

MARCH 17, 2019

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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THE LADDER

SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY



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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.

IN THE HOUSE OF LOVE

"Truly I say unto you: from now on you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." (St. John 1:51). Certainly, the Holy Icons that are seen in both our churches and our homes give us a vision of heaven, while we still live in this world on earth, and they remind us of our identity as members of the "House of Love," which is our Holy Orthodox Church.

The Icons are visual descriptions of the ministry of Christ in the world and the lives of His Saints, bringing to mind the

true nature of Divine Love. As "windows," it is not only we who behold Christ and the Saints, but, they also behold us and they invite us to join together in the Heavenly life. This invitation is itself the expression of God's love for each of us.

We certainly do not *worship* the Icons. We worship only Christ our True God. The Icon is a "medium" for prayer and, like the figure of the Holy Cross, takes on divine powers, precisely because it is a medium of prayer – truly heart-felt interaction

continued on page 2

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT --The Epistle reading for today is taken from Hebrews 11:24-26 and 11:32-40. After the righteous of the Old Testament are mentioned, the Epistle says: *And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.* The Gospel lesson is John 1: 43-51, and it ends with an explanation of the "something better" of the Epistle: *"You will see greater things than these." And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."* This reality is depicted through the Holy Icons, which give a vision into heaven.

Accepting Icons means to accept this fact. That is the way the Christians of the 8th and 9th centuries viewed this issue and the 7th Ecumenical Council in 787 A.D. decreed that Icons are to be used in prayer and worship – venerated as statements of faith, but not worshiped as idols. In 843 A.D. the Empress, St. Theodora once and for all affirmed the decree of the 7th Ecumenical Council with a public display of Icons through the streets Constantinople on the first Sunday of Great Lent. Every year, on the first Sunday of Lent, such as today, we commemorate this event as the "Sunday of Orthodoxy" with the Procession of Icons.

+FR. THEODORE



<Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν: ἀπὸ ἄρτι ὄψεσθε τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεωγῶτα καὶ τοῦ ἀγγέλου τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀναβαίνοντας καὶ καταβαίνοντας ἐπὶ τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.>

Ἐχει ειπωθεῖ ὅτι οἱ Ἱερέες Εἰκόνες εἶναι <παράθυρα ὥστε να μπορέσουμε να κοιτάξουμε στον ουρανόν.> Πράγματι, οἱ Ἱερέες Εἰκόνες που εμφανίζονται τόσo στις εκκλησίες μας ὅσο και στα σπίτια μας δίνουν σε εμάς ἕνα ὄραμα του ουρανοῦ ἐνὸς ζοῦμεν στον κόσμον ἐδῶ στη γην και μας θυμίζουν ὅτι ἡ ἀληθινὴ ἀξιοπρέπειά μας εὐρίσκεται ὡς μέλη του <Οἴκου τῆς Ἀγάπης,> ἡ οποία εἶναι ἡ Ἱερὴ μας Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία.

Οἱ εἰκόνες εἶναι ὀπτικές δηλώσεις των γεγονότων τῆς διακοινίας του Χριστοῦ στον κόσμον και τῆς ζωῆς των Ἁγίων Του, και ἐκφράζουν τὴν ἀληθινὴν φύσιν τῆς Θεϊκῆς Ἀγάπης. Ὡς <παράθυρα,> δὲν εἶναι μόνον εμεῖς που βλέπουμε τον Χριστόν και τους Ἁγίους, ἀλλὰ και αυτοὶ βλέπουν εμάς και μας προσκαλοῦν να ἐνωθούμεν στην οὐράνιον ζοῆν. Ἀυτὴ ἡ πρόσκλησις εἶναι ἡ ἴδια ἡ ἐκφρασις τῆς ἀγάπης του Θεοῦ γιὰ εμάς.

Μάλιστα, δὲν λατρεύουμεν τις εἰκόνες. Λατρεύουμεν μόνον τον Χριστόν, ὁ Ὁποῖος εἶναι ὁ Ἀληθινὸς Θεός. Ἡ εἰκόνα εἶναι τὸ <μέσον> γιὰ τὴν προσευχὴν, και, ὅπως εἶναι ὁ Τίμιος Σταυρός, ἀναλαμβάνει θεϊκὴς δυνάμεις, ἀκριβῶς ἐπιδὴ εἶναι τὸ <μέσον> τῆς προσευχῆς – μιὰ στενὴ ἐπικοινωνία με τον Θεόν. Ἀυτὸ εἶναι προφανές ἀπὸ τὴν πραγματικότηταν ὅτι ὑπάρχουν εἰκόνες που ἐνεργοῦν θαύματα ἢ/και <στάζουν> μύρον, διὰ των ὁποίων πολλοὶ ἔχουν θεραπευθεῖ. +Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

with God. This is evident in the fact that there exist Icons that have worked miracles and/or “drip of” myrrh oils, through which many have been healed.

St. John of Damascus, in his defense for the use of Holy Icons in prayer and worship, points to this interaction with God that is fostered by the prayerful use of the Holy Icons. “Because some find fault with us for worshiping and honoring the image of our Savior and that of our Lady and of the rest of the Saints and servants of Christ, let them remember that in the beginning God created man after His own image. On what grounds, then, do we show reverence to each other unless because we are made after God’s image? For, as Basil, that much-versed expounder of divine things says, the honor given to the image passes over to the Prototype.” (Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, “Concerning Images,” pg. 271). Hence, by honoring the Image of Christ, Who took upon Himself our lowly flesh, we honor Christ Himself. Honoring Christ involves honoring one another, since we are created in His image.

The Icons of Saints point to the unique nature in which God’s love for us works. Our God and Savior Jesus Christ loves each one of us equally. At the same time, in His Divine Love, we are created to be unique, special individuals for His glory. While our Lord loves us equally, His love is filtered through us “unequally” as unique individuals in unique times and in unique circumstances. This is evident in the life of each Saint and which is depicted in their Icons.

On this point, Martin Buber, in his book “I and Thou,” notes that we must be careful not to confuse feelings of God’s love with God’s Love Itself. Our Savior’s love is a constant, pure, life-giving force, equal to all. “But,” notes Buber, “The feelings that accompany it may be very different. Jesus’ feeling for the possessed man is different from His feeling for His beloved disciple: but the love is the same.” (pg. 66). We are, after all, members of the same Household of God; let us not allow pride to infect our true identity as people in His Image by pretending that some people are “better” than others. Upon beholding the Icon of the Virgin of Vladimir, Henri J.M. Nouwen commented, “As Mary sees Jesus, so She sees those who pray to Her: ...as people called to become sons and daughters of God. It is hard for us to relinquish our worldly identity as noteworthy people and to accept our spiritual identity as children of God. But the eyes of the Virgin invite us to let go of our old ways of belonging and accept the good news that we truly belong to God.” (Behold the Beauty of the Lord, pg. 34).

+FR. THEODORE

HYMNS FOR THIS SUNDAY'S CELEBRATION OF THE DIVINE LITURGY

ANTIPHON I:

Verse 1: The Lord reigns; He clothed Himself with majesty; the Lord clothed and girded Himself with power.

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

Verse 2: And He established the world, which shall not be moved.

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

Verse 3: Who shall tell the mighty deeds of the Lord; who shall make all His praises heard? Let those redeemed by the Lord say so, whom He redeemed from the hand of the enemy.

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

Chanter(s): Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, both now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

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

ANTIPHON II:

Verse 1: Let them give thanks to the Lord for His mercies and His wonders to the sons of men.

Response: "Soston imas Ie Theou, o Anastas ek nekron, psallontas si: Allilouia."

Verse 2: Let them exalt Him in the assembly of the people and praise Him in the seat of the elders.

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

Verse 3: The eyes of the Lord are on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy. To hear the groaning of those bound, to set free the sons of the slain.

Response: "Soston imas Ie Theou, o Anastas ek nekron, psallontas si: Allilouia."

Chanter(s): "Doxa Patri ke Io, ke Ayio Pnevmati, ke nin ke ai ke is tous eonas ton eonon. Amin."

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

ANTIPHON III: *Let heaven and earth praise Him, the seas and everything that moves in them. This is the day the Lord made; let us greatly rejoice and be glad therein.*

Resurrection Hymn: *Tou lithou sfraghisthendos [Tone 1]... (The stone that had been sealed before Your tomb by the Judeans and the soldiers guarding watch o'er Your pure and sacred Body, O Savior, the third day You arose. And unto all the world did you give life whereby all the heavenly powers did proclaim that you are the Giver of Life. Glory unto our Resurrected Christ; glory unto Your Kingdom; glory to Your dispensation, O You alone Who loves all.)*

Sunday of Orthodoxy: *Tin achranton eikona Sou... (We venerate Your immaculate icon, O good Lord, and entreat You to forgive our offences, O Christ our God. By Your own choice you were pleased to ascend the Cross in the flesh, to deliver us, whom You created, from our slavery to the foe. Therefore we cry to You with gratitude: You have filled all things with joy, O our Savior, by coming to save the world.)*

Hymn for St. George: *Os ton ehmaloton eleftherotis... (As the one who sets the captives free and the protector of the poor; as physician to the sick and the champion defender of kings, bearer of trophies are you, O Great Martyr George, intercede with Christ our God that He may save our souls.)*

Kontakion Hymn for this Sunday: *Ti Ypermacho... (O Champion General, I your City now ascribe to you triumphant anthems as the tokens of my gratitude, being rescued from the terrors, O Theotokos. Inasmuch as you have power unassailable, from all kinds of perils free me so that unto you I may cry aloud: Rejoice, O unwedded Bride.)*

READINGS: Epistle - Hebrews - 11:24-26; 32-40 / Gospel - St. John 1: 43-51

The Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great (pgs. 125-143 in our Divine Liturgy Book)

Megalynarion (Hymn to the Theotokos): Epi Si Cherhee ke Charitomeni... (Divine Liturgy Book, Pg. 135)

Communion Hymn: Enite ton Kyrion (Divine Liturgy Book, pg. 64)

SERVICE OF THE PROCESSION OF THE HOLY ICONS

Following the conclusion of the Doxology, the altar boys and those participating in the Procession, with Icons, fans and candles, proceed in a counter-clockwise direction, stopping at four stations as the faithful chant: *"Your undefiled icon we venerate Lord, asking for forgiveness of all our faults, O Christ our God; for of Your own will You were pleased to ascend in the flesh upon the Cross to deliver those You created from the bondage of the foe. Wherefore, in thanksgiving we cry to You: You have filled all things with joy, O our Savior, now that You have come to save all the world."*

At the first station, the Deacon exclaims petitions praying for the health and salvation of all Orthodox Christians. The priest concludes with: *"For You are a merciful God Who loves mankind and to You do we give glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit now and forever and to the ages of ages."* The faithful then chant the above hymn again.

At the second station the Deacon exclaims petitions praying for the Eternal Life and blessed memory of our sacred forefathers and relatives. The priest concludes: **"For You are the Resurrection, the Life and the Repose..."** The faithful then chant the above hymn again.

At the third station the Deacon exclaims petitions praying for the safe-keeping of our Church clergy and lay leaders, parents, grandparents and relatives. The priest concludes with, *"For You are a merciful God Who loves mankind..."* The faithful then chant the above hymn again.

At the fourth station the Deacon exclaims petitions praying for the safe-keeping of our Church and our general community. As before, the priest concludes with, *"For You are a merciful God Who loves mankind..."*

The Priest then reads the Synodikon Statement, as the faithful follow along:

"As the Prophets beheld; as the Apostles have taught; as the Teachers have dogmatized; as the Universe has agreed; as grace has shown forth: As Truth was revealed; as falsehood has been dissolved; as wisdom has presented; as Christ awarded: Thus we declare; thus we assert; thus we preach Christ our True God, and honor His Saints in words; in writings; in thoughts; in sacrifices; in churches; in Holy Icons; on the one hand worshiping and reverencing Christ as God and Lord, and on the other, honoring them as true servants of the same Lord of all and offering them the proper veneration. This is the Faith of the Apostles; this is the Faith of the Fathers; This is the Faith of the Orthodox. This is the Faith which has established the universe. Furthermore, to these messengers of piety, with brotherly and fatherly love and reverence, in glory and honor of piety for which they fought, we praise and cry out: of all the defenders of Orthodoxy, pious kings, most holy Patriarchs, bishops, teachers, martyrs, confessors, Eternal be their memory." The faithful respond; Memory Eternal; Memory Eternal; Memory Eternal."

The Priest continues: *"We today, entreating God that we be instructed and strengthened by their exploits and struggles and teachings for piety unto death, and praying to become imitators of their Godly life unto the end, may we prove worthy of all these requests by the compassion and grace of Christ the Great and First Arch-Priest and our True God; through the intercessions of our Most Glorious Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, the God-like Angels and all the Saints, Amen."*

Then all the faithful chant: *"Who is so great a God as our God! You are the God Who works wonders."* This stanza is repeated after each of the following verses: – "You have made known Your power to the nations." – "And I said: Now I began to understand; this is a change in the work of the right hand of the Most High." – "I remember the works of the Lord; for I will remember Your wonders from the beginning."

Then, the faithful together read the Creed on page 42 of our Divine Liturgy Books.

The Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great begins.

ST. GEORGE
LENTEN PARISH SYMPOSIUM:

LIFE AFTER DEATH: "INQUIRE WITHIN"

SYMPOSIUM INCLUDING TOPICS RELATED TO
ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN SPIRITUAL LIFE & DISCIPLINE:

-THE NATURE & PRACTICE OF SACRAMENTAL LIFE IN
EVERYDAY LIVING-

SATURDAY, APRIL 6, 2019

AT:

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX
CHURCH PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA

10:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.

PROGRAM:

10:00 A.M. - WELCOME AND MORNING PRAYER

10:30 - 11:30 - SPEAKERS: DEACON EUTHYM KONTAXIS, (ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, PALM DESERT), FR. DAVID KRUSE (ST. RAPHAEL ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, THOUSAND PALMS) & FR. ANDREW LESKO (ST. NICHOLAS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, TEMECULA)

11:30 - SUMMARY AND REFLECTION

12:00 P.M. - 1:00 P.M. - LUNCH

1:00 P.M. - 3:30 P.M. - SYMPOSIUM (QUESTIONS & ANSWERS)

3:30 P.M. - 4:00 P.M. - VESPERS