

DECEMBER 26, 2021

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

74-109 Larrea Street  
Palm Desert, California 92260

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# THE LADDER

SUNDAY AFTER THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

## Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 4755

Palm Desert, CA.92261

Tel: (760) 568-9901

or: (760) 880-5869

– 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 RIGHT TO LIFE

Throughout the year we are cautioned to avoid committing sins and to repent of the sins that we have committed. The reasons for this is multifold: 1) sins quickly turn into crimes; 2) sins tarnish our image; 3) sins cause our illness and death; 4) sins create habits of evil-doing; 5) sins separate us from God's love and, left unrepented, they remove us from God for eternity.

Herod's sins of self-worship and ambition quickly turned into sins of duplicity and hatred, which, in turn, turned into the sin of murder. While we can only imagine the outcry of people under his

reign who suffered through the slaughter of innocent children in his effort to maintain his throne, our nation's soul seems to have grown numb to the slaughter of innocent children through the practice of abortion. The right to life is being eclipsed by the rights of freedom. Indeed, society has come to have a common mind like that of Herod.

It is certainly time to evaluate our thinking, calling to mind that when the right to life is denied for people about to be born, the time may come later for the right to life is denied for

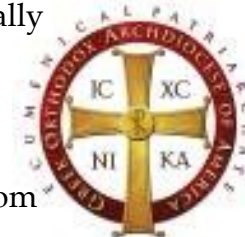
*Continued on page 2*

## THE SYNAXIS OF THE THEOTOKOS

On the day of the Nativity of the Lord, the Church glorifies the Redeemer of the human race, and the blessed deliverance which freed the sinful world from the snares of the Enemy. On the second day of the Nativity of the Lord, such as today, the Church calls upon us to honor the Ever-Virgin Mary, the Mother of our Lord, in an appropriate manner.

Today, therefore, as we celebrate the Resurrection of Christ (as we do every Sunday), we also commemorate the "Synaxis" of the Theotokos. The word "synaxis" in Greek means "gathering." According to the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Christian faithful, people of the Church gather in worship in order to honor the Most Holy Theotokos (the Mother of God). This Synaxis - that is, our coming together to glorify the Theotokos - is celebrated especially in Her honor because She gave birth supernaturally to the Son and Word of God, and thus became the instrument of the salvation of mankind.

--Taken from the Archdiocese website: [www.goarch.org](http://www.goarch.org) and from the website of the Orthodox Church in America: [www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org).



Η Εκκλησία παντα μας προτρέπει να αποφεύγουμε τις αμαρτίες και να μετανοούμε για τις αμαρτίες που έχουμε διαπράξει. Οι λόγοι για αυτό είναι πολλαπλοί: 1) Οι αμαρτίες μετατρέπονται γρήγορα σε εγκλήματα. 2) Οι αμαρτίες αμαυρώνουν την προσωπικότητά μας. 3) Οι αμαρτίες προκαλούν την αρρώστια και τον θάνατο. 4) Οι αμαρτίες δημιουργούν κακες συνήθειες. 5) Οι αμαρτίες μας χωρίζουν από την αγάπη του Θεού και, χωρίς μετάνοια, μας απομακρύνουν αιωνίως από τον Θεό.

Το αμαρτήμα της φιλοδοξίας του Ηρώδη μετατράπηκε γρήγορα σε αμαρτήματα διπροσωπίας και μίσους, τα οποία, με τη σειρά τους, μετατράπηκαν στο αμαρτήμα του φόνου. Ενώ μπορούμε μόνο να φαντασθούμε την κατακραυγή των ανθρώπων κάτω από την εξουσίαν του που υπέφεραν από τη σφαγή αθώων παιδιών στην προσπάθειά του να διατηρήσει τον θρόνο του, η ψυχή του έθνους μας φαίνεται να έχει μουδιάσει από τη σφαγή αθώων παιδιών μέσω των πράξεων των αμβλώσεων. Το δικαίωμα για έχει ο άνθρωπος ζωή επισκιάζεται από το δικαίωμα για να έχει ο άνθρωπος ελευθερία. Μαλιστα, η κοινωνία μας άρχισε να έχει ένα κοινό μυαλό όπως αυτό του Ηρώδη.

Ας έχουμε στο νου ότι όταν το δικαίωμα για ζωή αρνείται σε αυτούς που πρόκειται να γεννηθούν, μπορεί να έρθει αργότερα η ώρα που το δικαίωμα για ζωή θα αρνηθεί σε αυτούς που είναι σε μεγάλη ηλικία. Ας έχουμε στο νου ότι ο Χριστός είναι ο Θεός που χαρίζει την ζωή και για εδώ στη γη, και για την αιωνιότητα στη Βασιλεία Του. Χριστός Γεννάται! Δοξάσατε!

+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

people in old age. This self-evaluation has meaning only if it is done from the depths of our hearts as individuals who truly want to honor the miraculous birth into the world of Jesus Christ our God.

Certainly our world-wide media seems intent on pressing an agenda that conflicts with Holy Orthodoxy. In the face of this, two of our St. George parishioners have inspired me of late to share an important scientific development. There is a new, digital-type ultrasound machine that can detect the smiles and other facial expressions of babies who are in the womb. They can detect a child turning its head in response to sound and can help doctors perform medical procedures for a pre-born child while still inside its mother's womb. As a result, a huge number of men and women who have experienced this type of ultrasound and who had previously decided to have an abortion, repented and changed their decision, opting to bring their child into the world and dedicate it to God. One-by-one, they have reversed the sin of Herod and confirmed to one and all that life indeed is precious.

One of our St. George parishioners kindly reminded me that we have in our parish two individuals who are among us today because their parents did not have them aborted. Instead, they were given the opportunity to be raised to love God and others. As heads of households today, they send the message that Holy Matrimony is indeed a sacred partnership as co-workers with our loving Lord for the continuance of the human race.

Our support of agencies like Birth Choice of the Desert that help couples with child-raising education and offer pathways for children to be adopted is something we can continue to do throughout the year as we support our St. George Philoptochos. Our Philoptochos is committed to providing for the needs of the Orthodox Christian St. Innocent Orphanage of Project Mexico and our Archdiocese St. Basil's Academy which have taken in children from far and wide in order to educate them in the life of our Orthodox Church. We can help our Philoptochos Chapter to support St. Basil's Academy on Sunday, January 9th when we celebrate the annual Vasilopita.

+FR. THEODORE



*"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 -- Galatians 1:11-19

Brethren, I would have you know that the gospel which was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it; and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.

GOSPEL -- St. Matthew 2:13-23

When the wise men departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." And he rose and took the child and his mother by night, and departed to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt have I called my son." Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, was in a furious rage, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they were no more." But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." And he rose and took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaos reigned over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

**WEEKDAY CALENDAR**

Monday, December 27th.....Office closed (Feel free to call Fr. Ted in case of any urgent need.)

Tuesday, December 28th.....No Bible Study

Wednesday, December 29th.....Bible Study - 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, January 1st.....THE CIRCUMCISION OF THE LORD

ST. BASIL THE GREAT

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



## Archiepiscopal Encyclical on the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord

Christmas, December 25, 2021

Unto...the entirety of the Christ-named Plenitude of the Holy Archdiocese of America.

*“You were born secretly in the cave, but Heaven proclaimed You to all, O Savior, using the star as its mouth, and led the magi to You, who worshipped You with faith. Have mercy upon them and upon us!”*

(Troparion from the Vespers of the Feast of Christmas)

My Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we gather across our Nation to celebrate Christmas – the quintessential and most sentimental religious holiday of the American People – we Orthodox Christians are called to an experiential participation with the Nativity of our Savior in Bethlehem of Judea. Through the divine services, and most importantly, the Divine Liturgy, we are called to become the Cave where the Child was born in a secret, hidden manner. For each of us possesses a heart-cave in which God yearns to be born, and which He desires to fill with His presence. And each of us can become the place where Divinity takes shape through our actions.

Much like how an infant grows by absorbing its world and interacting with it, our growth in Christ is symbolized most profoundly by the worship experiences we share in the Church services. But the actual growth takes place everywhere and at every time in our lives. As we practice the virtues of patience and forbearance, humility and generosity, forgiveness and compassion, mercy and love, the Divine Life of the Holy Trinity takes hold in our hearts and grows, as the Apostle Paul says, “in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect person, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:13)

My beloved Christians, Christ the Lord condescended to be born in the humble cave of Bethlehem. We are also caves where He desires to be born, but we must humble ourselves before Him. Let us become like the Shepherds and Magi who journeyed to meet Him. For He descended through the very ranks of the Angels to become like us in order to show us the way to a beautiful life on earth and eternal life in Heaven.

As we cry out: “Χριστὸς Γεννᾶται! Δοξάσατε! Christ is Born! Glorify Him!” – let us also welcome Him to be born anew in our hearts and minds. As we practice what we preach, we will experience a transformation in our lives that is the greatest Christmas gift of all – Emmanuel, God with us.

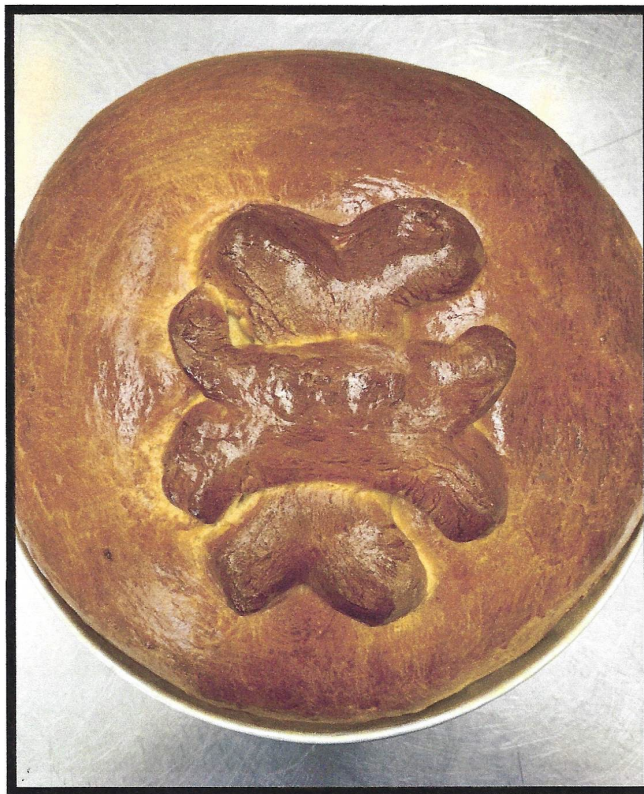
With paternal love in the Newborn King,

† ELPIDOPHOROS  
Archbishop of America

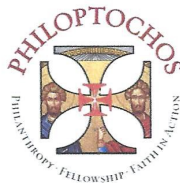
# ST. GEORGE PHILOPTOCHOS

SUNDAY, JANUARY 9th, 2022

## *VASILOPITA SUNDAY*



Vasilopita bread available for purchase after church on Sunday for a \$15.00 donation. All proceeds benefit St. Basil Academy.



# Taverna Night

## "Escape to the Greek Islands"

Featuring live music by *The Greeks*



**Saturday January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022**

Roast lamb on a spit, roasted potatoes, green beans, & Greek salad.  
Cocktail hour from 5:00 - 6:00 pm with appetizers, followed by the dinner including a special  
dessert made by our ladies and Greek dancing.

Beer, wine, ouzo, metaxa will be available for sale.

**Location: St George Greek Orthodox Church**

**74-109 Larrea, Palm Desert, CA 92260**

**760.568.9901**

**\$50 per person**

The event benefits our Philoptochos "Kids-N-Cancer / Camp Agape" ministry for 2022.

**Pay by website, fee added:**

**<https://www.go-stgeorge.org/Ministries/Philoptochos/>**

Reservations must be paid in advance by Sunday, January 16, 2022,  
at the Philoptochos table OR mail your check to the office.

Check is payable to St. George Philoptochos and note on check Taverna Night.

St George Mailing Address: P.O. Box 4755, Palm Desert, CA. 92261

**Sponsored by Ladies Philoptochos of St George**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Number attending: \_\_\_\_\_ Amt. enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_