



VOICE OF ST. GEORGE

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



THE HOLY SPIRIT, HOLY TRADITION, & A "MODERN" CHURCH

Inside this Issue

From the **Day of Pentecost**, (celebrated this year on **Sunday, June 4th**) the Church has been guided by the Holy Spirit, Who always reveals Christ our God to the world, in general, and to individuals, in particular. The Life of the Holy Spirit in the Church is evident from the way the faithful have lived their lives from generation to generation. This common "lifestyle" of the faithful, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit makes up the Holy Tradition of the Apostles, which we know today as the Orthodox Christian Church, with the Holy Bible originally being given in the Greek language, which was universal in Apostolic times.

We are inheritors of the writings of the Prophets and the Apostles, as well as male and female Saints down through the ages, all of whom expressed themselves with "one mind and one heart" with regard to the teachings of the Gospel and the Apostles.

Changes in the Church require special care so we do not betray Christ our God, nor His Saints, who lived according to the Tradition (with a capital "T") of the Apostles. Everything in our Church worship and moral teaching reflects the definition of what it means to "live the Bible," as did the saints.

People today will point out that the Orthodox Church is different today than it was for the Apostles. Over time, changes in worship and Sacramental life grew out of the need to combat heresy and to nurture spiritual needs of those who sought the salvation of their souls in compromising situations arising from persecutions, such as the use of koliva (boiled wheat) commemorating the miracle of St. Theodore of Tyre when political pressure was forced on the faithful for them to break the Lenten Fast. The template for meeting such spiritual needs is provided in the Book of Acts, known as the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15:6-29). This Holy Tradition must prevail today when speaking about "changes."

Are people calling for changes in our way of worship; our teachings—and even our moral positions — on the basis of falling in line politically with our "modern" world, or are they calling for changes which allow for a deepening understanding as to how to live the Faith in these "modern" times with the same *mind* and *heart* as did the Apostles in their time for the salvation of souls? Motives mean everything when it comes to trying to address a lifestyle that reflects the true teaching of Scripture.

+FR. THEODORE

Holy Spirit, Holy Tradition & a "Modern" Church.....pg. 1

Metropolitan Gerasimos-
Reflection for Pascha.....pg. 2

Pascha 2023.....pg. 3

Altar Coverings;
Sunday School;
Philoptochos;
AHEPA.....pg. 4

Spiritual Thoughts.....pg. 5

May/June, Parish
Calendar.....pg. 6

Inserts: Photos-Holy Week; Golf Tourney; Philoptochos; AHEPA & Sunday School; May Outreach

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HIS EMINENCE, METROPOLITAN GERASIMOS --REFLECTION FOR PASCHA

Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

In the Matins of Pascha, we will hear these words, read resoundingly and with power: *"Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ, let us worship the holy Lord Jesus..."* In fact they are read at every Sunday matins. In the Slavic tradition, these words have been set to beautiful arrangements and sung with great emphasis. These magnificent words are one of our first responses to the news of the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior. How else can we respond, except to bow down in worship of Almighty God? How else can we respond, except to proclaim that we know no other god. As we will proclaim in the Prokeimenon at the Agape service, *"Who is so great a God as our God? For You are the God, Who alone works wonders?"*

Our entire Paschal celebration is one of exuberant joy and praise. The reality of the resurrection is repeated, *"Why do you seek the living among the dead?"* The triumph over the oppression of death is proclaimed, *"You descended into Hades, and You shattered everlasting bars, which held fast those fettered...."* These are not empty slogans or songs. Contained in the Holy Bible, the words of the apostles themselves, are their eyewitness accounts of the risen Lord. They went to the tomb; they found it empty. The risen Lord first appeared to the women disciples (John 20:11-18). Then He revealed himself in the Upper Room to the others, even proving that it was Him by showing them the wounds of crucifixion (John 20:20). In another account, the Lord broke bread and ate with his disciples (Luke 24:30 and 24:42-43).

Pascha is more than a celebration of an event from two millennia ago. Pascha - Resurrection - is our vision of life today. Today and all the days ahead are an opportunity to see life through the lens of resurrection, of life, light, and renewal. This vision empowers us to become messengers of the Good News not only in words, but in our actions, living our lives according to the precepts of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The joy of Pascha

should not allow us to think that the problems of the world have been solved. Death may have been trampled, yet people still die. Death though is not the final word. There is a new vision for life because the tyranny of death has been overcome. Saint Paul wrote to the Corinthians, *"When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O Hades, where is thy victory?"*" (1 Corinthians 15:54-55).

In the icon of the Anastasis - the Resurrection, Christ raises Adam and Eve from their tombs in Hades, revealing a new possibility for humanity and offering hope for the cosmos. Through the resurrection, Christ has inaugurated His kingdom, and we His followers are challenged to live in the world according to this design. The resurrection has offered a new way of being in the world, a way of compassion, care, and forgiveness. This is the holy work we must accept. This work is *"a struggle against everything distorted and malignant, both in ourselves and in the damaged structure and fabric of a suffering creation."* ("For the Life of the World," §5). This work is ours to take up in our daily lives, in our homes, in our workplaces, in our parishes, in our communities. Equipped with the message of the resurrection, filled with the Holy Spirit, each of us may become an instrument of God's love and care in the world.

A most important space for this work is in our homes, with our children. We must use every opportunity we can to share our love of God, to talk about our Orthodox Christian faith, and to put it into action that faith. As the Epistle of James says, *"be doers of the word, not only hearers"* (James 1:22). Our children learn from our words, but even more importantly they learn to imitate our actions. If you care about your Church and your Faith, they will grow up caring about them. When they see the excitement and the joy of Pascha in you, they will learn to experience it as well.

My dear brothers and sisters in the Lord, as you
Continued on the next page ----->

METROPOLITAN GERASIMOS, Continued

hear the Good News of the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ at the Anastasis and in every moment it is proclaimed, allow those words to fill your heart, your mind, your soul, and your strength. When you hear the words, "Having beheld the resurrection of Christ," praise God fervently. Share the news with all you know but especially with your children, with our ancient greeting, "Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!"

God bless you!

PASCHA 2023

We are most grateful to God that we were joined this year by **His Grace, Bishop Spyridon of Amastris**, who celebrated the Hierarchical Divine Liturgies on Palm Sunday and on Pascha. As always, it is a great blessing for all of our parishioners.

We also express tremendous gratitude to those who set the foundations for decorating the Epitaphio this year -- the initial design and construction of necessary parts. Those who worked in this way were: **Deaconess Krisann Kontaxis, Tina Veroulis, and Peter Snarskis**.

Indeed, we are most grateful to the many parishioners who helped decorate the Epitaphio on Holy Friday.

Special thanks to the Philoptochos members who spearheaded the **Luminarias** for our Holy Friday Evening Procession with the Epitaphio **Margarita Pagoulatos, Irene Stambolos, Tina Veroulis and Rhonda Latkovic**. We express profound gratitude to all of our parishioners who supported this project. Special thanks also to Mrs. Athena Snarskis and Presvytera Petula for helping to coordinate the Myrrh-bearers for this year's Holy Friday night services.



We thank God for the inspiration that **His Grace, Bishop Spyridon of Amastris** imparted to our faithful in officiating the Palm Sunday and Pascha celebrations of the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy.



Pictured to the left: **His Grace, Bishop Spyridon of Amastris** officiated at the Holy Friday Evening Lamentation Service, imparting blessings to all the faithful in attendance.



To the left: **Tina Veroulis and Pete Snarskis** before the final-assembled Epitaphio just prior to the Service of the "Taking Down From the Cross of our Lord." Along with Deaconess Krisann Kontaxis (not pictured) the assembly of this year's Epitaphio was made possible.

More photographs are available on pages 7 & 8

NEW ALTAR TABLE COVERINGS



The beauty of our Church was further enhanced during the Lenten and Easter season by new altar coverings. The **royal purple** for Lent (photo at the top), a gift of **Kristi Maletis**. The **silver and red/gold** altar coverings (photo at the bottom), gifted by **Christina Kundanis**. Thank you and bless you both!

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday, May 7th was our **Sunday School Family Sunday**. Students joined Fr. Ted in church for the **Agiasmo Service** (Holy Water) in asking our Lord to guide our students through their summer vacation season and bless them to return in September for the 2023-2024 School Year. Fr. Ted spoke to the students about the meaning of our Orthodox Church Pentecost Feast. This was the last Sunday School Family Sunday until September.

PHILOPTOCHOS

On **Saturday, May 20th**, Philoptochos members participated in helping to “box” food for the hungry at the **Narrow Door facility in Indio** from **8:45 a.m. to 12:00 noon**.

Our Philoptochos, together with our St. George parishioners made a tremendous contribution of diapers and diaper wipes to the **“Birth Choice of the Desert,”** which is a local philanthropic organization that assists mothers and their babies and

advocates for women to choose life over abortion.

Tasia Richards, Irene Stambolos, and Rhonda Latkovic represented our Philoptochos Chapter at this year’s **Kids ‘n’ Cancer Fundraiser**, presenting a Philoptochos donation of \$3,000 toward this important ministry.

On **page 11** of this issue of *The Voice*, please view the pictures describing the loving dedication of our Philoptochos members to our St. George Greek Orthodox parish and to those in need.

The next **Philoptochos General Meeting** will take place on **Monday, May 22nd**. It will be a **dinner meeting at the Cowboy Cantina, beginning at 4:00 pm.**

AHEPA

Sunday, May 14th was **AHEPA Sunday!** Our AHEPA Chapter was pleased to help sponsor the carnations for Fr. Ted to distribute to the mothers, grandmothers and Godmothers among our parishioners, as we also commemorated **Mothers Day on May 14th.**

As is traditional, the **Fr. T. P. Theophilos Memorial Scholarship Awards** were presented on this day to deserving college students of our parish community. **Katrina Storton** was presented the **St. George Scholarship** of \$1,250, as she will be attending the University of Glasgow in Scotland this September. **Emmarie Shannazarian** was the recipient of the **Penelope Award** of \$1,000 towards her studies at Fullerton University, and **Jack Shannazarian** was the recipient of the **George Tcharos Scholarship**, as he pursues studies in law at the University of Toledo Law School in Ohio. Next year, those who are attending educational schools or programs for acquiring specialized employment skills will also be eligible to apply for the AHEPA 528 Fr. T.P. Theophilos Scholarships. More details to follow.

We are pleased to announce that we will be well represented at this year’s AHEPA District 20 Convention in Anaheim, which will be held in June.

GOLF TOURNAMENT

The 2023 St. George Golf Tournament this year was very successful! **Thank you to all who supported the event through golf, donation, dinner & volunteering.** We appreciate your participation & support! The turnout for golf was a huge success with a **full field.** The dinner taverna style & always popular Greek cuisine was enjoyed by more than 200 people.

See pictures from our St. George Golf Tournament on **pages 9 and 10** of this issue of *The Voice of St. George.*

This year's Tournament was among the most financially successful tournaments of our parish. The **net income** from this year's Tournament is: **\$20,826.**

Mark your calendar for the annual St. George Golf Tournament on May 11, 2024. Thank you!

SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS by Deacon Euthym

"Yesterday I was crucified with Him; today I am glorified with Him.

Yesterday I died with Him; today I am made alive with Him.

Yesterday I was buried with Him; today I am raised up with Him.

Let us become like Christ, since Christ became like us.

Let us become Divine for His sake, since for us He became Man.

He assumed the worse that He might give us the better. He became poor that by His poverty we might become rich. He accepted the form of a servant that we might win back our freedom.

He came down that we might be lifted up. He was tempted that through Him we might conquer. He was dishonored that He might glorify us. He died that He might save us. He ascended that He might draw to Himself us, who were thrown down through the fall of sin.

Let us give all, offer all, to Him who gave Him-

self a Ransom and Reconciliation for us.

We needed an incarnate God, a God put to death, that we might live. We were put to death together with Him that we might be cleansed. We rose again with Him because we were put to death with Him. We were glorified with Him because we rose again with Him.

A few drops of Blood recreate the whole of creation!"

- St. Gregory the Theologian, Easter Orations

St Gregory is reminding us of the great mercy of God to take flesh and re-establish our relationship with Him through His death on the Cross and His resurrection. He took our sins so we could be reconciled. He performed miracles during His ministry not to "show anything" but to draw us to Him, to establish His Divinity while present in His humanity. **"He became man, so man could be like God"....(St Athanasios).** He wants us to have a relationship with Him, that's all. He loves us, and offers us freedom of will to love him back, no strings attached. He desires a relationship with us but does not compel us. His love is purely sacrificial and without agenda, God does not need us, we need Him and He created us out of love so that we could have life eternal with Him.

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

When Christ resurrected and first saw His disciples, He said, "My peace I give to you". The peace of Christ is what defeats evil. As Christians we are in a war with evil. Christ reminds us that we

Continued on the next page -->

SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS, Continued

are guaranteed victory in Him. In this way, we always have peace and can rest in our Lord without fear. We then are no longer limited by the

constraints of this world, and we are open to witness and receive His holy Mysteries the more we desire His peace and seek it. "Peace be with you."

MAY/JUNE 2023 PARISH CALENDAR

Sundays - Orthros- 8:30 a.m./ Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

MAY 2023

Sunday, May 21st.....STS. CONSTANTINE & HELEN

Monday, May 22nd...Philoptochos General Members Dinner Meeting: Cowboy Cantina at 4:00 p.m.

Thursday, May 25.....ASCENSION OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST
Orthros-8:30 a.m./ Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

Tuesday, May 30th....Bible Study – 10:00 a.m.

JUNE 2023

Sunday, June 4th.....PENTECOST SUNDAY
Orthros-8:00 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:15 a.m. (Note special start times)

Tuesday, June 6th.....Bible Study – 10:00 a.m. (tentatively due to jury duty)

Tuesday, June 13th.....Bible Study – 10:00 a.m.

Tuesday, June 20th.....No Bible Study

Tuesday, June 27th.....Bible Study – 10:00 a.m.

Thursday, June 29th...STS. PETER & PAUL
Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

Friday, June 30th.....SYNAXIS OF THE HOLY APOSTLES
Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

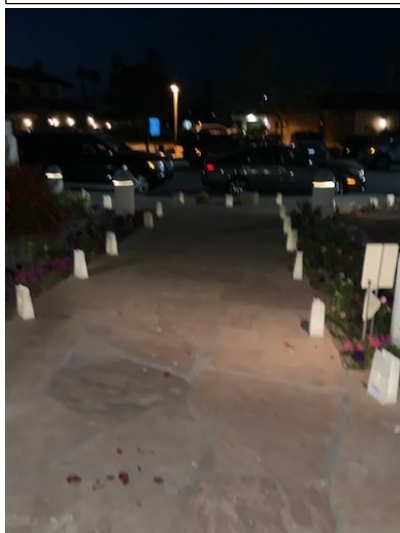
HOLY WEEK



Having completed the assembly of this year's Epitaphio, the entire body of those who helped in assembling and setting the Epitaphio came together for this photograph. In front of the Epitaphio are: **Tina Veroulis** (left), **Deaconess Krisann Kontaxis** (to her right) and Deaconess Krisann's nieces (to her right).



The Completed Epitaphio was placed on the Solea of our church in preparation for the Service of "The Taking Down From the Cross of our Lord" on Holy Friday.



The Luminaria, sponsored by our Ladies Philoptochos, paved the way for the Holy Friday Evening Procession with the Epitaphio. (To the right) The Luminaria are pictured leading to our parish bell tower.



The Ladies of Philoptochos pose after dyeing the Easter eggs on Holy Thursday afternoon. Participating in this labor of love were the grandchildren of **Athena Snarskis**, who offered valuable help.



<—The "crew" that helped set up the Divine Services for Holy Friday Evening.

**ST. GEORGE
GOLF
TOURNAMENT**



Pam Zaverdas pictured with a tray of delicacies leading into the Gold Tournament Awards Dinner.



Nick Speliopoulos offered great contributions of time and talent in making our tournament a huge success. **Paul Carconen** is pictured to the right of Nick.



Demetri Koromilas helps prepare the lamb for the Tournament Awards Dinner.



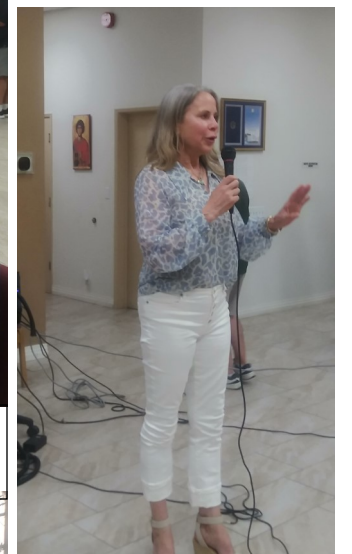
John Petalas and **Mark George** were among those who worked for our Tournament's success.



To the left, **Gloria Christopoulos** and **Linda Petalas** to the right chaired the Tournament raffle.



Fr. Ted, **Matthew Holm**, and **Nick Latkovic** share the joy of our annual Golf Tournament success.



Top: Jim Christopoulos served as Master of Ceremony for our Awards Dinner.



Below: Palm Desert Mayor, Jan Harnik honored us with her presence and congratulated our parish for holding such a successful event.

Nearly 200 Golf Tournament guests enjoyed our Awards Dinner. Our parish hall and courtyard were packed.



ST. GEORGE GOLF TOURNAMENT, Continued

Clockwise from the left: **Paulette Carkonen** and **Carol Speliopoulos** were members of the winning women's foursome. Not pictured: **Kay Constantine** and **Mary Gregores**



Golf Tournament chairman, **George Argyros** poses with **Jim Christophoulos**, to the left, and **Matt Holm**, to the right, who were members of the third place men's foursome. Not pictured: **Paul Hansen & Manny Navaro**.

George Argyros presented the three members of the second place men's foursome, from left to right, **Peter Ballas**, **Billy Ballas**, and **Jim Artiano**. Not pictured: **Terry Lyons**.



Paul Servo was congratulated for his tee-off which landed closest to the hole.

Michael Swartz was congratulated for his Hole in One.

Jason Wilkenson represented the Desert Willow Golf Resort. He worked wonders in arranging and scheduling our Golf Tournament and golfers at Desert Willow.



The winning men's foursome: (from left) **Christian Kontaxis**, **Michael Kontaxis**, **Craig Castrale**, **Deacon Euthym Kontaxis**.

The winning mixed foursome (not pictured in order): **Tom Huling**, **Lori Huling**, **Jeff Channen**, **Sandy Channen**

ST. GEORGE PHILOPTOCHOS



Clockwise from the left: The Philoptochos members who worked for the success of this year's Luminaria project presented a donation to St. George parish of \$600. From left to right: **Tina Veroulis, Rhonda Latkovic, Margarita Pagoulatos, Fr. Ted, Irene Stambolos.**

Our St. George Ladies Philoptochos Chapter recently donated over 1,000 diapers, 12 packs of diaper wipes and a \$200 donation to "Birth Choice of the Desert." This organization assists mothers and their babies and advocates for women to choose life over abortion. Philoptochos is grateful to all of our St. George parishioners for their support in this ministry. Pictured with our **Philoptochos President, Rhonda Latkovic**, are volunteers from "Birth Choice" who received the donations of diapers, diaper wipes and \$200: **Elva, Debby, and Marina.**

Tasia Richards, Rhonda Latkovic and Irene Stambolos represented our St. George Philoptochos at this year's Metropolis Philoptochos fundraiser—Kids 'n' Cancer. On behalf of our Chapter, they presented a donation in the amount of **\$3,000.**

Participants in the April Philoptochos General Members Meeting share the joy of Christ's Resurrection from the dead: "Christ is Risen!"

Two current members of our Philoptochos Board of Directors chose not to run for re-election. Pictured are (left to right): **Pam Zaverdas, Linda Petalas, and Rhonda Latkovic.** On behalf of the Philoptochos membership, Rhonda presented gifts of appreciation to Pam and Linda for their dedicated service to the Church and to our Philoptochos Chapter. They will both continue to be active members of our Chapter.

AHPEPA SUNDAY



AHEPAN OF THE YEAR: Matthew Holm was presented with the “AHEPAN OF THE YEAR AWARD” at AHEPA Sunday celebrations on May 14th. To his right: Fr. Ted; to his left, Nicholas Latkovic

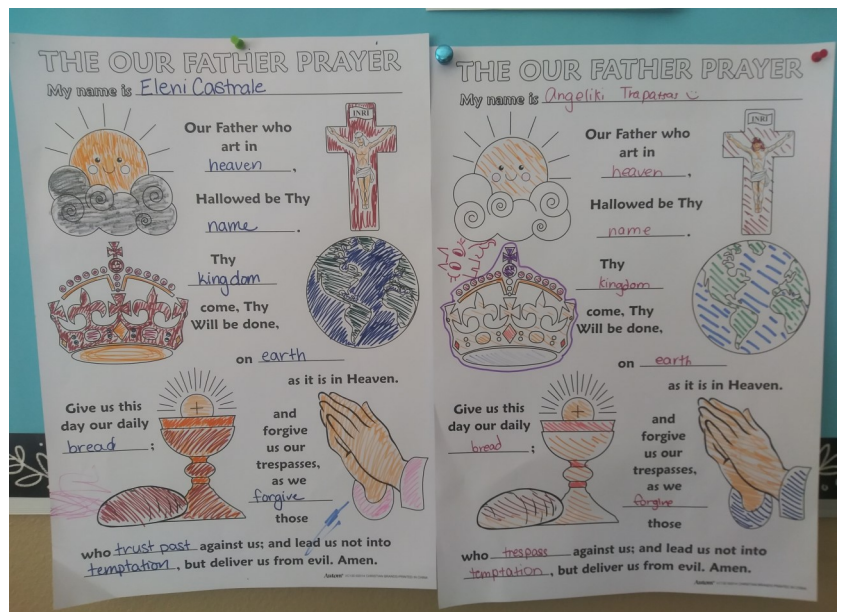


AHEPA SUNDAY—Recipients of the **AHEPA 528 Fr. T. P. Theophilos Memorial Scholarship** were (left to right) **Jack Shannazarian** (pictured receiving for him is his father, Haig Shannazarian), **Emmarie Shannazarian**, **Fr. Ted** (pastor), **Katrina Storton** and **Nicholas Latkovic** (AHEPA 528 Vice-President).

SUNDAY SCHOOL



Sunday School students learned the meaning of the Epitaphio (the tomb on which Christ was laid). They practiced “decorating” the Epitaphio in Sunday School so they can decorate the Epitaphio as part of their spiritual life in adulthood. Many thanks to Mrs. Athena Snarskis for arranging the arts and crafts for our students and posting their work on the Sunday School bulletin board.



Learning the deep meaning of the Lord’s Prayer was a central theme of our Sunday School program for 2022-2023. **Eleni Castrale** and **Angeliki Trapatsas** led all other students in attendance. After studying the Lord’s Prayer, our Sunday School students ask: “Is there anyone you have not forgiven, yet?”

MAY OUTREACH PROJECT

On **Saturday, May 20th**, St. George parishioners supported the efforts of our Philoptochos in helping to prepare food-boxes at the **Narrow Door** in Indio for those suffering from hunger.

With the inspiration given by our Philoptochos, St. George parishioners have offered donations of goods and funds throughout this year to help such charities as the Narrow Door, Coachella Valley Rescue Mission, Martha's Kitchen, the shelter for battered women, and for those suffering from human trafficking, etc.

Helping those in need is an on-going ministry. Donations to our Philoptochos for their philanthropic endeavors are always welcome — even

in the summer!

We want to thank God for all of our St. George parishioners and for all of their gifts of time, treasure and talent in helping those in need — both those who live in the general community, as well as those who are a part of our own parish family.

As the summer draws near, we will keep everyone posted as to the needs that present themselves ...and, as always, our Lord will bring blessings to each of us for keeping up the good work.



MAY OUTREACH AT THE NARROW DOOR

Pictures from our May Outreach at the Narrow Door: (top left) Picture of our parishioners gathered at Nick Krespis' restaurant, Andy's #4 in Indio following the assembly of 500 boxes of food for the hungry --from left to right: Nicholas Speliopoulos, Mary Ellen Kassotakis, Kalitsa Xitco, Margarita Pagoulatos, Susan Segaar, Alexandra Pappas, Sophia Speliopoulos (not pictured: Gloria & Stephanie Christopoulos, Fr. Ted & Presvytera Petula, Rhonda & Nicholas Latkovic); (top right) Picture of the "assembly line;" (bottom left) Picture of the entire group of volunteers, including parishioners from other churches and members of the Narrow Door staff.