

MARCH 29, 2020

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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# THE LADDER

ST. JOHN OF THE LADDER

## 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.

## "I BELIEVE; HELP MY UNBELIEF!"

As dark powers sought to destroy the demon-possessed child of today's Gospel passage, the Coronavirus is seeking to destroy us today. However, the words of our Savior addressed to His Disciples at that time echo in our ears today: *"This kind cannot be cast out except by prayer and fasting."* (St. Mark 9:29).

Fasting is more of an attitude of prayer that it is a matter of diet. Without prayer, fasting is not fasting at all, if we are to consider the true teaching of our Orthodox Church. A good example of the "spirit" (or attitude) toward fasting is to

be found in the person of Job in the Old Testament. In everything that he suffered from illness and misfortune, he avoided the sin of blasphemy against God. He remained steadfast in his faith that God's Will is always victorious against every trial and that God's Will is always everything that is good.

For Job, fasting was a matter of his faith that God always loved him and that God is Almighty. The Divine power of God is illustrated in the power of God's Only-Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, Who raised the young man of today's

*Continued on page 2*

## NOTES FROM TODAY'S SCRIPTURE PASSAGES:

In his Epistle to the Hebrews, St. Paul implores us to have hope in God. (Hebrews 8:15-20). Explaining this passage, St. John Chrysostom says, *"People swear by something greater. But God, because He could swear by no greater, swore by Himself. Well, who then is He that swore unto Abraham? Is it not the Son? ...Certainly indeed it was He: however, I shall not dispute [thereon]. So when He [the Son] swears the same oath, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you,' is it not plain that it was because He could not swear by any greater? For as the Father swore, so also the Son swears by Himself [as God], saying, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you.,' here uttering. 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes in Me shall never die.' [ John 11:26 ]"* -- *Excerpt From: Chrysostom, John. "The Complete Works of John Chrysostom." Apple Books.*

Jesus tells us that "all things are possible" (Mk. 9:23) and that the "deaf and dumb spirit" is expelled by "prayer and fasting." (Mk. 9:29). The Orthodox theologians of *The Orthodox Study Bible (New Testament)* write the following: *"'All things are possible,' because God's power is released through faith. Jesus seeks to elicit faith from the child's father. The presence of doubt does not imply the absence of faith. Christ honors whatever faith we have and will increase faith when we sincerely desire Him. Prayer and fasting are essential expressions of the life of faith..."* (pg. 107) +FR. THEODORE



Καθώς οι σκοτεινές δυνάμεις προσπάθησαν να καταστρέψουν τον δαιμωνισμένον του σημερινού Ευαγγελίου, το Coronavirus προσπαθεί να μας καταστρέψει σήμερα. Όμως, τα λόγια του Χριστού προς τους Μαθητάς Του τότε αντηχούν στα αυτιά μας σήμερα: «*Τούτο το γένος εν ουδενι δύναται εξελθειν ει μη εν προσευχή και νηστεία.*» (Μκ. 9:29).

Η νηστεία είναι περισσότερο μια στάση προσευχής από, ότι είναι θέμα διατροφής. Χωρίς προσευχή, η νηστεία δεν είναι καθόλου νηστεία σύμφωνα με την πνευματική διδασκαλία της Εκκλησίας μας. Ένα καλό παράδειγμα του «πνεύματος» της Ορθόδοξης διδασκαλίας της νηστείας ευρίσκεται στο πρόσωπο του Ιώβ στην Παλαιά Διαθήκη. Όσο υπέφερε από ασθένειες και ατυχίες, απέφυγε από τη βλασφημία εναντίον του Θεού. Έμεινε σταθερός στην πίστη του ότι η βουλή του Θεού πάντα υπερισχύει εναντίον της κάθε δυσκολίας και ότι η θέληση του Θεού είναι πάντα για τὸ καλὸ.

Για τον Ιώβ, η νηστεία συνίστατο στην πίστη του ότι τον αγαπούσε ο Θεός και ότι ο Θεός είναι Παντοδύναμος. Η Θεϊκή δύναμη του Θεού απεικονίζεται από τη δύναμη του Υιου του Θεού, του Ιησού Χριστού, που έγειρε το παιδί της σημερινής Ευαγγελικής περικοπής στη ζωή αφού εφάνηκε σαν νεκρό. Τελικά ο Χριστός κατέκτησε τον θάνατο με τον δικό Του θάνατο.

Η νηστεία απαιτεί προσευχή με πίστη, η οποία υπερνικά την απελπισία. Από την αρχή, ας ενισχύσουμε την πίστη μας, επειδή η απελπισία ακυρώνει τις προσπάθειές μας να τηρήσουμε σωστά κάθε είδους νηστείας.  
+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

Gospel back to life, after he appeared to be dead. In the end, Christ conquered death by His own death.

Fasting requires prayer with faith, which overcomes despair. From the outset, let us strengthen our faith, since despair undoes our efforts to observe any form of fasting as prescribed by our Orthodox Christian Faith. To the core, despair opens the gates to temptation and sin, by way of a hopeless disregard for virtue.

I can only share with you the wide range of emotions that I have felt over the past few weeks -- fear, anxiety, and sadness. We can find ourselves sympathizing with the father of the demon-possessed child, who confessed to Christ, *"I believe, Lord; help me in my unbelief!"* We can find ourselves praying the same words to our Savior today.

However, let us have no doubt that our Savior will help us in our unbelief if we have enough faith to ask Him to do so when we pray. From the Gospels themselves, as well as throughout human history, Jesus has addressed the common human frailties of doubt and the weakness of faith by revealing His love at moments when it mattered most, not only with *"encouraging words,"* but with signs and miraculous deeds, *"confirming His word with signs that followed."* The fact that there is such a myriad of Saints throughout the ages gives testimony to this reality and should strengthen our faith in the love of Christ our God.

Today, the Fourth Sunday of Great Lent, we commemorate St. John of the Ladder, who in his book, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, gives us this counsel: *"Whoever becomes the servant of the Lord will fear disappointing the Master -- and this alone. But, whoever does not have such fear is often afraid of a little shadow."* ("Step 21"). Rather than trusting in our own frail limitations, let us put our faith in Christ, calling to mind the words of St. Paul, *"If God is with us, who can be against us?"* (Romans 8:31).

Even a few moments of prayer in your home as a family is, at the same time, *the entire Church in worship!* As Orthodox Christians, we know that the home is, in truth, *"the house Church."* I know we are not monks and nuns, but we can all do a little bit of prayer every day, even for a moment, asking our Lord to *"help us in our unbelief."*

Let us share with one another and with everyone around us our faith in Christ our God as loyal ministers of His Holy Gospel.

+FR. THEODORE



*“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—Heb. 6:13-20 — Brethren, when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore to himself, saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise. Men indeed swear by a greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he interposed with an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

GOSPEL — Mk. 9:17-31 — At that time, a man came to Jesus kneeling and saying: "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a dumb spirit; and wherever it seizes him it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." And he answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him

to me." And they brought the boy to him; and when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father, "How long has he had this?" And he said, "From childhood. And it has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us." And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You dumb and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again." And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse; so that most of them said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting." They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he would not have any one know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise."

**ANNOUNCEMENTS & WEEKDAY CALENDAR**

**The church is closed.** Deacon Euthym and I will be serving at the altar for these services. Follow some of the website telecasts from our Archdiocese at: <https://www.goarch.org/live-broadcasts>.

Memorial Prayer – Athanasios Barsakis (1 Year)

Wednesday, April 1st.....Pre-Sanctified Divine Liturgy (behind closed doors)

Friday, April 3rd.....Pre-Sanctified Divine Liturgy (behind closed doors)

(No Salutation service at our parish. Watch website broadcasts or Liturgical DVDs.)

P.S.: Follow today’s Gospel reading and the sermon on our Facebook page.

*Find the upcoming video telecast schedule of our parish church services. See attached note.*

**ON THE NEXT PAGE:  
NOTE THE ATTACHED INSTRUCTIONS FOR DO  
LOADING THE  
ZOOM APP  
ONTO YOUR COMPUTERS SO THAT YOU CAN FOLLOW OUR BIBLE  
STUDIES; OTHER MEETINGS & PARISH OUTREACH EFFORTS**

**PHILOPTOCHOS ANNOUNCEMENT:**

To: St. George Philoptochos Board

We have a board meeting planned for **Monday, April 6th at 11:30 AM**. However, due to the Coronavirus, we cannot physically meet together.

So, my plan is for our meeting to be conducted on-line via Zoom Cloud Meetings. **Attached is an instruction on how to sign-up free with Zoom**. You can use your iPhone, iPad, Laptop or Desktop computer to participate.

I will forward the meeting agenda and password ID for the meeting in the next couple of days.

Please keep the phone calls going to our call list parishioners and let me know if anyone is in need of anything.

Yours in Christ,

Rhonda

**BIBLE STUDY** – Tuesday, March 31st – 10:00 a.m. Our Bible Study will be, in essence, a **Zoom meeting**. Set up your computer from now in order to join our Bible Study this Tuesday. Call Fr. Ted for any questions: (760) 880-5869. Use the following group ID number to log in: **ID 258-057-2454**



**Follow these steps to create an account:**

1. Click this link <https://zoom.us/signup> or go to [www.Zoom.com](http://www.Zoom.com) and click “Sign up, It’s Free”
2. Type in your email address (it does not need to be a work email address), or sign in with your Google or Facebook account.

**Follow these steps to join a meeting:**

1. Log on to Zoom
2. In the upper right hand corner of the screen there will be an option to Join a Meeting. If you can’t find that, click this link <https://us04web.zoom.us/join>
3. It’ll ask you to type in a Meeting ID or a Personal Link Name. Once we get the event calendar together. we will send everyone the Meeting ID’s for each event.
4. It may ask you to
5. Once you join a meeting, you may be asked to “Join With Computer Audio\*” and either “Join With Video” or “Join Without Video”. There should be a box that says “Automatically Join audio by computer when joining a meeting.”

\*For the audio setting, there should be a box at the bottom which says “Automatically join audio by computer when joining meeting”. Check that box so your audio always connects and so the message doesn’t appear anymore.

For additional help check out these Zoom videos here: <https://zoom.us/resources>

We are most grateful to Christ our God for the efforts of **Rhonda Latkovic** and **Stephanie Christopoulos** for providing the leadership in setting up our Zoom applications.