

**FEBRUARY 28, 2021**

**ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT**

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# THE LADDER

THE PRODIGAL SON

## 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.

## LET'S COME TO OUR SENSES!

*"Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit Who is in you, Whom you have from God, and you are not your own?"* (1 Corinthians 6:19). St. Paul clearly reminds us that we do not belong to ourselves; instead, we belong to God, Who bought us at a price by way of the Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection of His Only-Begotten Son.

On the basis of this passage from St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, our Holy Orthodox Church condemns acts of hatred, abuse, and sexual immorality, as well as practices that hasten

anyone's death (including one's own) and/or desecrate the human person. Her pro-life position is based on God's love for every person who is to be born in the world. In the effort to constantly remind people of God's eternal love, the Church is always calling us to observe God's Commandments.

Like the Prodigal Son, who wanted to ignore his father's love, many people seek to ignore the love of the Church by insisting that their own understandings and decisions are wiser than those proclaimed by the Church. In many ways we are all like the Prodi-

*Continued on Page 2*

**ST. JOHN CASSIAN** -- St. John Cassian was born in Romania, in about 360, and in 382 he entered a monastery in Bethlehem. After several years he was granted permission, along with his friend St. Germanus of Dobrogea, to visit the Desert Fathers in Egypt. They remained in Egypt until 399.

Upon leaving Egypt they went to Constantinople, where they met St. John Chrysostom, who ordained St. John Cassian as a deacon. He had to leave Constantinople in 403 when Chrysostom was exiled and he eventually settled close to Marseilles, where he was ordained a priest and founded two monasteries, one for women and one for men.

St. John's most famous works are the *Institutes*, which detail how to live the monastic life. Here, St. Cassian speaks as a spiritual guide about the purpose of life, about attaining discernment, about renunciation of the world, about the passions of the flesh and spirit, as well as about the hardships faced by the righteous. His work entitled, the *Conferences*, details of conversations between St. John, Germanus and the Desert Fathers are shared. St. John Cassian also warned against some of the excesses expressed in the theology of St. Augustine of Hippo.

St. John departed this life peacefully in 435.

– Taken from [www.orthodoxwiki.org](http://www.orthodoxwiki.org) and [www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org).



«Ὁὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι τὸ σῶμα υμῶν ναὸς του εν υμῖν αγίου πνεύματος ἐστίν, ου ἔχετε ἀπὸ θεοῦ; Καὶ ουκ ἐστὲ εαυτῶν;» - 1 Κορ. 6:19). Μας υπενθυμίζει ο Απ. Παῦλος σαφῶς ὅτι δεν ανήκουμε στον εαυτὸ μας. Ανήκουμε στον Θεό, ο Οποῖος μας αγόρασε μέσω της Ενσαρκώσεως, της Σταυρώσεως και της Αναστάσεως του Χριστοῦ.

Με βάση της εν λόγω περικοπῆς εκ της Πρώτης Επιστολῆς του Αγ. Παύλου στους Κορινθίους, η Ορθόδοξη Εκκλησία καταδικάζει ὅλες τις πράξεις κακοποιήσεως και σεξουαλικῆς ανηθικότητος, καθὼς και πράξεις που οδηγούν στο πρόωρο τέλος ἢ/και την ατιμία της ανθρωπίνης ζωῆς, επειδή ο κάθε ἄνθρωπος ανήκει στον Θεό. Ὅπως ο Ἄσωτος Υἱός, πολλοὶ θέλουν να αγνοήσουν την αγάπη της Εκκλησίας, επιμένοντας ὅτι οἱ δικές τους αντιλήψεις και αποφάσεις εἶναι σοφότερες ἀπὸ αὐτές που διακηρύσσει η Εκκλησία.

Πόσα πρέπει να συμβούν πριν να «ἐλθουμεν εἰς τον εαυτὸν μας;» Εθισμοὶ, διαζῶγια, ασθένειες; Εάν μόνο μπορούσαμε να «ἐλθουμε εἰς τον εαυτὸν μας» προτοῦ πρέπει πραγματικά να «ἐλθουμεν εἰς τον εαυτὸν μας», η ζωή θα ἦταν πιθανῶς πολὺ πὸ εὐκολη γιὰ ὅλους μας.

Ας ἔχουμε τον Χριστὸν στις σκέψεις μας ἀνά πάσα στιγμή. Μάλιστα, η συνειδητοποίηση ὅτι ο Κύριος εἶναι πάντοτε μαζί μας μας χρειάζεται πὸ πολὺ ἀπὸ τις ανησυχίες για ὅλα που ἴσως μπορούν να συμβούν σε εμάς ἢ ἀκόμα και στους αγαπημένους συγγενείς μας. Εάν ἔχουμε κατὰ νου τον Κύριο ἀνά πάσα στιγμή, τότε πρέπει να πιστεύουμε ὅτι «πάντα συνεργοῦσι προς το αγαθόν εἰς τους αγαπῶντας τον Θεόν». (Ρωμ. 8:28), επειδή ανήκουμε στον Θεόν.  
+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

gal Son. We often choose not to make the effort to join ourselves with our Lord, as St. Paul advises. Instead, we tend to want to “move out” on our own.

How many things need to happen before we “come to our senses?” The alcoholic and drug addict need to “hit bottom” before “coming to their senses.” So many married couples need to destroy their relationships before they “come to their senses” and realize that, with the practice of Christ-like virtues, they could have held on to their family. We all have to find ourselves failing in our health before we “come to our senses” and follow a necessary diet or seek required therapy. If only we could “come to our senses” before we have to actually “come to our senses,” life would probably be a lot easier for all of us.

The Bible is God’s “love letter” to us. It serves as a road-map to fulfillment, joy, and, ultimately salvation. The map shows the way to God’s House -- the Eternal Kingdom -- that is lived as much in the “hear-and-now” as it is in eternity. Like with any map, if we don’t follow it, we will get side-tracked and lost. While it is easy to believe in a map that indicates a tangible reality, we are called to believe in God’s Word, since It speaks of the intangible reality, yet a very “real” reality.

How real is it? It is as real as a parent giving advise to a son or daughter, based on love and experience. It is as real as the pain that we feel when relationships are lost, and when our health declines. It is as real as the joy that we feel when we perform good deeds, or the pain we have over regrets due to bad choices. Ultimately, the Word of God is the love of our God, Jesus Christ, offering us His Divine Wisdom.

So, let us “come to our senses.” Let us remember our Lord at all times. In fact, remembering our Lord is more important than worrying about things that might or could happen to us or even our loved ones. If we are remembering the Lord at all times, then we should remember that “*all things work together for the good for those who love God,*” (Romans 8:28), since we do indeed belong to God.  
+FR. THEODORE

#### **BIBLE STUDY –Tuesday March 2, 2020 - 10:00 a.m.**

**Please note: This Bible Study class will take place in-person outside on the patio outside our parish hall and will not be presented in a “zoom format.”**

**The passage that we will be studying is:**

**St. Matthew 25: 31-46**

**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>.**



*"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 - 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 --- Brethren, "all things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be enslaved by anything. "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food"—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two shall become one flesh." But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body and in your spirit which belong to God.

GOSPEL - St. Luke 15:11-32 --- The Lord said this parable: "There was a man who had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that falls to me.' And he divided his living between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have fed on the pods that

the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants.' And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to make merry. Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.' But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, 'Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

MEMORIAL -- Today's Memorial Service is for the Eternal Rest and Salvation for **Martha "Josie" Desnoyers (40 days)**, the beloved mother of **Martha Stithem and Frank & Jared Barboza**. She served as a dedicated member of our parish Philoptochos Chapter and also as one of our St. George Ushers and Greeters. May our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ grant Eternal Rest to **Martha "Josie" Desnoyers** and may He grant peace and comfort to **Martha Stithem and Frank & Jared Barboza**, as well as to all the members of the family. MAY HER MEMORY BE ETERNAL!

Today.....Metropolis-Wide Sunday School Program - 12:30 ("Zoom format)

Tuesday, March 2nd.....Bible Study -10:00 (in-person format on the patio outside the parish hall)

Saturday, March 6th.....SATURDAY OF SOULS - Orthros -8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.