



## St George the Great Martyr Orthodox Church

Weekly Bulletin – Sunday, November 13, 2016

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### UPCOMING SERVICES

**November 21 – Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple.** This feast commemorates Mary being brought by her parents to the Jerusalem Temple, where she was raised until her betrothal to Joseph. We will celebrate this event in our salvation history with Great Vespers on Sunday evening, November 20<sup>th</sup>, and Divine Liturgy on Monday morning, November 21<sup>st</sup>.

### Nativity Fast

The Nativity Fast begins this Tuesday, November 15<sup>th</sup>. This is one of the four major fasting periods of the Church year (the others are Great Lent, Apostle's Fast, and Dormition Fast). The Church offers us this time to repent, to pray, to fast, and to give alms so that we might prepare ourselves for the Nativity of our Lord, which we celebrate on December 25<sup>th</sup>.

All members of the parish should make a confession sometime during this Lenten period. Also, each of us must make an effort to fast. The Church prescribes a fast which is similar to Great Lent: No meat, fish, dairy products, wine (alcohol) or oil. Due to our health or our current spiritual condition, some of us may have concerns about how strictly we

can keep the fast. Fasting is an important tool and a gift given to us by God to help us grow in faith and life. It must not be taken lightly, but it must also not become a mere rule, a diet, or a heavy burden. Please be sure to talk to Father about any concerns you might have about this, so that each of us can do something appropriate to our specific situation.

### **Pledge Cards**

This is the time of year for each of us to prayerfully, thoughtfully and intentionally consider the gifts that God has placed in our care and to plan how we can offer it back to Him for his blessing and glory. **Please be sure to take a pledge card and return it no later than December 4<sup>th</sup>.**

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Nowadays, not many of us are farming or raising livestock for a living. We work at our jobs and we make a wage. Or perhaps we are retired and we are now living on our pensions and investments. What does it mean for us to offer our “first fruits?” Why is that even important?

Here is one way we might determine what our pledge is going to be: We could start by listing all of the things we pay for such as our mortgage or rent and our utility bills. We could list our car payments, what we intend to spend on vacations, on clothes and such. Then, once we’ve listed all the things that are important for living the life we want, we determine how much we have “left over.” And it is out of this left over, that we give back something to God.

There is a fundamental assumption at work here. We are assuming that the wealth we have is ours. It belongs to us. So we feel perfectly entitled to first use it to ensure we are living the life we want and then decide how much we can “afford” to give to God.

But is this really how things are? Scripture tells us that “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein” (Ps 24.1). We say this at the end of every Orthodox funeral when we are committing someone to the grave until the Second Coming of the Lord. It is very easy to see at a funeral that everything belongs to God and, as the saying goes, “we can’t take it with us.” But somehow in the day-to-day struggle of our lives, all of us tend to forget that. And more times than we care to admit it, we operate under the delusion that material things belong to us and that we can use and consume them however we want for our own benefit.

But there is another way to determine our pledge: We could begin by listing all the blessings God has given us. In our modern world, that usually means calculating how much income we have. Realizing that this wealth is not ours, we reserve 10% of it for God. We do this *first*. Then, and only then, we ask ourselves, how can we lead a good life with the rest. Whenever we determine that we don't have enough to do something we want – and this will happen a lot – we must ask ourselves: is this something that I need, or something that I want? Is it going to help me lead a life that is moving towards God or away from Him? Sometimes it may truly be a necessity, and we might have to reduce the percentage of our pledge. But going through our lives and making choices like these helps us to always remember that *we are using God's wealth* not our own, and we must be ready to give an accounting for it.

Changing the way we determine our pledge requires us to have a change of heart, a change of mind. It requires *repentance* and this is exactly why we should consider this process a gift. Perhaps this year we are not able to give 10% of our income. That is OK. God meets us where we are, and we pray that next year we can learn to trust God more. But thinking about what we have, what we need, and what belongs to God and changing how we live intentionally to grow closer to Him is a very real way to put the Gospel into practice.

**Trip to Saint Barbara's Monastery** – We have successfully signed up a van-load of catechumens and parishioners for our trip to Santa Paula where we will celebrate the Monastery of Saint Barbara's Altar feast with Archbishop BENJAMIN and other pilgrims from around the Diocese on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. The total cost is for the van is \$400, and we are still accepting donations from anyone who is so inclined. We will be leaving from the Church parking lot at 6am on Saturday December 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Choir Practice** –We are continuing to practice this Saturday at 430 pm. All are welcome. Even if you do not wish to sing with the choir, consider coming to a practice or two. Everyone in our Church is invited to sing during the divine services. Attending a few practices to learn the music will help all of us to sing joyfully and more beautifully.

**Adult Education Classes** – We are learning about Living our Lives as Orthodox Christians. All are welcome to attend. Classes are on Saturday evenings from 5 to 6 immediately followed by Great Vespers.

**Memorials** – There will be a general memorial service for all departed members of our parish after Liturgy on Nov 27<sup>th</sup>. Please give Dn George the names of anyone you would like to especially remember on that day.

**Office Hours** – Father will be at the Church for office hours on Wednesdays from 11 am to 5:30 pm. Feel free to stop by for a chat or to come to confession. While Wednesday is Father’s “official” office day, please don’t hesitate to call between 9am and 6pm on other days if there is something you need to discuss. Of course, in an emergency, you may call any time.

**Akathist on Wednesdays** – Before Father heads home on Wednesdays, he will offer an Akathist at 5:30pm. This is a short service where we pray and sing to one of the Saints of our Church. If you’re in the area, it is a lovely opportunity to stop by and say a prayer together in the evening and to learn a little about the many saints whose icons we have on the walls of our temple.

**Parish Council Meeting** – The parish council will meet for their monthly meeting today after Divine Liturgy today.

## Calendar of Events – November 13 – 20

<b>Sun 11/13</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 9:40am – Hours and Divine Liturgy</li><li>• Memorial for Sylvia Mitchell</li><li>• Parish Council Meeting</li></ul>
<b>Mon 11/14</b>	
<b>Tue 11/15</b>	
<b>Wed 11/16</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 11am-5:30pm – Office Hours</li><li>• 5:30pm Akathist</li></ul>
<b>Thu 11/17</b>	
<b>Fri 11/18</b>	
<b>Sat 11/19</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 4:30pm Choir practice</li><li>• 5:00pm Adult Education</li><li>• 6:00pm Great Vespers and Confessions</li></ul>
<b>Sun 11/20</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 9:40am – Hours and Divine Liturgy</li><li>• 6:00pm Great Vespers with Litya</li></ul>

### Save the Dates:

**December 3, 2016 at 6am** – Trip to Saint Barbara’s Monastery

**December 4, 2016** – Return Pledge Cards

**December 18, 2016 at 8:30am** – Baptisms/Chrismations