

DECEMBER 9, 2018

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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Palm Desert, California 92260**

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THE LADDER

CONCEPTION OF ST. ANNA, THE MOTHER OF THE THEOTOKOS

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– Fr. Theodore Pantels,
Proistamenos (Pastor)
– Deacon Euthym Kontaxis,
M.D.

Holy Communion Order

1. Please remain standing while following the directions of our ushers.
2. Ladies, kindly remove lipstick before receiving.
3. When receiving Holy Communion, make the Sign of the Cross, state your name (baptismal name), and naturally receive as if being fed.
4. Non-Orthodox Christians may not receive Holy Communion, but they may receive the Holy Bread at the end of the service.
5. All Orthodox Christians must be spiritually prepared to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Please see the priest if you have any questions.

THE PURPOSE OF THE SABBATH

It is possible to comprehend at least two themes that are to be found in today's Gospel passage. 1) The spiritual meaning of the "Seventh Day" (The Day of the Sabbath). 2) The oppression of the demons over humanity (the bent-over woman symbolizing the weakening of the human conscience).

God set forth the Sabbath Day for the salvation of humanity. Indeed, Christ our God "rested" in the tomb on the

Seventh Day. This is the Day when our Savior "utterly destroyed death" (Resurrectional Hymn, Tone 7). For this reason every good deed is allowed especially on the Sabbath Day.

The demons tyrannize humanity. In many ways, the demons sow disturbances everywhere and they "bind" human beings in pain and difficulties so that they may not be ever able to raise their eyes to God in Heaven.

Hypocrisy is the work of demons. In

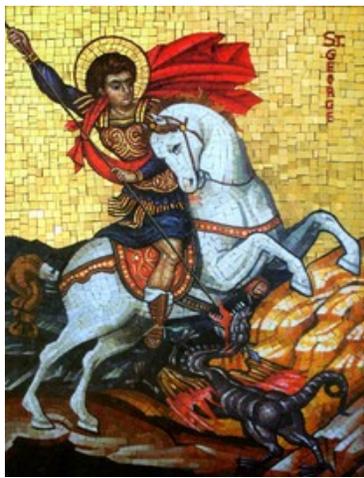
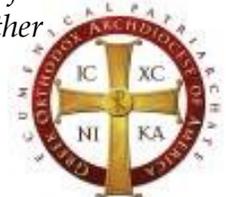
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ST. ANNA, THE MOTHER OF THE THEOTOKOS

According to the ancient tradition of the Church, since Saint Anna, the Ancestor of God, was barren, she and her husband Joachim remained without children until old age. Therefore, sorrowing over their childlessness, they besought God with a promise that, if He were to grant them the fruit of the womb, they would offer their offspring to Him as a gift. And God, hearkening to their supplication, informed them through an Angel concerning the birth of the Virgin. And thus, through God's promise, Anna conceived according to the laws of nature, and was deemed worthy to become the mother of the Mother of our Lord

St. Romanos, the Orthodox Saint who has composed many of our Church's hymns, offers these words in the hymn honoring St. Anna: "*The prayer and groaning of Joachim and Anna at their barrenness and childlessness have proved acceptable, and have come unto the ears of the Lord; and they have put forth fruit that brings life to the world. The one offered his prayer in the mountain, the other bore her reproach in the garden. But with joy the barren bears the Theotokos who sustains our life.*"

– Taken from www.goarch.org & www.orthodoxinfo.info



Είναι δυνατόν να γνωρίσουμε τουλάχιστον δύο θέματα που ευρίσκονται στην σημερινή Ευαγγελικήν περικοπήν. 1) Το πνευματικό νόημα της <Εβδόμης Ημέρας> (η Ημέρα του Σαββάτου). 2) Η καταπίεσις των δαιμώνων κατά την ανθρωπότητα (όπως με <την συγκυπτούσαν γυναίκαν>, η οποία συμβολίζει το αδυνάτισμα της ανθρωπίνης συνειδήσεως).

Ο Θεός έθεσε την Ημέραν του Σαββάτου γιά την σωτηρίαν της ανθρωπότητος. Μάλιστα, ο Θεάνθρωπος Χριστός <αναπαύθηκε> την Εβδόμην Ημέραν στον τάφον. Αυτή είναι η Ημέρα που ο Χριστός <κατέλυσε τον θάνατον> (Απολυτίκιον, Ήχος Βαρύς). Γιά αυτόν τον λόγον, κάθε καλό έργον προς σωτηρίαν επιτρέπεται κυρίως κατά την Ημέραν του Σαββάτου.

Τα δαιμόνια τυραννίζουν την ανθρωπότητα. Κατά πολλούς τρόπους τα δαιμόνια σπείρουν ανησυχίες παντού και μας <δένουν> με πόνους και δυσκολίες, με σκοπό να μην σηκώσουμε ποτέ τα μάτια μας προς τον Επουράνιον Θεόν.

Η υποκρισία είναι το έργον δαιμώνων. Στην ακολουθίαν των Κατηχουμένων (κατά την εκτέλεση του Αγίου Βαπτίσματος) τα λόγια της ευχής είναι: <Εξέλασον...παν πονηρόν και ακάθαρτον πνεύμα...> Αυτό το <πονηρόν και ακάθαρτον πνεύμα> είναι το πνεύμα της υποκρισίας – το πνεύμα ψεύδους, περί του οποίου ο Πατήρ Φιλόθεος Φάρος έγραψε οτι <Υποβαθμίζει την αξιοπρέπεια του συνανθρώπου μας και όταν οι σχέσεις μας με άλλους δεν έχουν την πιότητα της ειλικρινείας, τότε είναι σαν να θεωρούμεν τον συνάνθρωπον μας ως άψυχο πλάσμα.> (Functional and Dysfunctional Christianity, σελ. 34). Ας αποφύγουμε την υποκρισίαν! +Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

the first part of the Baptismal service (the prayers for the Catechumen), in one of the prayers, we find these words: “*Expel...every evil and unclean spirit...*” This “evil and unclean spirit” is the spirit of hypocrisy – the spirit of falsehood, about which Fr. Philotheos Faros wrote, saying that this is the spirit “*that degrades the worth of human beings and when our relations with others are not of a sincere quality (authentic) then we consider our fellow human being as an object (a soulless thing).*” (Functional and Dysfunctional Christianity, pg. 34).

Demons trick us by means of incorrect perceptions of reality and by temptations. Specifically, they tempt us with fantasies. They also tell us that we *deserve* to sin with thoughts suggesting that we are already “good enough,” or, “only human.” It is after we fall for such fantasies and temptations that they turn against us, beating us up with feelings of guilt and worthlessness. They do not stop there! If we consider running to the Sacrament of Confession, they try to stop us with such thoughts as, “*God loves you anyway and already knows your sins. The Lord understands your weakness; you don’t need extra prayers!*” So, then, we live with a persistent sense of unease over not being truly God’s Holy People, yet, hypocritically telling ourselves and others, “*We are okay! Not only are we okay, but the things we do – the sins themselves – are also okay.*”

But, if sin is okay, what can we say about Christian virtue? Is virtue a pathology? Is it just something “old fashioned?” When we live as though sin is okay, yet speak about *Christian virtues*, the word *hypocrisy* comes to mind – like saying, “*It’s understandable and okay when I sin, but others should follow Christian virtues.*” As if speaking to us in our present day, St. John Chrysostom chides us, saying, that our Lord called the Pharisees hypocrites, like “whited sepulchers.” St. John added: “*That “they” [meaning the Pharisees whom Jesus called hypocrites] should be such persons is not ‘so’ dreadful a thing (although it be dreadful), but that ‘you’ that have been accounted worthy to become temples of God should of a sudden have become ‘sepulchers’ yourselves... this is extreme wretchedness.*” (Post-Nicene Fathers, Ser. 1; Vol. 10, pg. 442). One who is baptized in Christ and who wears the garment of Christ can only live as a *sincere* follower of Christ our God. Sincerity leaves no room for hypocrisy. Let us all look into our hearts and souls *sincerely* and let us reaffirm our baptismal pledge to *join Christ*.

+FR. THEODORE

“Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, You are magnified exceedingly; You clothe Yourself with thanksgiving and majesty and cover Yourself with light as with a garment. You stretch out the heavens like a curtain and cover Your upper chambers with the waters, making the clouds Your conveyance and You walk on the wings of the winds, making Your angels spirits and Your ministers a flame of fire. You established the earth upon its stable foundation and it shall not be moved unto the ages. ”

– Psalm 103 (104)

HYMNS FOR THIS SUNDAY'S CELEBRATION OF THE DIVINE LITURGY:

ANTIPHON I: *"Tes presvies tis Theotokou..." (By the prayers of the Theotokos...)*

Verse 1— Bless the Lord O my soul and everything within me; Bless His Holy Name.

Refrain: "Tes presvies tis Theotokou, Soter, soston imas."

Verse 2— Bless the Lord O my soul and forget not all His rewards.

Refrain: "By the prayers of the Theotokos, Savior, save us."

Verse 3— The Lord prepared His throne in heaven and His Kingdom rules over all.

Refrain: "Tes presvies tis Theotokou, Soter, soston imas."

Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit now and forever and to the ages of ages.

Refrain: "By the prayers of the Theotokos, Savior, save us."

ANTIPHON II: *"Soston imas Ie Theou..." (Save us, O Son of God...)*

Verse 1— Praise the Lord O my soul! I shall praise the Lord while I live; I shall sing to my God as long as I exist.

Refrain: "Soston imas Ie Theou, O Anastas ek nekron, psallontas si alleluia."

Verse 2— Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob; his hope is in the Lord his God.

Refrain: "Save us, O Son of God, Who arose from the dead, we sing to You, Alleluia."

Verse 3— The Lord shall reign forever; your God O Zion, to all generations.

Refrain: "Soston imas Ie Theou, O Anastas ek nekron, psallontas si alleluia."

Doxa Patri ke Io ke Aghio Pnevmati ke nin ke aei ke eis tous eonas ton eonon. Amin

People: "O Monogenis Ios ke Logos tou Theou..." (O Only-Begotten Son and Word of God...)

ANTIPHON III-- *This is the day the Lord made; let us greatly rejoice and be glad therein*

Sunday Resurrection Hymn: *Efrenestho ta ourania [Tone 3]... (Let all things above in heaven rejoice and let all things below on earth be glad. With all the might and strength of His arm an eternal deed the Lord did perform. Beneath His feet He has trampled down death by death and First-Born of the dead has He become. From the womb of Hades has He delivered us, and to the world has granted His great redeeming mercy.)*

Hymn for St. Anna: *Simeron tis ateknias dhesma dialee-onteh... (Today the bonds of childlessness are broken. For hearing the prayers of Joachim and Anne, God promised that against all hope they would give birth to the Maiden of God. He, the Uncircumscribed, would be born of her, when He would become man, and by the Angel's example, He commands us to call to her: "Rejoice, Maiden full of the grace, the Lord is with you.")*

Hymn for St. George: *Os ton ehmaloton eleftherotis... (Since you are a deliverer of captives and a defender of the poor; a physician for the sick and a noble attendant to kings, O Great among the Martyrs and Glorious George: intercede with Christ our God that He may save our souls.)*

Kontakion Hymn for this Sunday: *Eortazi simeron ee ikoumeni tin tis Annis sylipsin ... (On this day the whole wide world is celebrating that Saint Anne conceived a child, which was a miracle of God. And she gave birth to the one who bore the divine Logos, in ways passing speech and thought.)*

READINGS: EPISTLE --Galatians 4: 22-27 / **GOSPEL** – St. Luke 13: 10-17

Axion Estin, page 52 in our Divine Liturgy books

Communion Hymn: *Enite ton Kyrion... (Praise the Lord...),* page 64 in our Divine Liturgy books.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



PARISH FALL GENERAL ASSEMBLY-Today is our **2018 Fall General Assembly** following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. All who want to participate are to be members of the parish in good standing, with their 2018 Stewardship Pledge up to date. **Regarding Nominations for the Parish Council** - In accordance with the policies of our Holy Greek

Orthodox Archdiocese, a nominee for candidacy to serve on the Parish Council must have already been baptized and chrismated according to the Rites of the Holy Archdiocese; if married, the marriage must have already been performed according to the Rites of the Holy Archdiocese; the nominee must submit a **"Application for Candidacy Form"** to Fr. Ted and attend a seminar with Fr. Ted to be updated regarding Parish Council duties. (Personal time-convenient appointments can be made.) **Parish Elections** will take place **next Sunday, December 16, 2018, after Church Services.** Write-ups of nominees' involvement in our parish are available at our General Assembly today and will also be emailed to parishioners throughout this week, along with those write-ups of any who are nominated today.

STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY-Today: a **special presentation following the Divine Liturgy.**

PHILOPTOCHOS-Our **Christmas Bake Sale** starts today. We want to thank our members who volunteered the last two weeks making our delicious recipes we've made for years. We will also sell our baked goods on **Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday this week from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.** Our sale **ends on Sunday, Dec. 16.** Our Christmas Baskets for shut-ins will be made and delivered on Wednesday, Dec. 12 at 10:30 a.m. Please come and help. **SAVE THE DATE. Our Taverna Night Dinner Dance with live music will be on Saturday, January 12, 2019.**

AHEPA CHRISTMAS DINNER - Make plans to join in the annual **AHEPA Christmas Dinner** on **Sunday, December 12th** at **Norma's Italian Kitchen** at **6:00 p.m.** **Details can be found on the AHEPA Christmas Dinner fliers available in our parish hall.**

COLORING BOOK MEETING – Adult Coloring Session- **December 14th** at **noon** in the church hall. **See flier available in our parish hall.**

SHUT – IN BASKET PREPARATION & DELIVERY- **December 12th @ 10:30 AM** in the church hall. We need 10-12 volunteers to help prepare & deliver the baskets. Please see **Rhonda Latkovic** if you would like to assist.

SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PROGRAM - Plan to join us next **Sunday, December 16th,** following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

WEEKDAY CALENDAR

Tuesday, December 11th.....Bible Study – 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday, December 12th.....ST. SPYRIDON THE WONDERWORKER

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

Philoptochos Christmas Baskets – 10:30 a.m.

AHEPA Christmas Dinner– 6:00 p.m. (at Norma's Italian Kitchen)

Thursday, December 13th.....Choir Practice – 1:00 p.m.

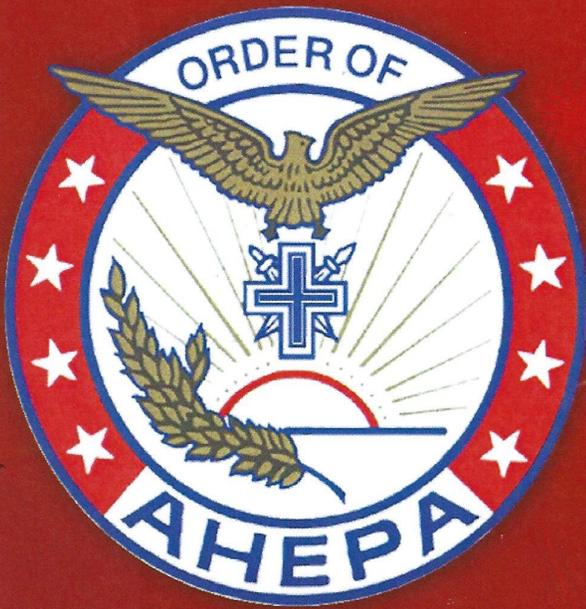
Friday, December 14th.....Coloring Book Group – 12 noon

Sunday, December 16th.....Sunday School Christmas Program/ Parish Elections

CORRECTION: *The Ladder* for all of **November 2018** was sponsored by **Alice Pulos.** Many blessings to Alice for her love for our parish and the support she offers for the publication of *The Ladder.*

The LADDER for December, 2018
is sponsored by
Rhonda & Nick Latkovic

We encourage all of our parents to sit in the church with their entire family as they participate in the beauty of the Divine Liturgy. Those with young children: feel free to sit near an aisle so that you may easily take your children for a break, as needed. If necessary, we have a "crying room" in the vestibule for your use. God Bless.



CHRISTMAS SUPPER

12/12/2018

6pm at

Norma's Italian Kitchen

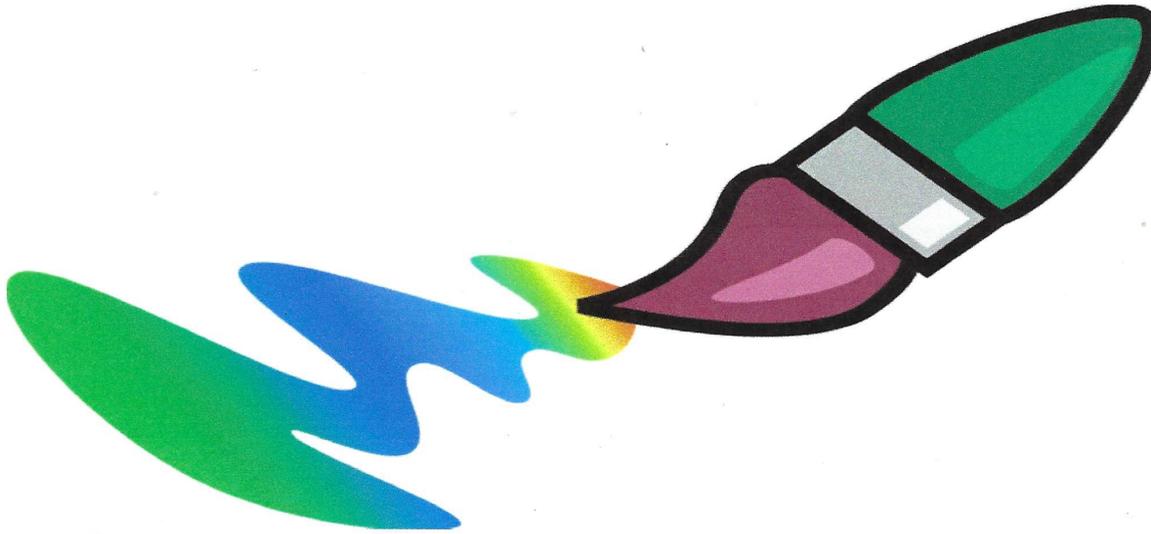
42418 Bob Hope Dr, Rancho Mirage, CA 92270

RSVP today

Ahepa528.org

Contact@ahempa528.org

CHAPTER 528



ADULT COLORING SESSION & LUNCHEON

When: Friday, December 14th @ 12 PM-2 PM

Where: St. George Church Hall

RSVP: By Dec. 9th to Rhonda Latkovic

Our next luncheon & adult coloring session will be Friday, December 14th. Lunch will be served at 12:00 PM. A raffle will be held. A \$5.00 minimum donation is requested. Coloring supplies provided. We will be icing sugar cookies for the homeless for the Streetlife Christmas Dinners in Indio & Palm Springs. Please join us!