

DECEMBER 6, 2020

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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THE LADDER

St. Nicholas of Myra



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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.*

GOD’S LOVE IS THE LAW

As we prepare for the celebration of our Lord’s Nativity (Christmas), we are reminded by way of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews that the bond of Christ-like love makes the authority of parents and the child-like obedience of youth a harmonious joy. In today’s society, however, it seems that such love has grown cold. With the same mentality, there exists the strong temptation to neglect the teachings of the Church with the deranged thoughts that Her ethical and religious ideals are out of date.

However, the purpose of the Law of Holy Scripture and, by extension, the Church, is to remind us to love God and to love our fellow human being. As such, without the love of God, the Law means nothing. The observance of the Sabbath, consistent with the Law, was to have us honor the God of Love. But, without love, the Law has little purpose. This is the central message of today’s Gospel passage.

Our Lord makes it clear that love supersedes the rote observance of the Law. In the Gospel of St. Mark He

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ST. NICHOLAS

Today we commemorate St. Nicholas, the Bishop of Myra. Because of the many miracles attributed to his intercession, he is also known as **Nicholas the Wonderworker**. Saint Nicholas is the patron saint particularly of sailors and merchants. He is known to have rescued three girls from being forced into prostitution by dropping a sack of gold coins through the window of their house each night for three nights so their father could pay a dowry for each of them. Other early stories tell of him calming a storm at sea and saving three innocent soldiers from wrongful execution.

After he became a bishop of the Church of Myra. He was eventually cast into prison during the persecution of Diocletian, but was released after the accession of Constantine. An early list of those who partook in the proceedings makes him an attendee at the First Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D, at which the first section of the Nicene Creed was issued.

Saint Nicholas was originally buried in his home town of Myra in Asia Minor. After the relics were brought to Bari, Italy, they continued to produce myrrh.



Καθώς ετοιμαζόμεθα για τη Εορτή της Γεννήσεως του Κυρίου μας (τα Χριστούγεννα), ενθυμούμεθα μέσω της επιστολής του Αγίου Παύλου προς τους Εβραίους ότι ο δεσμός της «εν Χριστώ» αγάπης καθιστά την εξουσία των γονέων και της παιδικής υπακοής μια αρμονική χαρά. Στην κοινωνία μας, ωστόσο, μια τέτοια αγάπη φαίνεται ότι έχει κρυώσει. Ως αποτέλεσμα, υπάρχει ο έντονος πειρασμός να αγνοούμε τις διδασκαλίες της Εκκλησίας με λανθασμένες σκέψεις ότι τα ηθικά και θρησκευτικά ιδανικά της Εκκλησίας είναι ασυγχρόνιστα.

Ομως, ο σκοπός των Νόμων των Αγίων Γραφών και, κατά επέκταση, της Εκκλησίας, είναι να μας θυμίζει να αγαπάμε τον Θεό και να αγαπάμε τον συνάνθρωπό μας. Ωστόσο, χωρίς την αγάπη του Θεού, ο Νόμος δεν σημαίνει τίποτα. Η τήρησης του Σαββάτου, σύμφωνα με τον Νόμον, προοριζόταν να μας κάνει να τιμήσουμε τον Θεό της Αγάπης. Αλλά, χωρίς αγάπη, ο Νόμος είναι άσκοπος. Αυτό είναι το μάθημα της σημερινής εκ του κατά Λουκάν Ευαγγελικής περικοπής.

Ο Κύριος καθιστά σαφές ότι η αγάπη υπερσχύει της ζηρής τήρησης ενός νόμου. Στο Ευαγγέλιο του Αγίου Μάρκου, διδάσκει ότι το Σάββατο εδημιουργήθηκε για τον άνθρωπο - ο άνθρωπος δεν εδημιουργήθηκε για το Σάββατο. Ο Χριστός είναι ο Θεός που είναι ο Κύριος του Σαββάτου, αφού κατά το Σάββατο εμπήκε στον τάφο για τη σωτηρία της ανθρωπότητας. Η «ανάπαυσις» Του στον τάφο ήταν επίσης η «ανάπαυσις» μας από τον θάνατον της αμαρτίας και είναι η αυγή της νέας ημέρας - την Ογδοη Ημέρα της Αιωνίου Ζωής.
+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

teaches that the Sabbath was made for man; man was not made for the Sabbath. Christ is God Who is the Lord of the Sabbath, since on the Sabbath Day He entered into the tomb for the salvation of humanity. His “rest” in the tomb was also our “rest” from the death of sin and the dawn of the new Day -- the Eighth Day, which is Eternal Life.

The Pharisees had become “worshippers of ritual”, rather than “worshippers of God.” They completely forgot the spirit of love, which is the essence of the law. God’s love is the Law! By healing the “bent-over” women our Savior made this clear. In some respect, the “bent-over” woman represents all of us who are “bent over” spiritually and ethically, in failing to observe the Law of God’s Love.

In that our love has grown cold, our faith has become weak and, rather than being in fear of committing sins, we simply justify ourselves. Hence, introspection and the examination of our souls is neglected in favor of finding someone or something to blame.

At the celebration of every Divine Liturgy our Savior calls us to Him much like He called forward the “bent-over” woman. We are called to approach with *love of God, with faith, and with fear*. The “fear of God” is tantamount to the fear of committing sin and falling away from God; the “love of God” is tantamount to sharing God’s love with others so that they can know the Love of our Savior; the “faith in God” is faith that God’s loving Will supersedes our own self-centered will. It is the essence of humility. The Holy Spirit unites us with Christ our God through His Holy and Precious Body and Blood. St. Symeon the New Theologian once said that, with Holy Communion, our hands become Christ’s hands; our feet become Christ’s feet; our whole body becomes Christ’s body. The Saints of our Church, regardless of age, race, nationality, or gender, are those who share in the divine powers of Christ, having acquired the grace of the Holy Spirit.

As we approach Christ during the Divine Liturgy, let us approach all of life the same way -- with fearful care not sin, *with faith to share* our faith in God and to share God’s love with everyone for His glory.

+FR. THEODORE

BIBLE STUDY-Tuesday, December 8, 2020 -10:00 a.m.

Join Zoom Bible Study Meeting by clicking on the following link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86794723099?pwd=WEErREgyRjkwNzg0alRIUnkycCs0dz09>

Meeting ID: Meeting ID: **867 9472 3099**

Passcode: **898242**

Or, using your cell phone, call: 1 669 900 6833 and dial in the Meeting ID and Passcode numbers.

We will be studying the following passages: [Colossians 3:4-11](#) and [St. Luke 14:16-24](#).

NOTE: When unable to attend Church Services in person due to state regulations regarding the Coronavirus or personal illness, follow the Divine Liturgy through live-streaming provided by various Archdiocese parishes at: <https://www.goarch.org/live-broadcasts>.



“Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord. Blessed are You at Your throne of the glory of Your Kingdom, seated above the Cherubic angels, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.”

“Shine within our hearts, loving Master, the pure light of Your divine knowledge and open the eyes of our minds that we may comprehend the message of Your Gospel. Instill in us, also, reverence for Your blessed commandments, so that having conquered sinful desires, we may pursue a spiritual life, thinking and doing all these things that are pleasing to You. For You are the Light of our souls and bodies and to You we give glory together with Your Father Who is without beginning and Your all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen”

EPISTLE -- Hebrews 13:17-21 --Brethren, obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you. Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner. Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do His will, working in you that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your infirmity." And he laid his hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and she praised God. But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be healed, and not on the sabbath day." Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?" As he said this, all his adversaries were put to shame; and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.

GOSPEL --St. Luke 13:10-17 --At that time, Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years; she

WEEKDAY CALENDAR

MEMORIAL -- Today’s Memorial is for the Eternal Rest and Salvation for the servant of God, **George Nicholas**, the beloved husband of **Theophania Nicholas**. May our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ grant Eternal Life to **George Nicholas** and may He grant peace and comfort to **Theophania Nicholas** and the entire family. MAY HIS MEMORY BE ETERNAL!

Today.....Sunday School - 11:30 a.m. (“Zoom” format)
 Funeral Service for our beloved brother in Christ, George Nicholas - 3:00 p.m

Monday, December 7th.....Philoptochos Board Meeting - 11:30 a.m. (“Zoom” format)

Tuesday, December 8th.....Bible Study - 10:00 a.m. (“Zoom” format)

Wednesday, December 9th..AHEPA - 6:30 p.m. (“Zoom” format)

Friday, December 11th.....Vespers - 5:00 p.m. - His Grace, Bishop Spyridon of Amastris officiating

Saturday, December 12th....Hierarchical Divine Liturgy - 8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy- 9:30 a.m., with His Grace, Bishop Spyridon of Amastris celebrating the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy

BOOK & ITEM SALE - Available following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy today are copies of the newly published St. George Philoptochos Cookbook and various items from our parish bookstore that can be shared as wonderful Christmas gifts.

GOOGLE GROUPS EMAIL - Those who are not receiving our parish publications through our St. George “Google Groups” email system, please inform Fr. Ted as soon as possible.