



MARCH 2023

VOICE OF ST. GEORGE

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



OUR THOUGHTS DETERMINE OUR LIVES!

Throughout the Bible fasting is associated with prayer and prayer is associated with repentance. After His Baptism in the Jordan, Jesus fasted to overcome the temptations set forth by the devil while in the wilderness. (St. Matthew 4:1-2). By His example, we note that fasting is part of our struggle against temptations—and the struggle against temptations is a constant repentance. *“Our Lord’s fast of forty days is the foundation of the Church’s forty-day Lenten fast before Holy Week and of the fast before Christmas.”* (Orthodox Study Bible, pg. 271).

Fasting from certain foods is certainly not a matter of “keeping a diet.” The ultimate purpose of fasting is for us to be obedient to God. On this point, let us be clear: when Adam and Eve ate from the tree, their sin was not in their act of eating anything and it was not the “apple” that was bad. It was that they wantonly disobeyed God. Fasting, then, is our effort in reminding ourselves to be obedient to God.

Obedience to God is linked with prayer. We see this when we think of the Lord’s Prayer, in which Christ our God is the “super-essential Bread” (the “arton epi-ousion”) Who feeds our minds; our souls, and our bodies, through Whom we can be forgiven and, in turn, forgive others, thereby avoiding temptations and escaping from evil.

Indeed, the Lord’s Prayer itself links fasting from food with prayer for forgiveness and power over temptations. Our “daily bread” is Christ Himself, Who forgives us our trespasses – and as followers of Christ, we forgive the trespasses of others so that we can “be delivered from evil.”

It’s been casually said, “It’s not what goes in the mouth; it’s what goes out of the mouth that counts.” But, we cannot overlook the fact that whatever comes “out of the mouth,” comes from the depths of our soul and on into our minds. As Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica would say, *“Our thoughts determine our lives.”*

As nice as our words may be, if we are not praying for others and if we are not trying to inspire others to love Christ, then fasting becomes a simple diet—a “practice” of “going through the motions” in order to keep up appearances and to “be seen by others,” about which our Lord cautions.

Great Lent, then, is not merely about fasting from foods. It’s about obedience to God out of love for God and for others in all matters of life. Indeed, obedience to God requires discipline—something that will set us apart from today’s world, but will, with God’s grace, help us pray for our brethren throughout the world.

+FR. THEODORE

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REFLECTION FROM METROPOLITAN GERASIMOS FOR GREAT LENT 2023

Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

In the Epistle reading for Sunday February 26, the day we call both Cheesefare and Forgiveness Sunday, Saint Paul's words should inspire and challenge us as we begin the holy season of Great Lent. Saint Paul writes to the Romans, *"Salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand."* A Father of the Church said this about the passage, *"We are on the threshold of the resurrection."*

With each passing day of Great Lent we draw closer to the resurrection and the day of salvation. Lent is our journey to that day. As individuals our journey is meant to be physical, spiritual, and intellectual. Physically we begin the Great Fast. When we are observant, and I hope that you will make every effort to observe the fast, our diets become simpler. As Metropolitan Kallistos Ware of Diokleia, of blessed memory, writes, *"The primary aim ... is to make us conscious of our dependence on God... to bring us to the point where we appreciate the full force of Christ's statement, 'apart from me you can do nothing'"* (John 15:5).

The fast though is more than a temporary diet, but a means to challenge us spiritually, to bring us to repentance – a change of mind and heart – about our relationships with God and with the world around us. Repentance begins when we honestly examine our lives and recognize that our lives are not what God intends. The Sunday Gospel lessons leading up to Clean Monday have provided the keys for self-examination. Instead of boasting like the Pharisee about our good works, overlooking our failings, have we humbled ourselves before God, recognizing that we are all sinners? Instead of wasting our inheritance like the Prodigal, have we recognized that we were better off when we lived according to our heavenly Father's way and we should return to Him? Then on the Sunday of the Last Judgment, when we hear *"for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in*

prison and you came to me" (Matthew 25:25-36). Have we recognized that at the heart of the Gospel is how we care for people?. On Forgiveness Sunday, have we reached out to someone to ask for forgiveness? These lessons from Scripture are not for someone else, they are for us. When we reflect on them in this way, we can see that we have all strayed from the path that the Almighty God intends for us and that we must return to Him.

Beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord, the Lenten services that our parishes will offer in these days will continually emphasize the need for repentance. The hymns boldly tell us the truth, if we are paying attention. They demand honesty from us in our reflections. They do not allow us to hide behind excuses. For example, in the Vespers of Clean Monday, we will hear this, *"I have committed every sin; more than all men I have lived as the Prodigal"* and in the Great Compline, we will head, *"Where shall I begin to weep for the actions of my wretched life?"* As Saint John Chrysostom writes about the Epistle passage but is equally applied to our lenten services, he says *"Paul is not trying to frighten his hearers but to encourage them, so as to detach them from their love of the things of this world."*

Our Lenten journey is an intellectual journey. As we know, Great Lent's origins are connected to the ancient catechumenate, when those preparing for baptism at Pascha would be instructed daily about Christ, the need for salvation, and the doctrines of the church. Our parishes will offer many opportunities for deepening our knowledge of our Orthodox Christian Faith, from Bible studies to lenten discussion groups. Greater knowledge of our Faith can only strengthen your experience of Great Lent and increase your celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord.

My beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord, Great Lent is a communal and family observance, as well as a personal practice. We are not meant to "go it alone." We fast as a community and family, observing the same basic principles. We increase our activities at our parishes, from attendance at the many liturgical services and participation in the educational life of our parishes service to the many philanthropic

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REFLECTION OF METROPOLITAN
GERASIMOS, *Continued*

works, experiencing these days with our fellow Orthodox Christians. In our communities and families, we have the experience and wisdom of those who have observed these practices of Great Lent before us. Grandparents can teach their grandchildren. "Cradle" Orthodox can teach those new to the Faith. Of course, the priests and deacons in our parishes are the guides for all of us.

And amid all the preparations and our observance of this holy season, do not forget the goal. All of this prepares us for the Resurrection of Christ, the day of salvation, the day when death is destroyed. Even on the very first day of Great Lent the Church wants us to remember that salvation is not too far away, that we are at the threshold of the resurrection. A hymn of Clean Monday says it best, *"Let us joyfully begin the all-hallowed season of abstinence; and let us shine with the bright radiance of the holy commandments of Christ our God.... So, clothed in raiment of light, let us hasten to the Holy Resurrection on the third day, that shines upon the world with the glory of eternal life."*

My beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord, God bless you on your Lenten journey. Kali Tessarakosti!

SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS by Deacon Euthym

The stadium of virtue is now open; those who wish to compete, enter therein, girded for the good contest of Lent, for those who compete according to the rules shall receive their laurels rightfully. Taking up the full armor of the Cross, let us do battle against the Enemy. As an impregnable wall, we have the Faith, prayer as our breastplate, and acts of mercy as our helmet. Instead of sword, there is fasting, which cuts every evil from the heart. He who does this shall attain a true crown from Christ, the King of all, on Judgment Day..." —From the praises on the Forgiveness Sunday

We are constantly in spiritual warfare and Great Lent shows us how to combat bad thoughts, evil inclinations, temptations, disagreements, grudges, broken relationships all of which are sown by the seeds of the evil one and cause us to lose

our peace and to substitute pride for humility and judgment of others for love. Here we are told we can work on our spiritual lives during these 40 days in order to practice humility and finding love no matter how challenging the situation appears to be. God heals, the devil divides. God loves and brings people together, the devil hates and causes enmity between us. The devil would have us be full of pride, so we cannot experience mercy. God would have us seek humility so that we can receive mercy. Please forgive me and I pray we all have the strength to seek God's love through this beautiful 40 days of a spiritual journey.

"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.

In contemplating peace, inward peace, the peace of Christ, which He gives to us through the Holy Spirit..."Peace unto you..." we realize that the grace of the Holy Spirit gives us spiritual gifts in order to glorify God and inspire others. The idea that we receive spiritual gifts as if we use a scoop and these gifts allow us to shed the light of Christ on those around us. How many times have we sighed and said, "All I want is peace". But what peace are we talking about? It is the peace of Christ that is eternal, can be attained no matter our circumstances and opens the door for God to reveal Himself to us and those around us. Worldly peace depends on perfecting our outer circumstances, while often making us isolated. We then avoid others, avoid confrontation, challenges, or effort... afraid to speak, act, interact or participate. It is inauthentic and has no love of others. God's peace is eternal. In this, our silence opens the door for God to speak. In our silence others often will hear the truth from God directly. Even more amazing,

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SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS, Continued.

we too will receive our own correction since we stop talking and our own ears are open to God's direction. For, frequently we are contributing to the problem. In love all things are truly possible.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Following our Greek Festival weekend, our Sunday School **FAMILY SUNDAY** was held on **Sunday, February 26th**, with the theme being, **Preparation for Great Lent**. Topics included: explanation of prayers of the Vespers for Forgiveness Sunday; the meaning of fasting during Lent. Parents joined in, as well.

On **Sunday, March 5th**, we invite our students and their parents to participate in the Procession of the Icons for **Sunday of Orthodoxy**. Students and their parents may bring their icons from home. Also, our students will participate in the Blessing of the Waters Service "**Agiasmo**") along with their parents.

Sunday, March 12th, features a special lesson with **Mrs. Mary Brown**, will be presenting **The Passion of Christ Iconography**

PHILOPTOCHOS

Our **Philoptochos Membership Event for 2023** will take place on **Saturday, March 11th at 11:30 a.m.** in the church hall. Our theme this year is "**Membership & Aloha**". This event is open to **both men & women** in our community wishing to join our chapter for the 2023 year. If you plan on attending, the **RSVP deadline is Friday, March 3rd**. Please respond to **President Rhonda Latkovic** via phone, text, or email by the deadline. Call (714) 875-4661; email: r.s.fleminglatkovic@gmail.com.

AHEPA

Our AHEPA Chapter 528 is accepting student applications for the **AHEPA 528 Fr. T. P. Theophilos Memorial Scholarship**. **Applications are due by April 2nd**. Please see our AHEPA 528 website at ahepa528.org to download a copy of the application and to learn the details surrounding the awarding of scholarships to those who are attending college. Scholarships will be announced and delivered on **May 21st - AHEPA Sunday**. The next AHEPA 528 meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, March 14, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.**

ST. GEORGE GREEK FESTIVAL

Our 2023 Greek Festival was a tremendous success! Many thanks to all of our parishioner for volunteering their time, treasures and talents toward this cause.

Included in this month's *Voice* are pictures from our Festival event. We want to thank **Gayle Nosal**, a photography student, for sharing the pictures that she took during our Festival.

Unfortunately, pictures of many who played major roles in preparing for the Festival and during the weekend of the Festival are not available, since, during the weekend, they were so involved in helping that they couldn't take time to pose for a picture without losing their stride in accomplishing their tremendously critical tasks.

Among those who gave of themselves heroically and whose pictures we do not have are:

George Argyros, Chairman
Pete Snarskis, Everyday maintenance
John Petalas, General set-up and take-down
Nick Latkovic, Accounting; set-up & take down
Mark George, Set-up and take down
Elias Doubaratzis, Set-up and Gyros
Doug Lyons, Electrical set-up
Tony Malley, Electrical set-up
Ana Storton, Publicity
Jim Christopoulos, Organizing the volunteers
Deacon Euthym, Loukoumades mix set-up
Cherise Everett, Bookkeeping
Michael Colikas/George Delagans, Church tours
Penny/Lou Karagianis, Entrance chairpersons
Tina Veroulis/ Stacey Argyros – Pastry set-up
Matthew Holm, Cart supply
Vincent Gandrillon, Cart transportation

Next month, we will continue to recognize those who helped make our Festival a great success either by contributing funds to underwrite costs, or by any special service about which we would like to know. Contributions toward underwriting costs are still being accepted. Please note in the "memo section" of your check: "Toward Festival Expenses." By recognizing the special efforts of our faithful, we share their examples of dedication and service for future generations.

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2023 Greek Festival, Continued

Those pictured in the pages of our photo album herein included all helped significantly toward the success of our Festival. We thank God for their tireless and dedicated efforts.

The financial reports related to this year's festival will be shared at our Spring General Assembly Meeting in March. As of the evening immediately following our Festival, Monday, February 20th (at which time we held the Festival Appreciation Dinner), it was reported that the **gross income from this year's Festival was a little more than \$260,000.**

ST. GEORGE BOOK STORE

With the beginning of Great Lent, copies of the **Akathist Hymn** and **Holy Week Books** are available in our book store. Copies of Alexander Schmemmann's classic, **Great Lent**, and Thomas Hopko's classic, **The Lenten Spring**, are also available. In addition, those who want copies of the spiral-bound white Liturgy books, containing the prayers of the Liturgy of St. Basil may check our book store. However, we encourage those who want their personal copies of the **Lenten Liturgies** to order them either through our parish book store or directly from **Narthex Press** at: <https://www.narthexpress.com>

St. George Greek Orthodox Church's
2023 Lenten Retreat

Living the Liturgy

with

Father Steven Tsihlis

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

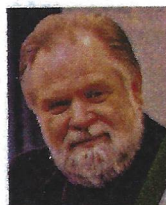
10:30 AM - 12:00 PM

"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:

psaintgeorge@gmail.com | 760-568-9901

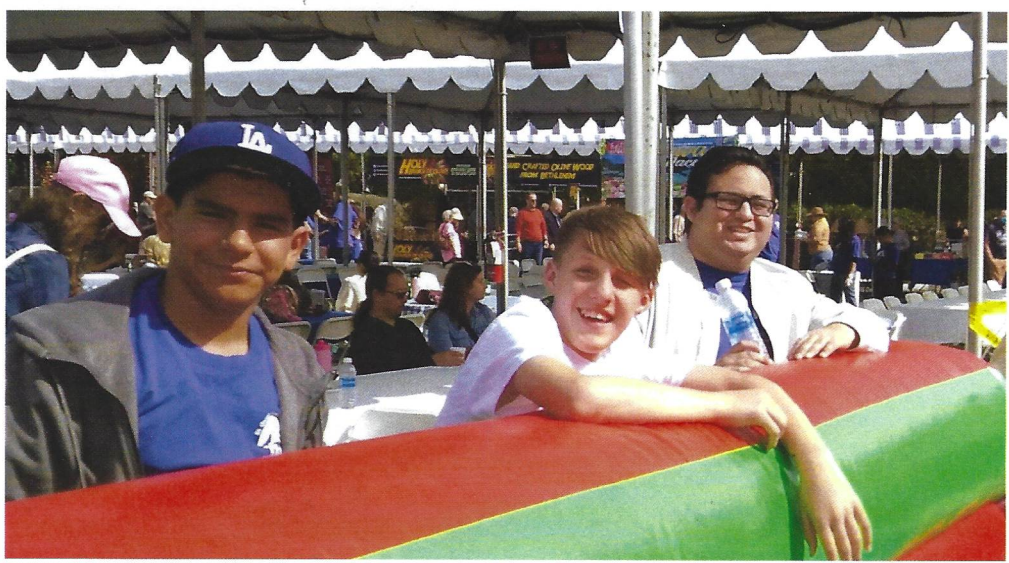
74-109 Larrea Street, Palm Desert, CA

MARCH 2023 CALENDAR

- Wednesday, March 1st.....PRESANCTIFIED DIVINE LITURGY – 6:00 p.m.
- Friday, March 3rd.....PRESANCTIFIED DIVINE LITURGY – 9:00 a.m.
Salutations Service (First Stanza) – 6:30 p.m.
- Saturday, March 4th.....SATURDAY OF SOULS (Miracle of the Kolyva – St. Theodore)
Orthros-8:30 a.m./ Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.
- Sunday, March 5th.....SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY
Orthros– 8:15 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:15 a.m./ Procession with the Icons-10:15 a.m.
- Tuesday, March 7th.....Bible Study – 10:00 a.m
- Wednesday, March 8th.....PRESANCTIFIED DIVINE LITURGY – 6:00 p.m.
- Friday, March 10th.....PRESANCTIFIED DIVINE LITURGY – 9:00 a.m.
Salutations Service (Second Stanza) - 6:30 a.m.
- Saturday, March 11th.....Philoptochos Membership Event: “Membership & Aloha”
Reception – 11:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, March 14th.....Bible Study – 10:00 a.m./ AHEPA Meeting – 6:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, March 15th.....PRESANCTIFIED DIVINE LITURGY – 6:00 p.m
- Friday, March 17th.....PRESANCTIFIED DIVINE LITURGY -9:00 p.m.
Salutations Service (Third Stanza) - 6:30 p.m.
- Saturday, March 18th.....St. George Parish Lenten Retreat – “The Divine Liturgy”
Fr. Steven Tsihchlis, speaker/ 10:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. (see enclosed flyer)
- Sunday, March 19th.....SUNDAY OF THE VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS
- Tuesday, March 21st.....Bible Study -10:00 a.m.
- Wednesday, March 22nd.....PRESANCTIFIED DIVINE LITURGY – 6:00 p.m.
- Friday, March 24th.....PRESANCTIFIED DIVINE LITURGY – 9:00 a.m.
Vesper Service – 5:00 p.m./Salutations Service (Fourth Stanza) – 6:30 p.m.
- Saturday, March 25th..... ANNUNCIATION TO THE EVER-VIRGIN MARY
Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.
- Sunday, March 26th.....St. George Spring General Assembly following the celebration of
the Divine Liturgy (Sunday of St. John of the Ladder)
- Tuesday, March 28th.....Bible Study – 10:00 a.m.
- Wednesday, March 29th.....PRESANCTIFIED DIVINE LITURGY – 6:00 p.m.
- Friday, March 31st.....PRESANCTIFIED DIVINE LITURGY – 9:00 a.m.
Akathist Hymn – 6:30 p.m.











OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA! 2023

Created by Fr. Jonathan Bannon (ACROD)

SUNDAYS	THEMES / GOSPEL READING	HOW TO PARTICIPATE:
Fast - Free Week FEBRUARY 5th	 <i>TRIODION WEEKS</i> Publican and the Pharisee Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:10-15 Gospel: Luke 18:10-14	Show compassion on the poor and distressed. Trust in God, not yourself and ask for His help before every task this week.
Normal Fast Week FEBRUARY 12th	 The Prodigal Son Returns! Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Gospel: Luke 15:11-32	Schedule a Confession. Every morning say, "Today I will be humble." Use up/freeze meats this week.
Meatfare FEBRUARY 19th FAREWELL TO MEAT TODAY	 The Last Judgement Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2 Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46	Pray facing East this week. Christ is returning from the East and we wait for Him! Use up/freeze dairy this week.
Cheesefare FEBRUARY 26th FAREWELL TO CHEESE TODAY	 Adam and Eve are cast from Paradise! <i>FORGIVENESS SUNDAY</i> Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4 Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21	Ask each other for forgiveness each evening this week before bed.
1st Sunday of Lent MARCH 5th	 <i>GREAT LENT BEGINS WITH FORGIVENESS VESPERS</i> SUNDAY of ORTHODOXY Epistle: Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2 Gospel: John 1:43-51	Bring an icon to church for a procession.
2nd Sunday of Lent MARCH 12th	 ST GREGORY PALAMAS Epistle: Hebrews 1:10-2:3 Gospel: Mark 2:1-12	Bring a prayer rope to be blessed today! Use it and pray the Jesus Prayer each day this week.
3rd Sunday of Lent MARCH 19th	 VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS <i>HALF WAY TO PASCHA!</i> Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6 Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1	Wear your cross to church and kiss the cross each morning with a bow!
4th Sunday of Lent MARCH 26th	 ST JOHN of the LADDER Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20 Gospel: Mark 9:17-31	Every time you climb stairs this week ask St. John to help you reach Paradise with the sign of the cross!
5th Sunday of Lent APRIL 2nd	 ST MARY of EGYPT Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14 Gospel: Mark 10:32-45	Ask the Theotokos to offer you and the world pure thoughts and ideas this week.
FLOWERY (PALM) SUNDAY! APRIL 9th GREAT WEEK BEGINS	 <i>GREAT AND HOLY WEEK</i> ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9 Gospel: John 12:1-18	Place your palm branches and pussywillows behind an icon at home and in your car!
GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY APRIL 14th	 GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY <i>JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS</i> CHECK WITH YOUR PARISH FOR ROYAL HOURS AND VESPERS SCHEDULE	Refrain from TV, Internet & Phones to honor Christ's Death.
FEAST OF FEASTS! APRIL 16th NO FASTING!	 <i>BRIGHT WEEK</i> HOLY PASCHA! (CHRIST IS RISEN!) Epistle: Acts 1:1-8 Gospel: John 1:1-17	Greet everyone with "CHRIST IS RISEN!" & say it before good morning and goodnight!