

MAY 9, 2021

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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Palm Desert, California 92260

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# THE LADDER

SUNDAY OF ST. THOMAS



**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.

**“MY LORD & MY GOD!”**

As we study the personality of the Apostle, St. Thomas, we know that he truly loved Christ our God. In the end, he laid down his life in martyrdom for our Lord. But his words are well known: *“Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails and unless I place my finger in His hands and place my hand in His side, I will not believe.”* (St. John 20:26). Indeed, St. Thomas wanted to believe. However, he had despaired and his faith was shaken. Christ God realized that St. Thomas’ expression of doubt was, in reality, a prayer, asking for help so that he could truly believe. Certainly, we all find ourselves

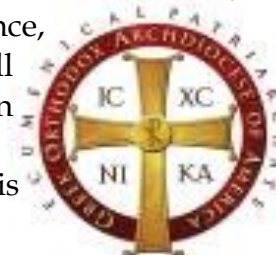
reaching that same point in our lives to one extent or another – in times of pain and anxiety; in moments of illness and troubles, or when we are confronted with perplexing situations and temptations. When our faith is shaken, we need to pray to the Risen Christ, asking that He reveal Himself to us in some spiritual, yet very real, manner and Christ will answer our prayers, just like He answered the prayer of St. Thomas. Rather than condemning St. Thomas, our Lord met him with His divine love. He will do the same for each one of us, whereby, we can express the truth, *“You are my*

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**ST. PETER AND THE MANY WONDERS** --The passage from the Book of Acts that was read today tells us of a Tradition that began to take hold in our early Church and two miracles surrounding the life of St. Peter. The Tradition that was established is that of the gathering of the faithful *“in one accord.”* As many began to follow Christ, it was important for them to *gather* in one place. *“Believers were increasingly added to the Lord.”* (Acts 5:14). The Church is a *“Body”* of people who are gathered to worship the Lord.

The two miracles are: 1) the shadow of St. Peter falling on some of the people gathered to heal them, and, 2) the angel of the Lord opening the doors to the prison where St. Peter was taken by the Pharisees, which allowed St. Peter the freedom to preach the Gospel in the temple (Acts 5:19-20).

From this passage we learn that the power of God rests in the Church. We learn, also, that the power of God works through physical creation since, for example, people were healed because St. Peter’s shadow fell upon them. Finally, we learn that God’s miracles are not ends in themselves. Our Lord allows us to participate in His divine energies as co-workers in order to encourage and strengthen His followers to preach the Gospel message. +FR. THEODORE



Καθώς μελετούμε την προσωπικότητα του Αποστόλου Θωμά, γνωρίζουμε ότι πραγματικά αγαπούσε τον Χριστό τον Θεό μας. Στο τέλος, έβαλε τη ζωή του στο μαρτύριο για τον Κύριό μας. Αλλά τα λόγια του είναι γνωστά: «*Εάν μὴ ἴδω ἐν ταῖς χερσὶν αὐτοῦ τὸν τύπον τῶν ἡλῶν, καὶ βάλω τὸν δάκτυλόν μου εἰς τὸν τύπον τῶν ἡλῶν, καὶ βάλω τὴν χεῖρα μου εἰς τὴν πλευρὰν αὐτοῦ, οὐ μὴ πιστεύσω.*».

(Αγ. Ιωάν. 20:26) Πράγματι, ο Άγιος Θωμάς ήθελε να πιστέψει. Ωστόσο, είχε απελπιστεί και η πίστη του κλονίστηκε. Ο Χριστός ο Θεός εσυνειδητοποίησε ότι η έκφρασις αμφιβολίας του Αγίου Θωμά ήταν στην πραγματικότητα μια προσευχή, ζητώντας βοήθεια, ώστε να πιστέψει. Βέβαια, όλοι ευρισκόμεθα στο ίδιο σημείο της ζωής μας σε έναν ή σε άλλον βαθμό - σε στιγμές πόνου και άγχους, σε στιγμές ασθένειας, ή όταν δοκιμάζουμεν δύσκολες καταστάσεις και πειρασμούς. Όταν η πίστη μας κλονίζεται, πρέπει να προσευχηθούμε στον Αναστημένο Χριστό, ζητώντας να μας αποκαλύψει τον Εαυτόν Του με κάποιο πνευματικό, αλλά πολύ πραγματικό τρόπο, και ο Χριστός θα απαντήσει στις προσευχές μας, όπως αποκαλύφθηκε στον Άγιον Θωμά. Αντί να εκαδικάσει τον Άγιο Θωμά, ο Κύριος τον εσυνάντησε με τη Θεϊκή Του αγάπη. Θα κάνει το ίδιο για εμάς, οπότε μπορούμε να εκφράσουμε την αλήθεια, «*Ο Κύριος μου και ο Θεός μου*», όπως έκανε ο Άγιος Θωμάς.

Η αγάπη για τον Θεό και η πίστη στον Θεό συνδέονται πολύ στενά. Όπως ο Άγιος Θωμάς αγαπούσε τον Κύριον, πρέπει και εμείς να αγαπάμε τον Κύριο, επίσης, έτσι ώστε να ζούμε πραγματικά την «εν Χριστώ Ζωή».

+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

*Lord and my God,*” as did St. Thomas.

The doubt expressed by St. Thomas is for us the opportunity to understand the dynamics of repentance. St. Thomas confessed his doubt in our Lord. Rather than condemning him, our Lord invited him to repent by asking St. Thomas to draw closer so he could see for himself that Christ is truly risen from the dead. St. Thomas *responded* to our Lord’s invitation and drew close enough to know the Risen Christ. His response is akin to our prayers when we ask our Lord to reveal Himself to us. At the same time, we are to be ready to respond to His Will.

When we were baptized, we each proclaimed Christ as God, saying, words that are similar to St. Thomas’ proclamation, “*You are my Lord and my God.*” In particular, we were first asked if we reject Satan and all of his powers and temptations. Then, we were asked if we do, in fact, join Christ - to which we each said, “*I do join Him.*” We join Him, because Christ is truly our Lord and our God.

Love for God and faith in God are very closely tied together. As St. Thomas loved our Lord, we are to love our Lord. In the context of our love for Christ, our faith is strengthened and we know for a fact that Christ our God arose from the dead, conquering death and establishing the way to Eternal Life through repentance. It all becomes a living and real experience! It is this life; this faith; this experience that is the foundation of the Nicene Creed which we proclaim at the performance of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and at every celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

+FR. THEODORE

## IN HONOR OF MOTHERS DAY

The Three Holy Hierarchs of the Orthodox Church, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian, and St. John Chrysostom, were taught by their respective mothers: St. Emmelia, St. Nonna, and St. Anthusa.

St. Emmelia raised five saints: St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Macrina the Ascetic, St. Peter, Bishop of Sebaste, and St. Theosebia, the Deaconess.

St. Nonna is the mother of St. Gregory the Theologian. Regarding his mother, St. Gregory said, “*What time and place for prayer ever eluded her? She was drawn to this each day before anything else, and she had complete faith that her prayers would be answered.*”

St. Anthusa is the mother of St. John Chrysostom who nurtured him in the highest quality of Christian character. When he was of proper age, she sent him to the celebrated Christian orator, Libanus, for advanced studies. He credited his mother for being given the Spirit by which he preached with great eloquence.

Source: <https://www.asceticlifeofmotherhood.com/blog/holymothers>



*"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"*

THE EPISTLE— Acts of the Apostles 5:12-20

In those days, many signs and wonders were done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high honor. And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and pallets, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed. But the high priest rose up and all who were with him, that is, the party of the Sadducees, and filled with jealousy they arrested the apostles and put them in the common prison. But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out and said, "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life."

THE GOSPEL — St. John 20: 19-31

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them: "Peace be with you." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when

they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them: "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him: "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them: "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in His side, I will not believe." Eight days later, His disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said: "Peace be with you." Then He said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing." Thomas answered Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to Him: "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

**WEEKDAY CALENDAR**

Tuesday, May 11th.... Bible Study - 10:00 a.m. (Acts 6:1-7)

Thursday, May 13th...Parish Council - 2:30 p.m.

**Current local Church attendance guidelines**

Christo Anesti! Christ Has Risen!

Thank you to our parishioners and their family members and guests for your adherence to Covid guidelines and our church these last 14 months. As the CDC, government state, local, and federal officials have relaxed guidelines, so have we. Going forward, here are the attendance guidelines we currently will follow:

1. Masks still must be worn covering nose and mouth when attending church services
2. Hand sanitizing must still be done prior to entering church and prior to lighting candles
3. Social distancing of 2-3 feet is still in effect
4. No use of hall for social hour
5. If you are not a normal attendee, we still require you to call to attend church

As you can see things have gotten a little better and hopefully in near future we will get back to full normalcy. Thank you again for your cooperation and God Bless.

## PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS

As May 2021 begins, it is noted that **all ten ladies running for the Board of Directors of our St. George Philoptochos Chapter were elected** to a two-year term. The newly elected board members will meet to elect officers for the 2021-2023 term prior to the **next Philoptochos General Members Meeting, which is scheduled for Monday, May 17, 2021 at Shield's Date Garden at 11:30 a.m.**

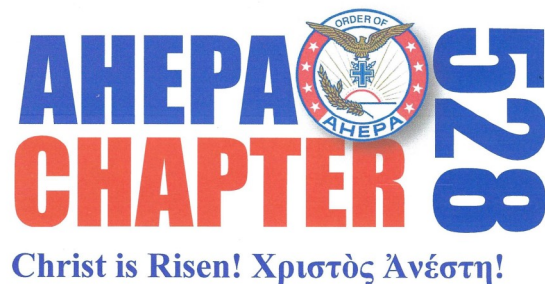
ALSO...Our **St. George Philoptochos Chapter** recently **donated \$1,500** to the San Francisco Metropolis Philoptochos in support of the beloved **"Kids 'n' Cancer" ministry**. We wish to thank our Philoptochos members and our St. George parishioners for their support and financial donation that gave us the ability to provide this blessing for children suffering from cancer and their families. Thank you very much and God bless you!

## AHEPA NEWS

Today, our **AHEPA 528 Chapter** is offering flowers to the ladies of our parish in honor of **Mothers Day**. We pray for all mothers, grandmothers, and Godmothers of our St. George parish. Next Sunday, **May 16th, is AHEPA Sunday**. Traditionally, awards from the **AHEPA 528 Fr. T. P. Memorial Scholarship** are given to deserving college students from our community. In addition, honors are given to those who have served to promote AHEPA ideals for the good of our community.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL

Next **Sunday, May 16th** our **St. George parish Sunday School classes resume**. "Zoom" links will be sent to the parents of our Sunday School students early this week.



Please help our students receive educational support.  
Fr. Theophilos Theophilos Memorial Scholarship Fund  
Donations accepted at  
[www.ahepa528.org](http://www.ahepa528.org)  
or mailed to: AHEPA 528 Scholarship fund  
42-215 Washington St. A-154 Palm Desert, CA 92211-8031