



SAINT GEORGE
Melkite Greek-Catholic Church
of Sacramento

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24 ~ GREAT FEAST OF THE NATIVITY

CHURCH SCHEDULE

Saturday - 5:30 pm Vespers
Sunday - 9:30 am Orthros (Morning Prayer)
Sunday - 10:30 am Divine Liturgy
Feast Days - please consult website schedule
* Confession available before all services.

CLERGY

Pastor: Rev. Hezekias Carnazzo
Assisting Clergy: Hieromonk Brendan,
Deacon Dorotheos, Reader Fredrick,
Seminarist Steven

CHURCH GROUPS

Pastoral Council

Contact: Steve Rosenzweig (knoinfo@aol.com)

Finance Council

Contact: Sonia Zumout (sohzu@comcast.net)

Property Council

Contact: Austin Roundtree (roundtreecottage@me.com)

Events Committee

Contact: Maher Dabbagh (mike_dabbagh@yahoo.com)

Coffee Social

Contact: Rania Sweidan (Randas001@yahoo.com)

Ladies Guild

Contact: Ghada Salhani (ghadafares62@hotmail.com)

Samaritan Society (Charity)

Contact: Laura Struck (lmstruck@aol.com)

Education & Evangelization Committee

Contact: Raymond Vincent (rvincent.hop@gmail.com)

Icon & Book Corner

Contact: Charles Tieszen (tieszen@gmail.com)

Sunday School

Contact: Mary Struck (marylstruck@hotmail.com)

Carlos Overstreet (carlosoverstreet@gmail.com)

Flower Committee

Contact: Mary Struck (marylstruck@hotmail.com)

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

Health & Salvation: Cecile & Michael Monier, Joseph Monier, Odette Abcarius, Samia Zumout, Rosalie Kost, Andrews Ramzi, Andre, Yvette, Vivian, Maria and Tanya Monier, Patrick, William and Gabriel Phillips, Conor Haag, Jessica Lee (Qurban), the Priest August Deasio, Jeanette Dahdouh (Wine), Hanna and Asma Hishmeh, Paul and Silvia Bryan, The Priest Franklin, Julianne Awwad Nicholas Abumahor, Kevin & Ghita Dipsia.

Memory Eternal: Max & Jeanette Rose, Ibrahim and Lulu Snobar, Fawaz Ammari, Mary and Saverio Parisi, Vita and Vincent Virga, Virginia Lagomarsino, George Procida, The Priest Youhanna, Deacon Thomas Burke, The Priest Patrick, Sheila Fina, John and Sebastian Camazzo

Place this list in your prayer corner each week and remember those in need of prayer.

STONE 4 RESURRECTIONAL TROPARION

The women disciples of the Lord, * having learned from the angel the joyful announcement of the resurrection, * and having rejected the ancestral sentence, * proudly told the apostles: * "Death is despoiled. Christ God is risen, * bestowing to the world great mercy."

لِنَنْشِئُ نَحْنُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ، وَنَسْجُدُ لِلْكَلِمَةِ، الْأَزَلِيِّ مَعَ الْآبِ وَالرُّوحِ، الْمَوْلُودِ مِنَ الْعِذْرَاءِ لَخَلَاصِنَا. لِأَنَّهَ ارْتَضَى أَنْ يَصْعَدَ بِالْجَسَدِ عَلَى الصَّلِيبِ، وَيَحْتَمِلَ الْمَوْتَ، وَيَنْهَضَ الْمَوْتَى بِقِيَامَتِهِ الْمَجِيدَةِ.

Scriptures - Epistle: Ephesians 6: 10 - 17 | Gospel: Luke 13: 10 - 17

Please Remember! Divine Liturgy for **Christmas** is on Sunday, December 24 @ 9:00 pm. There will be no service during the daylight hours of the feast. Make your family plans now so that you can come to Church for Christmas services and enjoy Christmas day with friends and family.

Please bring a NON-FASTING dish to share for our Christmas Agape following Divine Liturgy at 9:00 pm on Dec 24.

Saint George Ladies Guild Christmas Party & White Elephant Gift Exchange



Thursday December 28 @ 6:00 P.M.

Location: St George Church Hall

Please bring a dish to share and a gift for the gift exchange (approximate gift value:\$20)

RSVP to Ghada Salhani 916-204-9730



Mark your calendar! The Great Feast of Theophany (Baptism of the Lord) is coming! Vespertal Divine Liturgy on **Friday, January 5 @ 6:30 pm**. Festal parish dinner with awamat following Liturgy. Please bring the children for this special night at the church!

I'll Be Small for Christmas by Fr. Stephan Freeman

Children today are raised with dreams of greatness. Cultural affirmations of our limitless potential, well-intentioned, have not produced a generation of over-achievers, but have indeed brought forth hordes of great dreams. This is nothing new in American culture. We are the world's longest sustained pep-talk. Ronald Reagan loved to quote the 1945 Johnny Mercer hit:

"You've got to accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative and latch on to the affirmative."

Continue reading on the back of the bulletin . . .

. . . *Continued from front of bulletin*

We sing the songs of progress in the gospel of an ever-improving world. Today, this is the purpose that motivates almost every undertaking, both public and private. However, the cult of progress is the repudiation of grace.

Of course, the world of progress and pep-talks seems quite innocent, and may even be credited with inspiring innovation and effort. At its heart, it is rooted in the Christian faith, though in a heretical iteration that came about in the 18th and 19th centuries. It was timed with the great American drive to the West. Together, they created what is today the largest engine of modern culture and the most dominant civilization in the history of the world.

“Progress,” as a word with its present meaning, only goes back to the 19th century. It describes a sort of eschatology, the Christian doctrine of the end of all things. Traditionally, Christianity has espoused that at the end of time, Christ will return and reveal the fullness of the Kingdom of God. Mystically, the Church also affirmed that this Kingdom-which-is-to-come is somehow already present in the sacramental life of the Church. The 19th century notion, however, was that the Kingdom was something given to humanity to build. Guided by the blueprint of justice described in the Scriptures, it was for us to bring forth the Kingdom in this world as we eliminated poverty and injustice. Beyond all theory, the American Christians of the 19th century not only embraced this new idea, they believed they could already see it happening. “From sea to shining sea,” God’s grace was increasingly manifest in the unfolding destiny of the American century.

This initially Christian belief has long since shed its outward religious trappings and assumed the shape of modern secularism. However, we should not underestimate the religious nature of modernity. No religion has ever felt more certain of its correctness nor its applicability for all people everywhere and at all times than the adherents and practitioners of modern progress. Indeed, that progress assumes that all religions everywhere should quietly agree to find their place in the roll call of those who place their shoulder to the wheel in the building of a better world. Within the rules of secular progress, there is room for all.

The adherents of modernity not only feel certain of the correctness of their worldview; they believe that it should be utterly obvious to any reasonable person. Resistance is reactionary, the product of ignorance or evil intent. But from within classical Christianity, this is pure heresy, and perhaps the most dangerous threat that humanity has ever faced.

No one can argue with doing good things and helping people (and I certainly won’t try). But placing the good we do (or attempt to do) into the context of progress or making the world a “better place” is a serious distortion, one that is actually a distraction from our lives.

There are habits of the heart worth pondering in this context. The train of thought geared towards progress and the greatness of our achievements is rooted in discursive reasoning’s efforts to judge, weigh, measure and compare. It becomes a habit that blinds us to many things. Of note, the faculty that judges, weighs, measures and compares is not the same faculty that sees beauty. It is the faculty of utility, made for tools.

This faculty of the heart that sees beauty is also the faculty that sees the small things and the things that “do not signify.” It is not a practical place nor given to usefulness. The Fathers describe it as the *nous*, and often simply call it the heart. It is that place through which we have communion with God. It is, interestingly, also the place that recognizes Him in the “least of these my brethren.” It is that place which sees personhood in its proper form, in its utter uniqueness and never as “one of many.”

It is worth considering that our real day is almost completely populated with “small things.” Very few of us act on a global stage, or even a stage much greater than a handful of people and things. Our interactions are often repeated many times over, breeding a sort of familiarity that can numb our attention. We are enculturated into the world of “important” things. We read about important things of the past (and call it history); we are exposed to “important” things throughout the day (and call it news). We learn to have very strong opinions about things of which we know little and about people we have never met.

We have imbibed an ethic of the *important* – a form of valuing sentiment above all else. We are frequently told in various and sundry ways that if we *care* about certain things, if we like certain people and dislike others, if we understand certain facts – we are good persons. And we are *good* because we are part of the greater force that is making the world a better place. All of this is largely make-believe, a by-product of the false religion of modernity. For many people, it has even become the content of their Christianity.

The commandments of Christ always point towards the particular and the small. It is not that the aggregate, the “larger picture,” has no standing, but that we do not live in the “larger picture.” That picture is the product of modern practices of surveys, measurements, forecasts and statistics. The assumptions behind that practice are not those of the Christian faith. They offer (or pretend to offer) a “God’s eye-view” of the world and suggest that we can manage the world towards a desired end. It is little wonder that the contemporary world is increasingly “watched.” At present, nearly 1,100 active satellites are monitoring the earth (floating in a sea of over 500,000 bits of man-made debris). CCTV has become increasingly ubiquitous in major cities of the world. Pretty much every action made on your computer is noted and logged. All of this is a drive towards Man/Godhood.

The drive of God Himself, however, is towards the small and the particular, the “insignificant” and the forgotten. In the incarnate work of Christ, God enters our world in weakness and in a constant action of self-emptying. He identifies people by name and engages them as persons. Obviously, Christ could have raised a finger and healed every ailment in Israel in a single moment. He doesn’t. That fact alone should give us pause – for it is the very thing that we would consider “important” (it is also the sort of thing that constituted the Three Temptations in the Wilderness). Everyone would be healed, but no one would be saved. Those healed would only become sick and die later. This is also the reason that we cannot speak in universal terms about salvation. For though Christ has acted on behalf of all and for all, that action can only be manifested and realized in unique and particular ways by each.

This Divine “drive” is also the proper direction for our own lives. Our proper attention is towards the small, the immediate, the particular, and the present. Saying this creates an anxiety for many, a fear that not paying attention to the greater and the “important” will somehow make things worse. We can be sure that our attention does not make things better in the aggregate, while, most assuredly ignoring the particular things at hand is a true failure. Our spiritual life depends on the concrete and the particular – it is there that the heart is engaged and encounters God. In the “greater” matters, our sentiments are engaged rather than our hearts. You cannot love “world peace,” or “social justice.” These are vagaries that allow us to ignore peace with those around us and justice to those at hand. God does not want “noble” souls – He wants *real* souls, doing *real* things, loving *real* people, dying *real* deaths.

Follow the path of Christ and become small for Christmas.

Fr. Thomas Hopko, in one of his 55 maxims, said: “Be an ordinary person, one of the human race.” Indeed.