

# St. John Of Damascus Orthodox Church Newsletter

July 2020



## Welcome!

...to all who desire to gather to follow Jesus Christ and manifest the Kingdom of God in the Liturgy (common work) of His Church! Whether it is your first time with us or you are a long-term member, we are grateful to God for your presence and look forward to growing in Christ together!



## A Word from the Saints

Thoughts are like airplanes flying in the air. If you ignore them, there is no problem. If you pay attention to them, you create an airport inside your head and permit them to land!

Do not believe your thoughts, neither when they tell you that you are terrible, nor when they tell you that you are a saint.

The goal is to rise spiritually not simply to avoid sin

So in every test, let us say: "Thank you, my God, because this was needed for my salvation."

St Paisios of Mount Athos

## Our Life in Christ...

## ...Continues!

Dear Faithful Members & Friends of St. John of Damascus Church,  
Christ is in our midst! He is and ever shall be!

These past months have certainly been filled with uncertainty. Clearly, each day one does not know what to expect when we rise from our beds. We are not the first generation to live in these kinds of times. Since the first days after the Resurrection there have been continual accounts when Orthodox Christians, no matter where in the world they were, had to wrestle with living in a world (both the current society and even nature itself) that seemed to offer a whole lot of suffering and anxiety. Nearly every century has experienced disease, persecution, and even indifference to what is true - what is real, good and healthy - what is of life versus what leads to death.

Nevertheless, as Christians we vehemently hold to the truth that, while broken, this world has received Salvation - has been saved - because of the love of the One Who created it. It received the One who made it. It received Him in the person of Jesus Christ, Who united Himself to us as a human being (when He did not have to) and became one with all creation by taking on the elements in flesh, bone & blood. We have the Faith given to us by God, Himself, and know that through Him we can receive the strength, the perspective, the hope to live each day that is given to us. We can experience and reflect the unending life, joy, peace, and most importantly love of the God Who revealed Himself to us.

As days progress there will continue to be distressing times, but there is also always the knowledge we have that these times will end. There will also be many opportunities to see blessings and experience goodness. We know that when Christ comes again there will be no more sighing, sickness, pain, or sorrow but life everlasting.

I pray that we, as the Body of Christ here in North County San Diego, will support each other and work together to remember these things. Let us deepen our knowledge & understanding that Christ came that we may have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10) and that this life is available to us now.

By God's grace we, as a community, are again able to come and worship Him together. We are able to receive Him into our in-most selves through the sacraments. We can enter into a spiritual manner of living both thinking and doing such things that are well-pleasing to God.

With love in Christ, Fr. Michael  
**St. John of Damascus Orthodox Church**  
Newsletter July, 2020



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# Many Years!

## Birthdays

1st	Bob Stone
2nd	Cyndi Zmina Ruben Castañeda Alan Michaud
4th	Dale Franchak
7th	Alla K. Cline
11th	Tessa Sophia Stavrou Iryna Thayer
15th	Daniel Federoff
18th	Laurie Eivet
21st	Katrina Griebing
23rd	Konstantin Worth Landon Henry
25th	Joanne Spanovich
26th	Sergio Perez
27th	Nathan Cooper Jacob Lorelli
28th	John Henry Keeling
30th	Olga Bishaev

## Wedding Anniversaries

10	Emily & Anthony Lorelli
11	Gene & Judy Francello
12	Bob & Irene Stone
15	Dn George & Carole Shumaik
21	Jim & Patty Pelachik
22	Masha & Jason Jones
25	Edward & Vera Klavzar

## Name Days

31	Archbishop Benjamin
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*E-mail or call Fr. Michael with the date of your name day celebration, whether revised-Julian or old-style.*

## Memory Eternal!

### Anniversary of Repose

23rd	Fr Michael Prokurat
25th	Honey (Sarah) Liolin
26th	Renate Taurianen
28th	Fr John Psinka

### Scrip Is Still Available!

Your Daily Purchases  
Can Support the Church

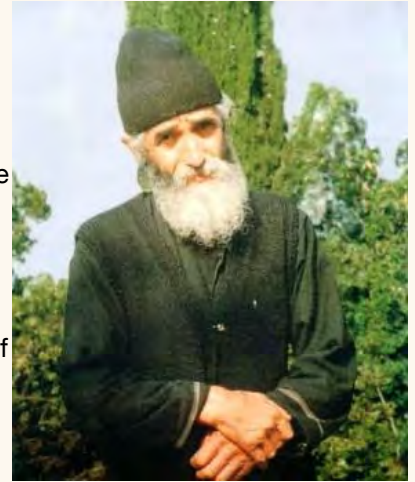
Grocery Stores, Gas Stations,  
Restaurants, Amazon  
see [www.shopwithscrip.com](http://www.shopwithscrip.com) for  
others

Contact Beth Brown at:  
(619) 823-2384  
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## St. Paisios of Mount Athos (Kontakion)

Thou, O Father, didst say with words enlightened by the Holy Spirit that many saints would have desired to live in our times, in order to strive for salvation. For Thou didst herald to us, who live in darkness, that the time is almost ready and that those that now struggle valiantly to win their salvation will receive a martyr's reward. For this we thank God, Who with mercy looked on His people, sending His Saint for our enlightenment, and thus with voices of joy we gladly sing to our All-Gracious Master the song: Alleluia

On July 25, 1924, the future Elder Paisios (Eznepidis) was born to pious parents in the town of Farasa, Cappadocia of Asia Minor. The family's spiritual father, the priest-monk Arsenios (the now canonized St. Arsenios of Cappadocia), baptized the babe with his own name, prophesying his future profession as a monk. A week after the baptism (and barely a month after his birth) Arsenios was driven, along with his family, out of Asia Minor by the Turks. St. Arsenios guided his flock along their four-hundred-mile trek to Greece. After a number of stops along the way, Arsenios' family finally ended up in the town of Konitsain Epiros (north-western Greece). St. Arsenios had reposed, as he had prophesied, forty days after their establishment in Greece, and he left as his spiritual heir the infant Arsenios.



The young Arsenios was wholly given over to God and spent his free time in the silence of nature, where he would pray for hours on end. Having completed his elementary education, he learned the trade of carpentry. He worked as a carpenter until his mandatory military service. He served in the army during the dangerous days of the end of World War II. Arsenios was brave and self-sacrificing, always desiring to put his own life at risk so as to spare his brother. He was particularly concerned about his fellow soldiers who had left wives and children to serve.

Having completed his obligation to his country, Arsenios received his discharge in 1949 and greatly desired to begin his monastic life on the Holy Mountain. Before being able to settle there, however, he had to fulfil his responsibility to his family, to look after his sisters, who were as yet unmarried. Having provided for his sisters' future, he was free to begin his monastic vocation with a clean conscience. In 1950 he arrived on Mount Athos, where he learned his first lessons in the monastic way from the virtuous ascetic Fr. Kyril (the future abbot of Koutloumousiou Monastery); but he was unable to stay at his side as he had hoped, and so was sent to the Monastery of Esphigmenou. He was a novice there for four years, after which he was tonsured a monk in 1954 with the name Averkios. He was a conscientious monk, finding ways to both complete his obedience (which required contact with others) and to preserve his silence, so as to progress in the art of prayer. He was always selfless in helping his brethren, unwilling to rest while others worked (though he may have already completed his own obedience), as he loved his brothers greatly and without distinction. In addition to his ascetic struggles and the common life in the monastery, he was spiritually enriched through the reading of soul-profitable books. In particular, he read the Lives of the Saints, the Gerontikon, and especially the Ascetical Homilies of St. Isaac the Syrian.

Soon after his tonsure, Monk Averkios left Esphigmenou and joined the brotherhood of Philotheou Monastery. He put himself under obedience to the virtuous Elder Symeon, who gave him the Small Schema in 1956, with the new name Paisios. Fr. Paisios dwelt deeply on the thought that his own spiritual failures and lack of love were the cause of his neighbour's shortcomings, as well as of the world's ills. He harshly accused himself, pushing himself to greater self-denial and more fervent

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St. John of Damascus Orthodox Church

# Coming to Church

## Before You Arrive

Remember we need to know you are coming. Make sure you have contacted Dn George of your intent to attend EACH service before you arrive.

Depending on your preference and how many want to attend you can indicate whether you desire to attend in the **church temple** or in the **church hall**.

You may also indicate that you will be praying the typika service or participating through live-streaming at home and coming to receive Communion after the Divine Liturgy

A large element of us being able to gather is maintaining the appropriate social distancing. This means we have limited space.

## On the Day of the Service

If you are feeling at all unwell on the day of the service, please stay home and take care of yourself. If you need to, contact your healthcare provider so he or she can give you guidance. Please also call Fr. Michael and let him know so he can include you in the church's prayers.

## Arriving at Church

Arrive and wait for the Greeters to greet and assist you. Please be patient. As you wait, find a shady spot. Standing in the sun can alter the reading of your temperature. If your temperature is over 100.4 you will need to go home and get care.

If you are **not** on the attendee list, you may not enter the church until those on the list have arrived. You will be asked to step to the side while others arrive. **Later**, If there is room, the greeters will help you enter the temple.

**At all times we all must maintain social distancing standards**

## Face Coverings

Remember all persons ages 8+ must wear face coverings during the service with the exception of serving clergy and assigned choir singers who are to remove theirs as they serve. Children ages 2 and under are NOT to wear face coverings.

Parents, be prepared to keep your children close to you during the service.

<sup>12</sup> As God's elect, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, humility, and perseverance. <sup>13</sup> Bear with one another, and forgive each other! If anyone has a complaint against anyone else, forgive, even as Christ forgave you.

<sup>14</sup> Above all, walk in love, which is the bond of perfection. <sup>15</sup> Let the peace of God (to which also you were called in one body) rule in your hearts, and be thankful!

(Col 3:12-15)

Cleenerwerck, L. (Ed.). (2011). The Eastern/Greek Orthodox Bible: New Testament. Laurent A. Cleenerwerck.

## Weekend Services Live-stream

People can electronically attend the weekend services at St John via live-stream.

You can find the live-stream here...

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCuzmdJHmKyTMAx3ugocW\\_1w/featured](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCuzmdJHmKyTMAx3ugocW_1w/featured)

## The Blessing of Tears

At the time of this reflection, the world is in the grip of turmoil wrought by a pandemic of infectious disease coupled with civil unrest over injustices that have roots imbedded deeply in our cultural heritage. A dispassionate examination of history would suggest there is nothing new to report here. Plagues have been chronicled as part of human existence for millennia and enmity between brothers is starkly illustrated in the biblical story of Cain and Abel. It is a time of sadness, it is a time of mourning, it is a time for tears.

Scripture is replete with references to weeping. A simple computer word search of the New King James Bible finds nearly 100 occurrences of "weeping" and its conjugates. If you add "crying" to the mix, the list explodes to several hundred. These passages are associated with the most intense emotions - sadness, grief, mourning, anguish, abandonment. The Orthodox Church has never shied away from visiting these unsettling writings. In the weeks preceding the Great Lenten Fast, we hymn Psalm 137 - "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion". The Church teaches that we too are living in a type of exile - in the world but not of the world is the familiar refrain. Unlike the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, our exile does not come at the hands of others but is a product of our own disobedience by submitting to the passions that have turned God's "very good" creation into corruption. The image we are given on Forgiveness Sunday is Adam and Eve weeping as they are cast out of Paradise. We then pray - "Turn not away Thy face from Thy child for I am afflicted! Hear me speedily! Draw near unto my soul and deliver it!" and "In my distress I cry to the Lord, Lord hear my voice". It is critically important to remember that the Church never abides in darkness but always lives within the Light of the crucified, resurrected and glorified Jesus Christ. Possessing every human characteristic except for sin, Jesus the man and God shares and endures all of the physical and emotional suffering that we do in this mortal life. Moreover, He does this voluntarily - to heal, to restore, to wash away our sins not only by His blood but by His tears. The Gospels bear witness to the fact that Jesus wept. He wept over the city of Jerusalem which by extension represents the entire fallen world. He also wept at the tomb of a single human being, His friend Lazarus.

The shedding of tears is common throughout the animal kingdom. Remarkably, we are the only creatures who weep precipitated by emotional triggers. Even the staunchest evolutionary scientists are nonplused when attempting to explain the origin or advantage for this strictly human trait. Water makes up 60 percent of our bodies and tears are merely saltwater akin to the oceans

of the earth, the biologic fountain of life. In the Christian worldview, water literally permeates the scriptures from Creation to the Jordan to the living water at Jacob's well and from the side of Christ at His crucifixion. Water is the classic solvent for cleansing in both a physical and spiritual sense. For Orthodox Christians life in Christ starts at the Baptismal font but does not end there. Hear the words of the Saints:

"The tears that come after Baptism are greater than Baptism itself, though it may be rash to say so. Baptism washes off those evils that were previously within us, whereas the sins committed after Baptism are washed away by tears. The Baptism received by us as children we have all defiled, but we cleanse it anew with our tears. (St. John Climacus)

"The first Baptism has the water which foreshadows the tears, and it has the myron [sweet oil] of the anointing which signifies beforehand the intelligible myron of the Spirit. The second Baptism, however, is no longer a type of the Truth, but is the Truth itself. (St. Symeon, the New Theologian)

At this time of upheaval, everyone is searching for an explanation for why we are suffering from the plagues of disease and human discord. Some contend that this storm is being wrought by the wrath of an angry God. Within the Orthodox Church we are cautioned not to speculate on the mind of God beyond that which He revealed to us through His Son. Even if we are being chastised, God the Father's motivation can only arise from His boundless love for us, the breadth and depth of which is beyond our comprehension. If disobedience is the wedge that separates us from the love of God there is ample evidence that is of our doing and, if He is angry "His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning. (Psalm 30:5).

**Amen.**



By Deacon George Shumaik

## St. Paisios of Mount Athos (continued)

prayer for his soul and for the whole world. Furthermore, he cultivated the habit of always seeking the “good reason” for a potentially scandalous event and for people’s actions, and in this way, he preserved himself from judging others.

In 1958 Elder Paisios was asked to spend some time in and around his home village of Konitsa so as to support the faithful against the proselytism of Protestant groups. He greatly encouraged the faithful there, helping many people. Afterwards, in 1962, he left to visit Sinai where he stayed for two years. During this time he became beloved of the Bedouins, who benefitted both spiritually as well as materially from his presence. The Elder used the money he received from the sale of his carved wooden handicrafts to buy them food.

On his return to Mount Athos in 1964, Elder Paisios took up residence at the Skete of Iviron before moving to Katounakia at the southernmost tip of Mount Athos for a short stay in the desert there. The Elder’s failing health may have been part of the reason for his departure from the desert. In 1966, he was operated on and had part of his lungs removed. It was during this time of hospitalization that his long friendship with the then young sisterhood of St. John the Theologian in Souroti, outside of Thessaloniki, began.

In 1968 he spent time at the Monastery of Stavronikita helping with its spiritual as well as material renovation. While there he had the blessing of being in contact with the ascetic Elder Tychon who lived in the hermitage of the Holy Cross, near Stavronikita. Elder Paisios stayed by his side until his repose, serving him selflessly as his disciple. It was during this time that Elder Tychon clothed Fr. Paisios in the Great Schema. According to the wishes of the Elder, Fr. Paisios remained in his hermitage after his repose. He stayed there until 1979, when he moved on to his final home on the Holy Mountain, the hermitage Panagouda, which belongs to the Monastery of Koutloumousiou.

It was here at Panagouda that Elder Paisios’ fame as a God-bearing elder grew, drawing to him the sick and suffering people of God. He received them all day long, dedicating the night to God in prayer, vigil and spiritual struggle. His regime of prayer and asceticism with which he served God and his fellow man, his strictness with himself, and his sensitive nature made him increasingly prone to sickness. When he was forced to leave the Holy Mountain for various reasons (often due to illness), he would receive pilgrims for hours on end at the women’s monastery at Souroti, and the physical effort which this entailed in his weakened state caused him such pain that he would turn pale. He bore his suffering with much grace. He would say that God is greatly touched when someone who is in great suffering does not complain, but rather uses his energy to pray for others.

In addition to his other illness he suffered from haemorrhaging which left him very weak. In his final weeks before leaving the Holy Mountain, he would often fall unconscious. On October 5, 1993 the Elder left his beloved Holy Mountain for the last time. Though he had planned on being off the mountain for just a few days, while in Thessaloniki he was diagnosed with cancer that needed immediate treatment. After the operation he spent some time recovering in the hospital and was then transferred to the monastery at Souroti. Despite his critical state he received people, listening to their sorrow and counselling them.

On July 11, 1994, he received Holy Communion for the last time. The next day, Elder Paisios gave his soul into God’s keeping. He was buried at the Monastery of St. John the Theologian in Souroti. The monastery at Souroti has undertaken organizing the Elder’s writings into volumes benefitting faithful Christians around the world.

Venerable Elder Paisios was glorified on 13 January 2015 by the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and the church commemorates his feast day on June 29 [Old-Style] / **July 12 [New Style]**.



## Parish Contact Information

### Church & Church Offices

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### Rector/Pastor

Fr. Michael Anderson

Cell Phone: 858-717-2172

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We are a parish of the Orthodox Church in America, committed to be the Body of Christ in North County San Diego, to witness to the Kingdom of God, and to be faithful to the life in the Holy Spirit as lived in the Holy Orthodox Church since the time of the Apostles.