CA