

FEBRUARY 23, 2020

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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THE LADDER

JUDGMENT SUNDAY



Mailing Address:

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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.

DOING THINGS THE RIGHT WAY

In essence, the first fruits and the best animals which served human needs were sacrificed by idol worshipers in order to appease their gods. To the contrary, the True God, Jesus Christ, rejoices with our love for Him. Our own sacrifice to God is our love for God and our efforts to observe His Will – that is, to make God’s Will our own will.

God’s Will is that we love one another as He Himself loves us. This is why, during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, we hear these exhortations: *“Let us commit ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.”* Also, *“Let us love*

one another, that with one mind we may confess.”

Christ God values each person who enters the world so much that whatever happens to that person, happens to Him, as well. In that we do good deeds for our fellow human beings, we do them for Christ. Indeed, the glory that we are to give God is expressed as love for our neighbor.

Love is the energy of Christ that is extended from within ourselves. Genuine love is acquired through prayer in Christ, Who offers Himself for our lives in this present world and in the

Continued on page 2

TODAY’S GOSPEL PASSAGE – ST. MATTHEW 25: 31-46...THOUGHTS FROM OUR SAINTS AND THEOLOGIANS:

“For surely, as I have said, the sick and he that is in bonds seeks not for this only, but the one to be loosed, the other to be delivered from his infirmity. But He, being gracious, requires only what is within our power, or rather even less than what is within our power, leaving to us to exert our generosity in doing more.” – Excerpt From John Chrysostom. *The Complete Works of John Chrysostom*, Apple Books.

“The needs described in this parable include both physical and spiritual needs. Thus, the hungry or thirsty (Matth. 25:44) are not only those who need food and drink, but also those who hunger and thirst for the hope of the Gospel.” --Orthodox Study Bible, pg. 1319.

St. John Chrysostom and St. Basil the Great, among other Saints, remind us that our Lord asks us to *visit* those who are alone and *give* to the poor. He does not ask us to *release* the prisoners; or *cure* the sick; or to *give away an inheritance* to others and *neglect* our children. Even a cold glass of water to one who is thirsty or simple food – even bread – to the hungry attracts the blessings of our Savior, provided it is given with faith and love for Christ and the other person..



Στην ουσία, οι καλύτεροι καρποί και τα καλύτερα ζώα που εξυπηρετούν τις ανάγκες του ανθρώπου εθουσιάσθηκαν από ειδωλολάτρες για να ευχαριστήσουν τους θεούς τους. Αντίθετα, ο Αληθινός Θεός, ο Ιησούς Χριστός, ευχαριστεύεται από την αγάπη μας για 'Αυτόν και για τον συνάνθρωπο μας, η οποία αγάπη είναι ταυτοχρόνως αντανάκλασις της αγάπης Του για μας. Επομένως, η δική μας θουσία για τον Θεόν είναι η αγάπη μας για Αυτόν και τον αγώνα μας για να τηρήσουμε το θέλημά Του - δηλ., το θέλημα του Θεού να είναι το δικό μας θέλημα.

Το θέλημά Του είναι να αγαπάμε ο ένας τον άλλον όπως μας αγαπά ο Ιδιος. Για αυτόν τον λόγο, κατά την εκτέλεση της Θ. Λειτουργίας ακουµεν αυτές τις προτροπές: «...εαυτοὺς καὶ ἀλλήλους καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν ζωὴν ἡμῶν Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ παραθώμεθα...Αγαπήσωµεν ἀλλήλους, ἵνα ἐν ὁµονοίᾳ ὁµολογήσωµεν.»

Ο Χριστός ο Θεός τιμά τον κάθε άνθρωπο που εισέρχεται στον κόσμο τόσο πολύ ώστε ό,τι συμβαίνει στον οποιονδήποτε άνθρωπο, συμβαίνει και σε Αυτόν. Όσο κάνουμε καλά έργα για τον συνάνθρωπο μας, τα κάνουμε για τον Χριστό. Η δόξα που προσφέρουµεν στον Θεό εκφράζεται με αγάπη για τον πλησίον μας.

Η αγάπη είναι η ενέργεια του Σωτήρος μας που εκτείνεται από τον εαυτό μας. Η γνήσια αγάπη αποκτάται δια µεσου της προσευχής µας προς τον Χριστό που προσφέρει τον Εαυτό Του για την ζωή µας και σε αυτόν τον επίγειον κόσµον και στον άλλον. Δια της προσευχής ζουµε τις προτροπές της Θείας Λειτουργίας. Μάλιστα, προσεγγίζουµεν το Άγιο Ποτήριον με πίστη και αγάπη.
+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

next, as well. Through prayer we live the exhortations of the Divine Liturgy and, indeed, we approach the Holy Chalice with faith and love.

In assigning today's passages from St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians and from the Gospel of St. Matthew, our Church makes it clear that our relationships with one another are to be based on our relationship with Christ, whereby caring for "even the least" of our brethren is an offering to our Lord Himself. Note that by "even the least," Christ means even our enemies.

In his First Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul makes it clear that we are to love the other person *because* the other person is an image of Christ our God. Hence, we are to be careful "not to sin against our brethren, wounding their conscience," otherwise, "we sin against Christ" (vs. 12). This means that caring for others is to be done with good intentions, rather than with self-serving intentions or any kind of curiosity. Nor, as Fr. Alexander Schmemmann points out, is our Lord's commandment intended to make His Church into a "social service agency," doing God's work in an impersonal manner. (See *Great Lent*, pg. 25) Instead, our good works are to be given to another person on a *personal, loving* basis, as in making an offering to our Lord so that the other person can be inspired to also love the Lord.

Above all, doing God's work requires our effort to live a consistently Orthodox Christian spiritual and ethical life-style. St. Basil the Great is very clear on this matter. In his treatise entitled, "On Mercy and Justice," he writes: "If you make an offering to God from the fruits of injustice and rapine, it would be better not to possess such wealth and not to make an offering...On the other hand, if you acquired gains from honest toil and do not make offerings to God, whereby the poor may be fed, robbery will be alleged against you...If you show mercy with God as your witness, you will be sure of not doing it for selfish gain...Let us, then, show mercy that we may receive it from God." (*Complete Works of St. Basil the Great*, compiled from Toronto, Ontario, Canada, pgs. 1562-1563).

+FR. THEODORE

EPISTLE -1 Cor. 8:8-13; 9:1-2

Brethren, food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if any one sees you, a man of knowledge, at table in an idol's temple, might he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, the brother for

whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall. Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

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

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

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

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

Refrain: *" Tes presvies tis Theotokou, Soter, soston"*

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 Yio ke Aghio Pnevmati ke nin ke aei... *"O Monogenis Yios ke Logos tou Theou..."*

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 the Heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad, for the Lord has shown strength with His protective arm: by death He has trampled upon death and has become the Firstborn of the dead; He has delivered us from the depths of Hades, and has granted to the world His Great Mercy.)*

Hymn for St. George: *Os ton echmaloton 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: *Otan eltheis o Theos... (When You come down to the earth, O God, in Your glory, all things will cower tremulous, and a river of fire will draw before Your Judgment Seat; the books shall be opened up, and public knowledge will things hidden be. Rescue me, then, I pray, from unquenchable fire, and count me worthy to stand at Your right hand, O You, the most righteous Judge.)*

Axion Estin...

Communion Hymn: *Enite ton Kyrion... (Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest.)*

GOSPEL - Mt. 25:31-46

The Lord said, "When the Son of man comes in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; 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.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?

And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.' And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

ANNOUNCEMENTS

2020 ST. GEORGE GREEK FESTIVAL TODAY FOLLOWING THE CELEBRATION OF THE DIVINE LITURGY - 11:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.



PHILOPTOCHOS -- We offer many prayers of thanks to our Lord for the time, talent and treasure given toward the success of our St. George Greek Festival by the all the ladies of our parish, as well as the members of our St. George Ladies Philoptochos. Every day throughout this week, from early morning until evening, the ladies of our parish, as a united body, worked tirelessly in preparing the needed items and setting up for the Festival weekend.

STEWARDSHIP - We “kicked-off” our 2020 Stewardship program two weeks ago on Sunday, February 9th. We look forward to receiving more Stewardship Cards over time. Receiving Stewardship now as the 2020 year is still beginning will go far in helping to meet the economic needs of our parish going forward.

MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN- Our new **Memorial Wall Fountain** has been installed at the corner of our church office edifice opposite the Memorial Wall, which enhances the area for prayer and meditation.

AHEPA – Applications for the **AHEPA Fr. T. P. Theophilos Memorial Scholarship** are available online at: www.ahepa528.org, where information is also posted regarding offering donations for this scholarship fund. Applications must be sent in by our community college students **in April** so that awards can be announced on **AHEPA Sunday in May**.

TRIP TO GREECE -“**The Spring Experience**” -- from May 8-May 26th. Contact **Margarita Pagoulatos** at: **714-308-0266** or **Jose Alfredo Garcia** at: **310-988-3531** and see the “Spring Experience” fliers in our parish hall. Also, check out the website: www.margreek2020.com.

WEEKDAY CALENDAR

Monday, February 24th.....2020 Greek Festival Tear-down - 9:00 a.m.
Festival Appreciation Dinner - 6:00 p.m.

Tuesday, February 25th.....Bible Study - 10:00 a.m. (spiritual video presentation)

Thursday, February 27th.....Choir Practice - 1:00 p.m.

Saturday, February 29th.....SATURDAY OF SOULS
Orthros-8:30 a.m. / Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

“I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me.” Phil. 4:13