

JANUARY 2, 2022

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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

Website: www.go-stgeorge.org

Email: pdsaintgeorge@gmail.com



THE LADDER

SUNDAY BEFORE THEOPHANY

FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT

As the Divine Liturgy is celebrated, we hear these words intoned by the deacon or priest: *“For a Christian end to our life, peaceful, without shame and suffering, and for a good defense before the awesome judgment seat of Christ, let us ask of the Lord.”*

The meaning of these words is best expressed by St. Paul in his Second Epistle to Timothy, which we heard today: *“Always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry. For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is*

laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:5-8).

St. Paul lived his whole life in preparation for a peaceful end to his life and a good defense before the awesome judgment seat of Christ. For St. Paul, the word “suffering” refers to spiritual suffering. This is obvious, since he already speaks of “enduring suffering,” such as physical pain and “being sacrificed,” knowing that his “time of departure” was near. The Divine Liturgy places the sentiments

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WHY ARE THERE A CHURCH NEW YEAR & A SECULAR NEW YEAR?

The Church never sought to invent a new calendar. However, in the ancient world, the Church found a multiplicity of calendars and systems of measuring time. There were several “First of the Year” dates. In Rome, for example, according to the old calendar of *Numa Pompilius*, the beginning of the year was March 1st. Thus, if March was the first month, which would be the seventh month? September. What does September mean? It comes from Latin *septem*, which means *seven*, so the seventh month. October from *octō*, eight, November from *novem*, nine, and December, from *decem*, ten!

It was not until Julius Caesar reformed the calendar in the year 45 BC, when the First of the Year became January first. For most of the East, however, the First of the Year continued to be Sept. 24, the day of the vernal equinox. For practical reasons, in the year 462 AD, the first of the year was transferred to Sept. 1st, which remained the beginning of the year for all the Byzantine period, and to this day continues to be the beginning of the new ecclesiastical year of the Orthodox Church.



– Taken in part from: www.orthodoxwitness.org/

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.*

Καθώς τελείται η Θεία Λειτουργία, ακούμε την εκφώνηση του διακόνου ή του ιερέως: «Χριστιανὰ τὰ τέλη της ζωῆς ημῶν, ἀνώδυνα, ἀνεπαίσχυντα, εἰρηνικὰ, καὶ καλὴν ἀπολογίαν τὴν ἐπὶ τοῦ φοβεροῦ βήματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, αἰτησώμεθα.»

Το νόημα αὐτοῦ τοῦ εκφώνηματος εκφράζεται καλύτερα ἀπὸ τὸν Ἅγ. Παῦλο στὴ Δεύτερη Ἐπιστολὴ τοῦ πρὸς τὸν Τιμόθεο, πού ακούσαμε σήμερα: «*Νῆφε ἐν πᾶσι, κακοπάθησον, ἔργον ποιήσον εὐαγγελιστοῦ, τὴν διακονίαν σου πληροφόρησον. Ἐγὼ γὰρ ἤδη σπένδομαι, καὶ ὁ καιρὸς της ἐμῆς ἀναλύσεως ἐφῆστηκε. Τὸν ἀγῶνα τὸν καλὸν ἠγωνίσαι, τὸν δρόμον τετέλεκα, τὴν πίστιν τετήρηκα· λοιπὸν ἀπόκειται μοι ὁ της δικαιοσύνης στέφανος, ὃν ἀποδώσει μοι ὁ Κύριος ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ, ὃ δίκαιος κριτής...*»

Γιὰ τὸν Ἅγ. Παῦλο, ἡ λέξι «βάσανο» ἀναφέρεται στὸν πνευματικὸ πόνο. Αὐτὸ εἶναι προφανές, ἀφοῦ ἤδη ομιλεῖ γιὰ «υπομονὴ βασάνων», ὅπως ἓνα εἶδος σωματικὸ πόνο καὶ «θυσία», γνωρίζοντας ὅτι ἡ «ὁ καιρὸς ἀναλύσεως [αὐτοῦ] ἐφῆστηκε». Ἡ Θεία Λειτουργία τοποθετεῖ τὰ συναισθήματα τοῦ Ἅγ. Παύλου στὶς προσευχὲς μας, στὸ ὅτι προσευχόμεστε γιὰ «*καλὴν ἀπολογίαν τὴν ἐπὶ τοῦ φοβεροῦ βήματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ*», ἔνω ὁ καθένας μας εἶναι προορισμένος νὰ συλλογιστεῖ ὅπως ὁ Ἅγ. Παῦλος: «*Τὸν ἀγῶνα τὸν καλὸν ἠγωνίσαι, τὸν δρόμον τετέλεκα, τὴν πίστιν τετήρηκα.*» Γιὰ τὸν Ἅγ. Παῦλο, λοιπὸν, ἡ αμαρτία θὰ ἦταν τὸ «βάσανο» πού θὰ τὸν ἐμπόδιζε νὰ λαβεῖ «*τὸν στέφανο ὁ της δικαιοσύνης*» ἀπὸ τὸν Θεό.

Γιὰ νὰ ἐπιτύχουμε τὴ δικαιοσύνη τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἔχουμε ἀνάγκη ἀπὸ τὸ ἔλεος τοῦ Θεοῦ, πού εἶναι στὴν πραγματικότητα ἡ χάρις γιὰ νὰ ἀποφύγουμε τὴν αμαρτία.
+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

of St. Paul in our prayers, in that we pray for “a good defense before the Lord’s judgment seat,” having “fought the good fight” and “finished the race,” as well as having “kept the faith.” For St. Paul, then, sin is the suffering, through which he would have been kept from “receiving the crown of righteousness” from God. As for worldly suffering, St. Paul endured for the sake of others: “I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake...” (Colossians 1:24).

Would that we could all have the same understanding about suffering as that shown by St. Paul!

The “awesome judgment seat of Christ,” of which we pray during the Divine Liturgy, is awesome, because Christ is Himself a “righteous judge,” as St. Paul says. When we fall short of sharing our Lord’s righteousness we suffer a “coldness” in our souls, which makes it difficult to even pray. This, in itself, is a reason to be humble; yet, there is no reason to despair, if we appeal with humility to our Lord’s mercy, which is why we continuously pray, “Lord have mercy,” throughout the Divine Liturgy. God’s mercy is the grace that helps us to avoid sin.

The prayers of the Divine Liturgy are at the same time both communal and individual. St. Paul notes that salvation in Christ is not only for “me” (as he says), but for “all who have loved His appearing.” While we continually chant, “Lord, have mercy,” we not only want our Lord’s mercy for us, as individuals, but for all people, as well.

Let us begin the New Year with our re-commitment to Christ and to each other as followers of Christ, encouraging one another in the Faith; forgiving one another and praying for one another.

+FR. THEODORE

“BRING A FRIEND TO CHURCH” SUNDAY – Next Sunday, January 9, 2022! We have postcards in the Narthex at both candle stands and in the Church Hall on the bar counter. Parishioners are asked to either give a postcard to a friend and invite them to church, or fill out the address on the postcard and the church will mail them out tomorrow. Volunteers are needed to serve as Welcome Greeters at the doors and Ushers. Volunteers are also needed for Vasilopita distribution.

PHILOPTOCHOS – TAVERNA NIGHT POSTPOSED! Due to the uptick in the Covid omicron virus, **Taverna Night**, originally scheduled for Saturday, January 22nd, **has been postponed**. A future date will be determined after Covid restrictions are lifted.

VASILOPITA – Please support our **St. George Philoptochos Annual Vasilopita Celebration**. This year, the Vasilopita will take place **on Sunday, January 9th**. Nationally, Philoptochos offers major donations in support of the **St. Basil’s Academy** through which children in need are provided with good education for their future.



"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 — 2 Timothy 4:5-8

Timothy, my son, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry. For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

GOSPEL — St. Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who shall prepare your way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.' John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

WEEKDAY CALENDAR

Note: For the Services of the Blessing of the Waters, while Holy Water Bottles are available, those who want to bring their own Holy Water Bottles from home are welcome to do so.

Tuesday, January 4th.....Bible Study – 10:00 a.m. (Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83371776876?pwd=UnEzUTRybjkwT2FraW1LSWWhlYk9Bdz09>)

Wednesday, January 5th.....EVE OF THEOPHANY

Royal Hours – 8:00 a.m./ Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great – 9:30 a.m.

Blessing of the Waters (Great Agiasmo) – 10:45 a.m.

Bible Study-6:30 p.m (Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86111452564>)

Thursday, January 6th.....GREAT AND HOLY THEOPHANY (EPIPHANY)

Orthros- 8:30 a.m./ Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m./ Blessing of the Waters (Great Agiasmo) - 10:45 a.m.

Friday, January 7th.....ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

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

Those who want their homes blessed may contact Fr. Ted at (760) 880-5869 to make an appointment.



Prot. No. 01/2022

Archiepiscopal Encyclical on the New Year

January 1, 2022

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

“Above all else clothe yourselves with love, which is the perfect bond of unity.”
(Colossians 3:12,14)

My Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Let us greet the New Year of 2022, the centennial year of our Sacred Archdiocese of America, with the hope and faith that our renewal in Christ is at hand. We came through the past year with many accomplishments, despite the ongoing challenges of the pandemic. The highlight of last year was surely the Apostolic Visit of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, but there were many other significant events as well.

We gathered once again in worship and fulfilled our journey with the Lord through Holy Week and Pascha. We inaugurated the Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine with our first official participation in the commemorations of September Eleventh by lighting the Church with its signature illumination from within for the Twentieth Anniversary of 9/11. We reconvened in-person classes at our beloved Hellenic College and Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, and all the Orthodox Bishops of America were able to meet this past October for the first time since the pandemic began. All of these normative events signaled to us that we might be returning to pre-pandemic realities, but we are not quite there yet. We must still exercise prudence and caution, so that we protect our neighbors with the same care with which we protect ourselves.

This is why I urge all of us to hearken to the exhortation of the Apostle Paul to the Christians at Colossae: let us clothe ourselves with love, and forge that perfect bond of unity, which God wills for His Church. Especially in this centenary year of the Greek Orthodox Church of America, as an Institution and a Sacred Eparchy of the Venerable Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, the cultivation of our sincere and genuine love for one another is the path to perfecting the bonds of unity across the country.

Thus, as we enter this New Year of 2022, may we renew our appreciation and realization of God’s precious gift of unity, and celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of our Sacred Archdiocese with love for one another and for every aspect of His creation.

With paternal love in Christ,
† ELPIDOPHOROS
Archbishop of America