

*St. George Greek Orthodox Church
of the Desert*

74-109 Larrea St., Palm Desert, California 92261

THE LADDER, Sunday, November 25, 2007

WEARING OUR "TEAM COLORS"

The NFL is on -- morning, noon and night. Maybe equally entertaining are the fans who go to great lengths to wear their team's colors as if they are actual members of the team itself. Otherwise normal people paint their faces with their team's colors; paint their bodies with their team's colors, going shirtless in sub-zero weather; throw hours-long "tailgate" parties with their vans and trucks decorated with their team's colors. As one Green Bay Packers' fan once said, "The Packers are like your children. You don't love them because they're good. You love them because they're YOURS!" In an analysis of such a statement, one social psychologist in a 1998 article found in the publication, *Advanced Social Psychology*, noted that fans identify with the team as though they are an integral part of the team. When their team does well, they feel a sense of high self-esteem.

As Christians, our self-esteem is found in Christ's love and His victory over death. As members of His Church, we have "team colors", too. Our main colors are *red* and *white*. *White* is the color of our baptism in Christ, representing purity in soul and newness of life in Christ, Who is the Life and Resurrection of each of us. *White* also represents the Light of Christ, Who illumines each person born into the world. Wearing Christ means that we are illumined by Him and His Light covers ourselves and our actions. This is what St. Paul meant when he wrote to the Galatians, "Whoever has been baptized in Christ, has put on Christ." We heard these words in today's Epistle Reading. *White* is represents the purity of our souls when we repent of sins and follow our Lord in every decision that we make.

Red is the color of following Christ. In today's Gospel reading, we heard that our Lord told the rich man to give all his possessions to the poor and to follow Him. The message here is this: following our Lord and Savior is worth everything we have. Ironically, "everything we have" is really nothing at all, except for our decision to love God. Everything belongs to God - even our own flesh and bones. Anything we do have has been given to us by God. His gift to us is His Only-Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, through Whose sacrifice upon the Cross and His Resurrection from the dead, paved the way for us to have Eternal Life. This is why the Divine Liturgy is offered as a "Thanksgiving Service". As the Holy Spirit sanctifies the Gifts upon the Altar, changing them into the very Body and Blood of Christ, we sing: "We praise You; we bless You; we give thanks to You, O Lord our God." Indeed, praising, blessing and giving thanks to God involves much more than giving a simple donation to the Church or to some charity. Included in our "donations" are our time; our efforts; our attentiveness to what is good; our energy; our every breath of dedication for Christ and for the salvation of others. *Red* is the color of sacrifice, toil and giving. It is the color of the Blood, which Christ shed on the Cross for us; it is the color of the blood shed by martyrs to glorify His Name. It is the color that reminds us of St. Catherine, the Great Martyr, whose memory we commemorate today.

Red and *white*. Let us work to keep our minds and souls pure and renewed in Christ -- to wear the white garment of our baptism so that the whole world can know of our rich Orthodox Faith. Let us remember the sacrifice of our Lord and His Martyrs -- symbolized by the color *red* -- so that we can find salvation. Let us give of our love in prayer, worship and good deeds, as people identifying ourselves with Christ in every way. Even a Green Bay Packers' fan would have to love the players for their willingness to give "110%" of themselves to win their games. How could we dare to do less than "110%" for Christ, Who gave Himself in exchange for our salvation?

+FR. THEODORE

FEAST: St. Catherine, the Great Martyr; St. Mercurios, the Martyr
HYMNS: (during and following the Entrance with the Gospel)

Tou lithou sfrayisthentos...(The stone that had been secured with a seal by the Judeans, and a guard of soldiers was watching Your immaculate Body. You rose on the third day, O Lord and Savior, granting life unto the world.

And therefore the powers of heaven cried to You, O Giver of Life: Glory to Your Resurrection; Glory to Your Kingdom; Glory to Your dispensation, only One Who loves mankind.)
[Sunday Resurrection Hymn]

Simeron tis evdokias...(Today is the prelude of God's good pleasure and the proclamation of humanity's salvation.

In the temple of God, the Virgin is presented openly, and in Herself She announces Christ to all. Let us, then, with a great voice cry aloud to Her: Rejoice, You are the fulfillment of the Creator's dispensation.)[Hymn in honor of the Presentation of the Theotokos in the temple]

Tin panefimon nymfin... (Let us praise and extol the all-lauded bride of Christ, the Protectress of Sinai, divine Saint Catherine, as the one who gives aid and her assistance to us; for she brilliantly suppressed the impious orators, with the sword of the Spirit. And, being crowned as a martyr, she asks that all receive the Great Mercy.)[Hymn for St. Catherine]

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 the kings, O Great among the Martyrs and Glorious George: intercede with Christ our God that He may save our souls.)[Hymn for St. George]

O katharotatos Na-os tou Sotiros...(The most pure temple of the Savior, His most precious bridal chamber, the Virgin, sacred treasury of God's glory, enters today into the house of the Lord, bringing with Her the grace of the Divine Spirit. Wherefore, the angels of God are singing: "Behold the heavenly tabernacle!") [Kontakion Hymn for Sunday]

READINGS: EPISTLE -- Galatians 3:23-29, 4:1-5; page 1697 in the GOOD NEWS BIBLE
GOSPEL -- St. Luke 18:18-27; page 1541 in the GOOD NEWS BIBLE

PRAY FOR THE SICK: Jim Mazoras, Adele Gallade, Bill Ballas, Dimitra Rosier, Athanasios Vorris, Helen Batsakes, Fr. T.P. Theophilos, Tracy Shannon, Evelyn Karas.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY - Our Fall General Assembly will take place **next Sunday, December 2, 2007**, following the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. According to the Uniform Parish Regulations of our Archdiocese, one must be current in their Stewardship contributions for this year in order to participate as a member of the General Assembly. Now is the time to become current in Stewardship contributions for 2007. If anyone has any questions about their personal Stewardship status or about the Stewardship program in general, please contact Fr. Ted as soon as possible.

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS

The members of our Ladies Philoptochos Society are planning some very worthy and rewarding events, which will take place over the next two months:

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15th - PHILOPTOCHOS CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON at Springs Country Club in Rancho Mirage.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 16th and SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23rd - PHILOPTOCHOS CHRISTMAS BREAD SALE - after church services.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 6th - ANNUAL PHILOPTOCHOS VASILOPITA CELEBRATION

SATURDAY, JANUARY 19th - PHILOPTOCHOS FASHION SHOW at Rancho Las Palmas Spa and Resort in Rancho Mirage.

PLAN TO BE PHILANTHROPIC BY SUPPORTING OUR PHILOPTOCHOS!

Sunday School Christmas Program and Parish Elections - Mark Sunday, December 16th on your calendars. Following the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, everyone is invited to participate in the Election of Members of the Parish Council for 2008. Immediately following the distribution of ballots for voting and the collection of those ballots, the SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PROGRAM will take place. We ask everyone in our community to participate. Lunch will be served.

PETITION FOR CANDIDACY FORMS: As noted in our November Newsletter, today is the deadline for anyone who wishes to be a candidate for election to serve as a member of the Parish Council in 2008 to submit his or her PETITION FOR CANDIDACY TO THE PARISH COUNCIL FORM. The form must be submitted to the Nomination Committee (George Tcharos, chairman).

FOS QUESTION FOR THIS SUNDAY:

Why do we receive Holy Communion?

Answer: The answer to this question is given partially in today's sermon. However, a clear and "to-the-point" answer is given in the Communion Prayer of the Divine Liturgy itself. As we begin reading the first Communion Prayer, we can understand that the reasons for partaking in the Sacrament of Holy Communion are as follows:

1. We believe and confess (by virtue of our physical presence before the Holy Chalice) that Christ is the Son of the Living God.
2. We acknowledge the fact that He came into the world to save sinners, of whom, as we state in the Prayer, each of us believes that we are individually the greatest of sinners. Through these words, we admit openly that we have no business passing judgment on anyone else -- that we only judge ourselves. We also state, through this Prayer, that Christ is the only One Who forgives us and that we must unite ourselves to Him in order to reject sinful thoughts, words and actions and live a life of Christ's virtues so as to dwell with Him forever in His Kingdom.
3. We state that we know that the Holy Gifts of Bread and Wine are truly the Body and Blood of Christ. We base our statement in this Prayer on the fact that the Holy Spirit has changed them in response to our **collective** prayer and worship in the form of the Divine Liturgy. (Remember: our Lord said that when two or three are gathered in His Name, He is present also.)
4. We state in our Communion Prayer that we receive Holy Communion for the forgiveness of sins and for Life Everlasting.

We remember that forgiveness of our sins is tied to our forgiveness of the sins of those who have done wrong unto us.

AHEPA CHRISTMAS PARTY -

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2007 @ the Rock Garden in Palm Springs: 6:30 p.m. -- \$17 for members/\$20 for non-members. Make your reservations by contacting Harry Loukatos at 275-5196.

CHRISTMAS CARD and POINSETTIAS: Today is the deadline to return the form to participate in our Community Christmas Card program. Forms are available in our church narthex and parish hall. Wednesday, December 5th is the deadline to submit the form to order Christmas poinsettias in commemoration of loved ones who have fallen asleep in the Lord. A contribution of \$20 is asked in order to participate in each of these Christmas celebration activities.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: After church services today, everyone is invited to our parish hall for refreshments, offered today by members of our Ladies' Philoptochos Chapter. Please support our Philoptochos by offering a donation for today's "coffee hour".

Monday, November 26th..... Adult Greek Folk Dance Session - 10:30 a.m.- 12:00 noon
Cub Scouts -6:30 p.m.
Tuesday, November 27th..... Bible Study - 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, November 28th.. Greek School - 5:00 p.m.
Thursday, November 29th..... Evening Divine Liturgy -- ST. ANDREW THE APOSTLE
Orthros -5:30 p.m.
Divine Liturgy - 6:30 p.m
