

# ***St. George Greek Orthodox Church of the Desert***

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***THE LADDER, Sunday, June 22, 2008***

Fr. Theodore Pantels, Proistamenos (Pastor), Fr. James Tavlarides, Emeritus, Fr. T.P. Theophilos, Emeritus, Deacon Euthym Kontaxis, M.D.

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## **HOW DO PEOPLE BECOME SAINTS?**

Today, we commemorate all the Saints of our Church collectively -- known Saints and Saints whose names we will never know. In today's Epistle reading, St. Paul described these Saints as those "who were tortured...had trials of mockings and scourgings; yes and of chains and imprisonment" (Hebrews 11:36,37), because they made the decision to follow Christ with all their heart and soul. The Saints made their decisions to please God based on their fervent faith. Because of their faith in God, our Lord answered their prayers and miracles occurred.

Of great importance is the fact that even from the times of the Old Testament, faith was expressed by pleasing God through words, as well as through works. But, worship was always the basic starting point in terms of expressing one's faith. We heard St. Paul allude to the fact that the Saints of old wandered "in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth". This is a reference to the Old Testament Book of Second Maccabees. King Antiochus had conquered the Jews and commanded the Jews to forsake the teachings of God; he closed their temple of worship, forcing Judas Maccabeus to withdraw into the desert with his followers. They gathered in caves in order to keep the Lord's Day. However, they were eventually discovered and martyred for their faith.

This phenomenon of the faithful being tormented for worshipping God has been repeated in history again and again. When Greeks were being ruled by the Ottoman Turks, many of our compatriots became martyrs for Christ, because they were found worshipping Christ by participating in the Divine Liturgy. In our own life-time, we know of the martyrdoms of many Russian Orthodox faithful who were forced to worship Christ in secret, because the Communists closed down their churches. In contrast to the fervor of thousands of Orthodox Christians of past generations, we find ourselves taking for granted our opportunities to worship Christ our God and to glorify Him in our actions. I can remember times, before becoming a priest, when I had the notion that taking time to attend church services was taking away from "family time". Yet, worshipping Christ as a family is the most precious time we can spend with our families.

If we pay careful attention to the deeper meaning of our Lord's words of today's Gospel reading, He is not asking us to insult or dishonor our children or our parents and to abandon our family responsibilities. In essence, Christ is imploring us to be decisive in expressing our faith and to have faith that He will provide for us if we remain faithful to Him. He asks us to abandon our passions and our weaknesses. He asks us to abandon our pride. Christ, Who is both God and Man, asks us to abandon selfishness and sins and to follow Him immediately.

We are often deceived to wait for tomorrow, or "next time", in order to decide to follow Christ. This is a mistake. Who can say that tomorrow we will even have the opportunity to correct our mistakes of today? The Saints, whom we commemorate today, did not wait for "tomorrow" in order to give glory to God through the Church's teachings and their deeds. Let us take note of St. Paul's words to the Corinthians: "Now is the opportune time; now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). Let us not wait for tomorrow to perform our sacred duties for God and for others. "Tomorrow" often means "never". People become saints by making the fervent decision to follow Christ immediately and they make this decision based on

their faith in God. Let us pray that our Lord will strengthen our faith so that, through Him, we can accomplish every good thing.

+FR.

THEODORE

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### **F.O.S. QUESTION FOR THIS SUNDAY**

#### ***Question: What are "liturgical colors"?***

**Answer:** The Church uses colors to indicate the meaning of a particular Feast Day or Ecclesiastical season. For example, during Great Lent, altar coverings and vestments are purple (with the exception of Sundays, because even during Lent, Sunday is a festive day celebrating our Lord's Resurrection). Purple indicates a sense of personal ascetic effort and an attitude of spiritual contemplation. On Sundays, the vestments are bright -- usually gold, white. If it is the Feast Day of a martyred Saint, the color red is often used. Blue vestments are common during celebrations honoring the Theotokos, the Ever-Virgin Mary. White or red are the festive colors of Easter vestments and green is used during the Pentecostal celebration and days on which the power of the Holy Spirit is commemorated. While there are no strict church laws that govern when vestments of various colors are to be used, the use of altar coverings and vestments with various colors is done with decorum and usually with a view of indicating the kind of Feast Day or Liturgical season that is being observed by the Church.

+FR. THEODORE

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**FEAST:** ALL SAINTS SUNDAY; *Sts. Eusebius, bishop of Samosata, Zenon and Zena the Martyrs*

**HYMNS:** *(during and after the Entrance with the Holy Gospel)*

**Ex ipsoos katilthes...***(From on high You descended O Merciful Savior, You endured the grave for three days, that You might free us from sufferings. Glory to You, O Lord, our Life and Resurrection.)*[Sunday Resurrection Hymn]

**Ton en olo to kosmo...***(O Christ our God, Your Church, crimsoned with the blood of Your martyrs all over the world, as with a cloak of murex and porphiry, cries out to You: Send Your mercy upon Your people; grant peace to Your fold and extend Your great compassion upon our souls.)*[Hymn for All Saints Sunday]

**Os ton ehmaloton eleftherotis...***(Since you are a deliverer of captives and a defender of the poor, a physician for the sick, a noble attendant to kings, O Great among the Martyrs and Glorious George: intercede with Christ our God that He may save our souls.)*[Hymn for St. George]

**Os aparchas tis physeos...***(As first-fruits of our nature to the Planter of created things, the world presents the God-bearing martyred Saints in offering to You, O Lord. Through their earnest supplications, keep Your Church in deep peace and Divine tranquility, through the pure Theotokos, O You Who is greatly merciful.)*

**READINGS:** EPISTLE -- Hebrews 11:33-40, 12:1-2; page 1754 in the GOOD NEWS BIBLE

GOSPEL -- St. Matthew 10:32-33,37-38, 19:27-30; pages 1437 & 1453 in  
the GOOD NEWS BIBLE

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PRAY FOR THE SICK - Adele Gallade, Dimitra Rosier, Vasiliki  
Kourletas, Nicholas Kontaxis,  
Anastasia Pantels, Aspasia Petsas

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**ST. SOPHIA SUMMER CAMP**

**Session I - July 27-August 2, 2008**

**Session II - August 2 - August 9, 2008**

See details for camper and counselor applications, as well as the map to get to Camp Seeley online  
at:

<http://www.saintsophiacamp.org/home.shtml/>

(Forms are available in our parish hall)

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June 28th - SPECIAL PARISH LEADERSHIP SEMINAR

The members of our Parish Council are planning to attend the Southern California Parish  
Leadership Seminar at St. Paul's Greek Orthodox Church this **Saturday, June 28, 2008** from 9:00 a.m.  
- 4:00 p.m. It is an excellent opportunity for all of us to understand better the relationships between  
parishes and our Holy Archdiocese. Contact Fr. Ted for more information.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Following the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy today, everyone is invited to our parish hall for  
fellowship.

Monday, June 23rd.....Adult Greek Folk Dance Session - 10:30 a.m.

Tuesday, June 24th.....No Bible Study

Sunday, June 29th.....STS. PETER AND PAUL (regular Sunday Schedule)

Monday, June 30th.....HOLY APOSTLES  
Orthros - 8:00 a.m.  
Divine Liturgy - 9:00 a.m.