

**JULY 25, 2021**

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

**74-109 Larrea Street  
Palm Desert, California 92260**

**Website: [www.go-stgeorge.org](http://www.go-stgeorge.org)**

**Email: [pdsaintgeorge@gmail.com](mailto:pdsaintgeorge@gmail.com)**

# THE LADDER

## 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 SIN OF INDIFFERENCE

In his book, *How Satan Deceives People*, Elder Cleopa shares a story of a monk who asked our Lord to reveal to him the tricks of the demons. The Lord granted to the monk a vision of demons meeting with Satan for the purpose of determining the best way to destroy people. Suggestions included the denial of the existence of God; the idea that people can believe in God, but that they can also be consumed with worldly cares, and so on. The suggestion that Satan and the other demons agreed was the best way to destroy people was to convince them that, although they may have committed sins,

they can always repent *tomorrow*. This suggestion seemed to be the best, because people are deceived into thinking that “tomorrow” they can repent of sins that darken their souls *today*. Over time, since people wait for “tomorrow” which never comes, their sins darken their souls and become habits, which, further become a part of their character, making repentance very difficult, if not impossible. In this regard, they are *possessed* of their sins.

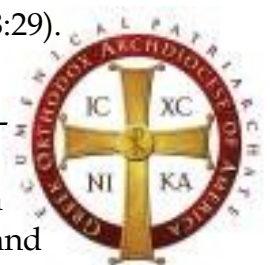
Having demons expelled from a person is analogous to having sins expelled.  
*Continued on page 2*

**THE CONFESSION OF FAITH** -- Even the demons cannot help but reveal the truth about the Bible. This is evident from today's Gospel passage. As our Savior approached the demon-possessed men of the Gergesenes, the demons who were possessing them proclaimed two matters of fact:

- 1) Jesus Christ is truly the Son of the Living God, Who has full authority over all things seen and unseen. The words of the demons are indeed revealing: *What have You to do with us, O Jesus, Son of God?* (St. Matthew 8: 29).
- 2) There will be a Day of Judgment, when Christ will return in glory to Judge His creation. Knowing that they are already cast out of God's Kingdom, following the Day of Judgment, they will be subjected to eternal torments. Again, the words of the demons themselves are revealing: *“Have You come to torment us before the time?”* (St. Matthew 8:29).

In essence, these demons revealed the whole truth about the Bible in just these two statements. The fact that our Lord allowed them to enter into the swine while expelling them from these men indicates that human beings enjoy greater love from God than everything else created, because they are the Image and Likeness of God.

+FR. THEODORE



Στο βιβλίο του, *Πως ο Σατανας Εξαπατεί τον Κοσμον*, ο Γερων Κλεοπα εξηγεί μια ιστορία ενός μοναχού που ζήτησε από τον Κύριο να του αποκαλύψει τα κόλπα των δαιμόνων. Ο Κύριος επαραχώρησε στον μοναχό ένα όραμα που οι δαίμονες ηλθαν σε συνεδρίαση με τον Σατανά με σκοπό να καταλάβουν τον καλύτερο τρόπο να καταστρέψουν τους ανθρώπους. Ολοι αυτοί συμφώνησαν ότι ο καλύτερος τρόπος για να καταστρέψουν τους ανθρώπους ήταν να τους πείσουν ότι, αν και έχουν διαπράξει αμαρτίες, μπορούν πάντα να μετανοήσουν *αύριο*. Αυτή η πρόταση εφαινόταν να είναι η καλύτερη, επειδή οι άνθρωποι εξαπατούνται να πιστέψουν ότι «αύριο» μπορούν να μετανοήσουν για αμαρτίες που σκοτεινιάζουν την ψυχή τους *σήμερα*. Με την πάροδο του χρόνου, καθώς οι άνθρωποι περιμένουν το «αύριο» που δεν έρχεται ποτέ, οι αμαρτίες σκοτεινιάζουν τις ψυχές των και γίνονται συνήθειες, οι οποίες, σιγά-σιγά, γίνονται «κομμάτια» του χαρακτήρος των, καθιστώντας τη μετάνοια πολύ δύσκολη, αν όχι αδύνατη. Τελικά, με το πέρασμα κάθε «αύριο», οι δαίμονες μας εξαπατούν ακόμη και για να πιστεύουμε ότι αμαρτίες δεν υπάρχουν καθόλου.

Το να εκδιώκονται οι δαίμονες από ένα άτομο είναι παρόμοιο με το να αφαιρούνται οι αμαρτίες από την ψυχή μέσω της Θείας Εξομολόγησεως και της μετάνοιας. Η αδιαφορία για τη σωτηρία των άλλων είναι μια αμαρτία που απαιτεί τη μετάνοιά μας, έτσι ώστε δια της αγάπης του Χριστού, πολλοί δαίμονες θα διασκορπισθούν από τον κόσμο μας.  
+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

pelled from the soul by way of Holy Confession and repentance. Let us not be deceived. The sins committed today, with the passing of each “tomorrow,” do not seem to be that bad. Eventually, demons even trick us into thinking that there is no such thing as sin.

Yet, how else can we look upon a world that is broken with so much violence and hatred if we refuse to believe in sin? Homelessness, racism, violence, and other situations of harm and death that we see daily are certainly not in harmony with Godly love. Imagine the good in the world if everyone truly loved one’s neighbor, as our Savior loves every one of us. We may be insignificant in the big picture of the whole world, but, for the person next to us in need of fellowship, healing, and compassion, our significance is huge. For them in their “little world,” we are their whole world. Indifference to this reality is a major sin from which we must all repent.

In his classic book, *Whatever Became of Sin?* Dr. Karl Menninger noted that the beginning of repentance from sin is to *care* – to *care* about one’s own salvation and, in so doing, to know that one’s salvation is connected to the salvation of others. That is, to “*commit ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God,*” as is intoned throughout the Divine Liturgy. Dr. Menninger writes, “*Concern is the touchstone. Caring. [We must relinquish] the sin of indifference [which is] the heart of all sin.*” (pg. 221). To repent of the sin of *indifference* is to offer our *care*.

Let each of us continue with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy today, praying that our Savior gives us the wisdom and ability to truly *care* about the other people around us, inspiring them to give thanks and render glory to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

### WEEKDAY CALENDAR

Monday, July 26th...ST. PARASKEVI THE RIGHTEOUS MARTYR  
Orthros - 8:30 a.m. / Divine Liturgy - 9:30 a.m.

Tuesday, July 27th...ST. PANTELEIMON THE MARTYR  
Orthros - 8:30 a.m. / Divine Liturgy - 9:30 a.m.  
Bible Study - 11:00 a.m.

**In-person at our parish hall and via “Zoom”**  
at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86498724291?pwd=aVVFaUdIcHhqR2FwSXdBdGx6c3hYdz09>  
Meeting ID: 864 9872 4291  
Passcode: 821010  
One tap mobile: +16699006833

Note: You may also join by entering: <https://zoom.us/join> in your computer search engine at the top left corner of your screen and then enter the Meeting ID: **864 9872 4291** & Passcode: **821010** when prompted. You may also call in by cell phone at: 1 669 900 6833 and enter the herein noted Meeting ID number and Passcode.



*"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 4:22-27

Brethren, Abraham had two sons, one by a slave and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, the son of the free woman through promise. Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written, "Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and shout, you who are not in travail; for the children of the desolate one are many more than the children of her that is married."

GOSPEL - St. Matthew 8: 28-34, 9:1

At that time, when Jesus came to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, two demoniacs met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one would pass that way. And behold, they cried out, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?" Now a herd of many swine was feeding at some distance from them. And the demons begged him, "If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of swine." And he said to them, "Go." So they came out and went into the swine; and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and perished in the waters. The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, and what had happened to the demoniacs. And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their neighborhood. And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to his own city.

### SAVE THE DATES

1. **Monday, August 16th...Helping those in need at the Coachella Valley Rescue Mission.** Contact **Ronda Latkovic** or **Fr. Ted** to volunteer.
2. **Saturday, September 25th...St. George Golf Tournament at Desert Willow Golf Resort in Palm Desert.** Items are needed for sale at our silent auction which will be held at the awards banquet. Contact **Fr. Ted** to arrange delivery of items at the church.

### PRISON MINISTRY AWARENESS SUNDAY

Today - Sunday, July 25 - has been declared Prison Ministry Awareness Sunday by the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops. As the national prison ministry for the Orthodox church, the Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry (OCPM) introduces prisoners to the fullness of the Orthodox faith and helps Orthodox Christians who have been convicted of crimes return to the Church to find healing and reconciliation. Visit [www.theocpm.org](http://www.theocpm.org) for more information or send your donation payable to OCPM, 276 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 704-3183, New York, NY 10001.

### WELCOME BACK TO ST. NICHOLAS RANCH

After a long hiatus, the doors of Saint Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center are opening again! Though there are still restrictions for in-person gatherings, the Board of Saint Nicholas Ranch is now permitting small groups with limited occupancy. If your family would like to visit the Ranch, or if your parish would like to offer a small retreat, please contact Ranch Executive Director Michael Pappas, [info@stnicholasranch.org](mailto:info@stnicholasranch.org) or call 559-338-2103.



## THE GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA ARCHIEPISCOPAL ENCYCLICAL

Prot. No. 186/2021

### Archiepiscopal Encyclical on the Day of Mourning for Hagia Sophia

July 24, 2021

Unto the Most Reverend and Right Reverend Hierarchs, Pious Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, Presidents and Members of Parish Councils, Honorable Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Members of Leadership 100, the Day and Afternoon Schools, Philoptochos Societies, the Youth, Greek Orthodox Organizations, and the entirety of the Christ-named Plenitude of the Holy Archdiocese of America.

My Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Ἡ σοφία ὠκοδόμησεν ἑαυτῇ οἶκον καὶ ὑπῆρξεν στυλοὺς ἑπτὰ. (Παροιμία 9:1)

Wisdom has built herself a house, and has set up seven pillars. (Proverbs 9:1)

One year ago today, the Great Church of Holy Wisdom, our Ἁγία Σοφία, was unnecessarily seized and given over to an alien purpose. This was a grim day for all people of good will and equanimity, because Hagia Sophia is much more than a sacred space. It is the vision and embodiment of the substance of our Orthodox Christian Faith. As a cultural icon, the Great Church could have been left as a museum. And although this is less than any of us would desire, at least it respected the integrity of the space. But for this past year, in a city which has abundant places for Islamic worship, it was misappropriated and done so in order to send a message to religious minorities, and to appeal to misplaced nationalistic fervor.

Therefore, we mourn, and not only today, but every day, until a measure of justice is meted out for the Great Church. Every culture and civilization is worthy of respect, and Hagia Sophia, the epitome of the Byzantine achievement, should have been left as a place of cultural intersection and religious harmony. Or, if it was to be restored to worship, it should have been restored to its original intention.

Until such time as our prayers are answered, we must redouble our efforts to bear witness to this House of Wisdom. We must be like the Seven Pillars spoken of in Proverbs, and support Hagia Sophia in every way. Moreover, we must stand with and offer our vigilance to the continuing Great Church of Christ – the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, for it is the See of Saint Andrew that furthers the ecumenical mission and purpose enshrined in the stones of Hagia Sophia.

Yes, today we mourn, but not as those without hope, as the Apostle says (1 Thessalonians 4:13), ever expecting the revelation of the hope of the Resurrection in all things; and in our Ἁγία Σοφία as well.

With paternal love in our Lord Jesus Christ,

† **ELPIDOPHOROS**

Archbishop of America