



DECEMBER 31, 2023

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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Palm Desert, California 92260

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– Fr. Theodore Pantels, M.Div. Proistamenos (Pastor) – Deacon Euthym Kontaxis, M.D.,M.Div.

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 LADDER

SUNDAY AFTER THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST



PRAYER FOR READING HOLY SCRIPTURES

“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."

JANUARY 1st— Tomorrow, with the New Year, we commemorate the Circumcision of our Lord and we also commemorate the memory of St. Basil the Great.

THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD— Since the Mosaic Law commands that if a woman give birth to a male child, he should be circumcised on the eighth day (Lev. 12:2-3), on this, the eighth day from His Nativity, our Savior accepted the circumcision commanded by the Law. According to the command of the Angel, He received the Name: JESUS, which means "Savior" (Matt. 1:21).

ST. BASIL THE GREAT – About the year 370, St. Basil was elected to be bishop of Cappadocia, which he tended for eight years, living in voluntary poverty and strict asceticism, having no other care than to defend holy Orthodoxy as a worthy successor of the Apostles. He wrote volumes in defense of Orthodoxy and established hospitals, monasteries and orphanages throughout his diocese.

Liturgical Notes for Today

At the Entrance of the Gospel: 1) **Entrance hymn:** 1) *“O Faithful, let us sing a hymn of praise and worship to the Logos Who is co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, Who was born of the Virgin for our salvation. Of His own Will, He went upon the Cross in the flesh and suffered death, to raise the dead through His glorious Resurrection.”/Τον συνάναρχον Λόγον...*

2) *“Your birth, O Christ our God, dawned the light of knowledge upon the earth, for by Your birth those who adored the stars were taught by a Star to worship You, the Sun of Righteousness and to know You, Orient on High. O Lord, glory to you.” /Η Γέννησις Σου Χριστέ ο Θεός...*

3) *“Annunciate the miracles to David the ancestor of God, O Joseph. You saw the Virgin pregnant. You glorified with the shepherds. You worshipped with the Magi. And you were warned by an Angel. Entreat Christ God to save our souls.”/Ευαγγελίζου Ιωσήφ...*

4) *“Since you are a deliverer of captives...” [Hymn of St. George]/Ως των αιχμαλώτων ελευθερωτής...*

5) **Kontakion:** *“Today the Virgin comes to the cave to ineffably give birth to the eternal Logos. Harkening to this, rejoice, O Universe, and with the angels and shepherds glorify Him, the God before all ages, Who willed to be held as a young child.”/Η Παρθένος σήμερα...*

THE GIFT OF REPENTANCE

In his Epistle to Timothy, St. Paul expressed the tremendous peace that he had in his soul as the result of repenting from being a persecutor of Christians to becoming a paramount Apostle of Christ. From today's Gospel passage, we learn that God, in His great love, gives us both the opportunity and the ability to repent from a lifestyle of self-centeredness, which so often fosters misunderstandings and hatred, to a lifestyle of God-like love, fostering good will in our world and the salvation of souls.

St. Paul's lifestyle was one of “fighting the good fight” constantly, thereby suggesting that, with our own baptism, we pledge to reject Satan and all of his powers, and to join Christ. According to St. Paul and the many Saints after him, who lived throughout the centuries, rejecting the temptations from Satan and turning one's thoughts to the love of Christ our God is a daily effort. When we fight temptations and repent of sins, our Lord blesses us and, over time, we take on a nature that is more divine and less human. This is how our Church's Saints became saints when they were formerly sinners. The fact that we face temptations does not mean that God does not love us. Even our Savior was tempted in the wilderness immediately following His Baptism in the Jordan.

The gift of repentance erases regrets and grants us peace of soul. As we prepare to celebrate our Savior's Baptism in the Jordan River to wash away Adam's sin and all of our own sins, let us remind ourselves that our own baptism in Christ opens the door for our repentance from the sins that we always seem to fall into due to our own imperfections. Constant repentance every day is a new way of life, as we begin a New Year!

+FR. THEODORE

Στην Επιστολή του προς τον Τιμόθεο, ο Άγ. Παύλος εξέφρασε την τεράστια γαλήνη που είχε στην ψυχή του ως αποτέλεσμα της μετανοίας του από το ότι ήταν διώκτης κατά των Χριστιανών μέχρι που έγινε ο μεγάλος Απόστολος του Χριστού. Από τη σημερινή περικοπή του Ευαγγελίου, μαθαίνουμε ότι ο Θεός, με τη μεγάλη Του αγάπη, μας δίνει και την ευκαιρία και την ικανότητα να μετανοήσουμε από έναν τρόπο ζωής εγωκεντρισμού, που τόσο συχνά καλλιεργεί παρεξηγήσεις και μίσος, σε έναν τρόπο ζωής αγάπης που μοιάζει με την αγάπη που έχει ο Θεός για εμάς – σκοπός της αγάπης Του είναι να καλλιεργήσει την καλοσύνη στον κόσμο μας και τη σωτηρία των ψυχών.

Ο τρόπος ζωής του Αγίου Παύλου ήταν «να πολεμήσει τον καλόν αγώνα» συνεχώς, υποδεικνύοντας έτσι ότι, με το δικό μας βάπτισμα, δεσμευόμεθα να απορρίψουμε τον Σατανά και όλες τις δυνάμεις του και να ενώσουμε τον εαυτό μας με τον Χριστό. Σύμφωνα με τον Άγ. Παύλο και τους πολλούς Αγίους μετά από αυτόν, που έζούσαν ανά τους αιώνες, η απόρριψη των πειρασμών από τον Σατανά και η στροφή των σκέψεων στην αγάπη του Χριστού είναι καθημερινή προσπάθεια. Όταν καταπολεμούμε τους πειρασμούς και μετανοούμε για τις αμαρτίες μας, ο Χριστός μας ευλογεί και, με την πάροδο του χρόνου, παίρνουμε μια φύση πύθιμη και όχι τόσο ανθρώπινη. Έτσι έγιναν άγιοι οι Άγιοι της Εκκλησίας μας όταν ήσαν προηγουμένως αμαρτωλοί. Το γεγονός ότι αντιμετωπίζουμε πειρασμούς δεν σημαίνει ότι ο Θεός δεν μας αγαπά. Ακόμη και ο Χριστός είχε πειρασμούς στην έρημο αμέσως μετά το Βάπτισμά Του στον Ιορδάνη.

Το δώρο της μετανοίας διαγράφει τις τύψεις και μας χαρίζει γαλήνη ψυχής. Καθώς προετοιμαζόμεθα να εορτάσουμε το βάπτισμα του Χριστού στον Ιορδάνη για να ξεπλύνει την αμαρτία του Αδάμ και όλες τις δικές μας αμαρτίες, ας υπενθυμίσουμε στον εαυτό μας ότι το δικό μας βάπτισμα εν Χριστώ ανοίγει την πόρτα για τη μετάνοιά μας από τις αμαρτίες στις οποίες, ως φαίνεται, πάντοτε πέφτουμε λόγω των δικών μας αδυναμιών. Η συνεχώς καθημερινή μετάνοια είναι ένας νέος τρόπος ζωής, που είναι να ζούμε με το Νέο Έτος! +Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

WEEKDAY CALENDAR

Monday, January 1st.....CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST & COMMEMORATION OF ST. BASIL
Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great – 9:30 a.m.

Tuesday, January 2nd.....Bible Study – 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday, January 3rd..Online Orthodox Christian Catechism – 6:30 p.m.

Friday, January 5th.....FOREFEAST OF THE EPIPHANY (THEOPHANY) OF CHRIST
Orthros a.m./Divine Liturgy of St. Basil-9:30 a.m./Great Blessing of the Waters to follow.

Saturday, January 6th.....EPIPHANY (THEOPHANY) OF CHRIST
Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m./Great Blessing of the Waters to follow.

Next Sunday:

The Annual Philoptochos Vasilopita Celebration following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PHILOPTOCHOS –

- o **Vasliopita Sunday is January 7th** and we will have a limited amount of vasilopita available for purchase.
- o January calendar...Philoptochos Board meeting, Monday, January 8th at 11:00 AM.
Philoptochos General Meeting, Monday, January 15th at 11:30 AM
- o **Paint & Sip** is back for January! If you enjoyed the wine bottle painting in November, then you will enjoy painting a Greek vase at our next event on **Sunday, January 21st!** (See flier for details)
- o **Enclosed is a flyer announcing a screening about the work of Birth Choice of the Desert in saving the lives of pre-born children**, which will be shown at **Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church** in Palm Desert on **January 12, 2024**.
- **SUNDAY SCHOOL** – Sunday School classes will be held on **Sunday, January 14, 2024** and **Sunday, January 28, 2024**. A special Sunday School service project is scheduled for Sunday, January 28th.
- **ONLINE ORTHODOX CATECHISM CLASS - Wednesday, January 3, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.** Those who want may email Fr. Ted at pdsaintgeorge@gmail.com to receive a link in order to join the online class.
- **GREEK FESTIVAL** – Volunteers, sponsors and donors in support of our 2024 Greek Festival (February 17-18, 2024) are most welcome! Festival flyers are available in our parish hall for distribution throughout the Coachella Valley. **Festival preparations resume on Monday, January 8th.** See enclosed flyer, "Support our Festival." Note: The next Festival Meeting is: Wednesday, January 4, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.
- **ST. GEORGE BOOKSTORE** – Our **St. George Bookstore** has received many new items just in time for Christmas party gift swaps and/or last minute gift ideas for your special someone. We have set up a "**Christmas Shop**" in the **Church Hall**. Items include novelty aprons, Greek flag fleece blankets, pashmina shawls, orthodox jewelry, handmade soaps, ornaments, and much more. Another shipment is arriving by mid-week so if you don't see anything today check back in a few days or next Sunday. We take credit card, cash, or **checks payable to St. George Church -memo-bookstore**.



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA
ARCHEPISCOPAL ENCYCLICAL

Prot. No. 363/2023

Archepiscopal Encyclical on the New Year 2024

January 1, 2024

Ὡστε εἴ τις ἐν Χριστῷ καινὴ κτίσις· τὰ ἀρχαῖα παρήλθεν, ἰδοὺ γέγονε καινὰ τὰ πάντα.

(Πρὸς Κορινθίους Β΄ 5:17)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation! What's past has passed. Behold! Everything is new!
(II Cor 5:17)

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:

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

On this first day of the New Year of 2024, let us embrace the newness in Christ, which He has appointed for our renewal and salvation. The Apostle Paul reminds us that we are, in fact, new creations! And that whatever has transpired is beyond us, forgiven and even forgotten. For every new year — whether this civil one, or the Ecclesiastical New Year on September 1 — is a call and opportunity to begin again. Why? Because in Christ, “everything is new.”

This is the truest and the best optimism. Neither a false hope for the future, nor a denial of mistakes in the past. We press forward in Christ, Who is an ever-flowing fountain of love, mercy, compassion and forgiveness. This is how we are called to live — in the dynamic flow of God’s grace through the Holy Spirit. Whether it is by our participation in the Sacred Mysteries of the Church, or by applying the teachings of our Savior in our everyday lives. When we pray, “give us this day our daily bread,” it is much more than an invocation of the Eucharist, as precious and profound as it is. We are affirming that the gift of life itself is a constant source of God’s nourishing love and care.

Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, let us embrace 2024 with the optimism that is grounded in the truth of God. And as we base our hopes in the promises of His Grace, let us remember the Saint of this Day, and the sacred institution of our Archdiocese that bears his righteous name. Saint Basil Academy is a literal incarnation of new beginnings. It is a place of God’s love and His promise where newness of life flourishes. Let us always generously remember the Academy and its mission. And may the New Year of God’s grace bestow upon you and all those you love the blessings of good health of body and soul, and the newness of life that propels you to reach for even greater spiritual heights.

With much paternal love in Christ,
† ELPIDOPHOROS
Archbishop of America

Celebrate the New Year!
Join us for the cutting
of the Vasilopita!



St. George Philoptochos is ringing in the New Year with our annual Vasilopita cutting on **Sunday, January 7th, 2024** in the Church Hall after Divine Liturgy by Fr. Theodore Pantels. Appetizers & refreshments will be provided. Everyone is welcome! A goodwill offering is greatly appreciated.

We will also have a limited number of Vasilopitas for you to purchase for take home. Each will have a coin inside for good luck in the New Year!

Enjoy this tradition that symbolizes the sweetness & joy of life everlasting!
Best wishes for 2024!



Support our Festival!

Our festival is just a few months away and, God willing, everyone will have a rewarding experience. We thank our parishioners and friends for your past support and want to take a moment to remind you of all the ways you can help this upcoming year.

Volunteering – Volunteers are welcome as of the 18th of December for cooking. Such support will be needed up until the festival in February. Please reach out to George or Stacy Argyros to get more information. In addition, assistance is appreciated during the week before the festival to help set up, during the festival and following the festival to assist with cleanup. If you’ve volunteered before and wish to continue, feel free to contact the past chairperson to again offer your assistance. If you’d like to volunteer for the first time or don’t have contact information for the past chairperson, feel free to reach out to Jim Christopoulos at 760-902-8460 or at goofy_328@yahoo.com.

Sponsorships – Any person can pay for a sponsorship, whether it be to advertise your business or send a personal message. You may also ask friends and/or owners of businesses you frequent to buy a sponsorship. These not only provide financial support for the festival, but are a wonderful way to advertise businesses.

Donations – Unable to volunteer? Sponsorship not appropriate? Another option would be to provide a cash donation. Such a donation would help offset our many expenses.

The success of our festival depends on us all. We strive to simultaneously satisfy the needs of our guests as well as to share our hospitality and religion with them. Please help in any way you can. You may contact George Argyros or Father Ted for more information.

WE INVITE YOU TO OUR

Paint & Sip

Sunday

01/21/2024 @ 1200 p.m.



HOSTED BY:

St George Ladies Philoptochos

74109 Larrea St – Palm Desert, CA 92260

Bring your friends and join us for an afternoon of appetizers, refreshments, wine and painting a beautiful small Grecian vase!

Sign up during Coffee Hour or call
St. George Church @ 760-568-9901

\$15

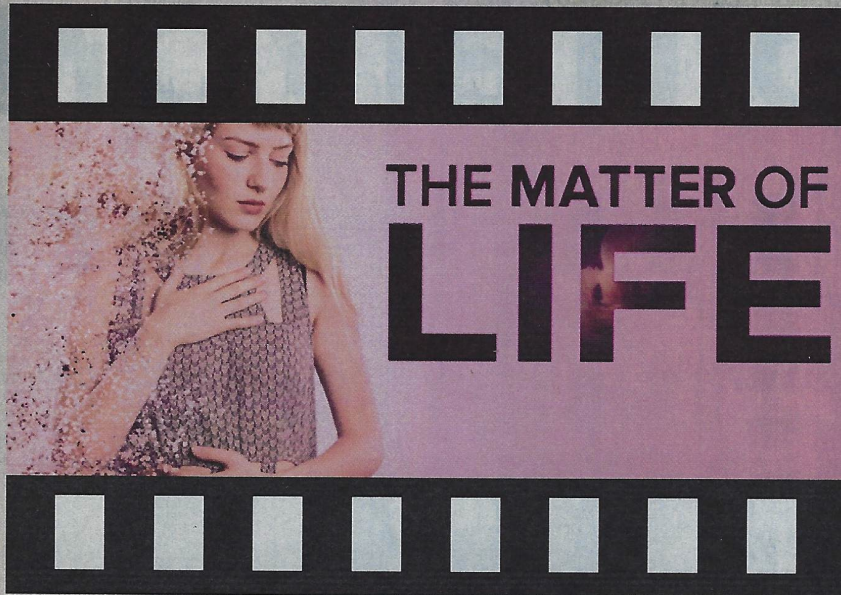
PER PERSON

Check out our talented and fun group from our first Paint & Sip Art Event on 11/12/2023. A great time was had by all!



Community

MOVIE NIGHT



A film that clarifies the most contentious issue of our day.

JANUARY 12

DOORS OPEN 5:30PM • STARTS AT 6:00PM

FREE ADMISSION!

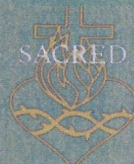
SACRED HEART CHURCH

SALTA PASTORAL CENTER GYM

43775 DEEP CANYON RD, PALM DESERT, CA 92260

PRESENTED BY:

**BIRTH
CHOICE**
OF THE DESERT



SACRED HEART CHURCH
Pro-Life Ministry



