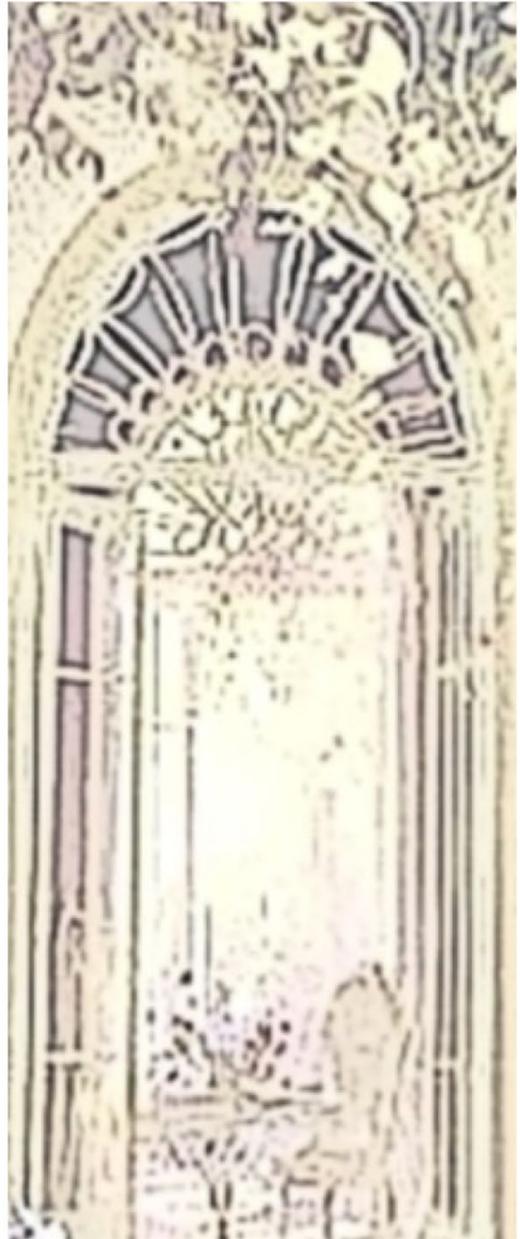


Message from Fr. George for Friday, February 24, 2023



*...hungry, thirsty, stranger,
naked, sick, or in prison...*



Sunday of Last Judgment, February 19, 2023

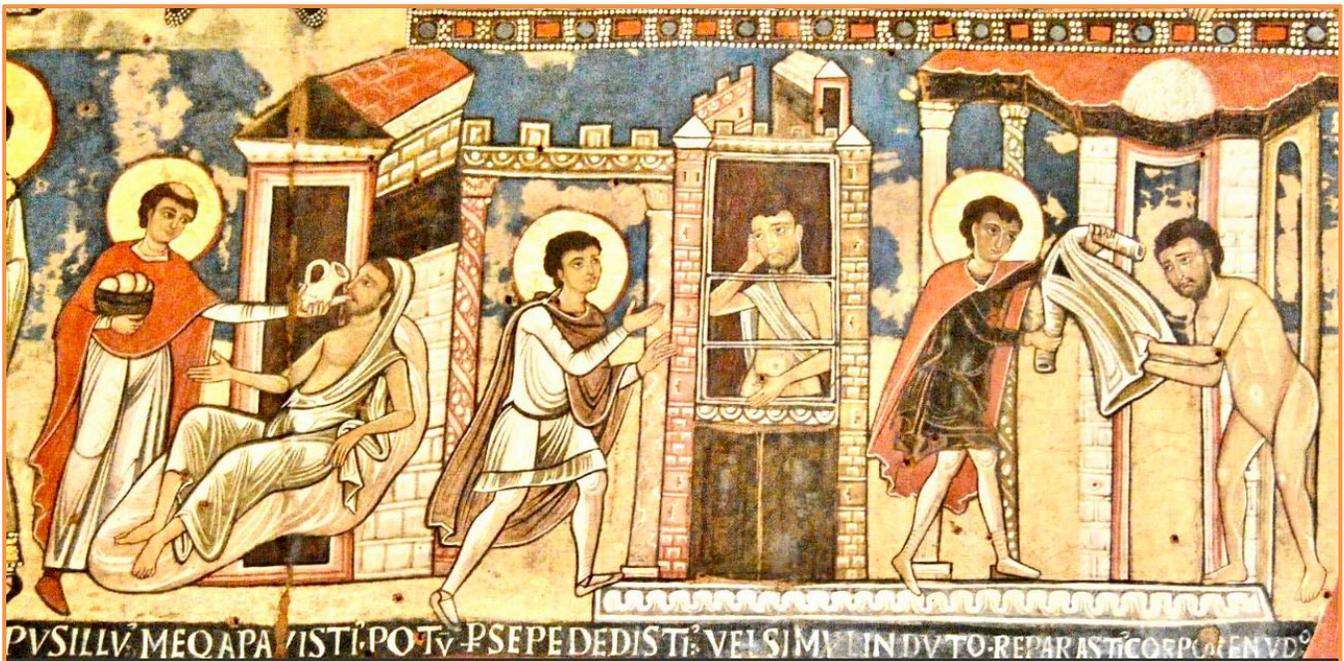
This past Sunday was the third of the four pre-Lenten Sundays in advance of the first day of Great Lent on Monday, February 27th. Its theme, the Last Judgment, focuses on Jesus Christ's revelation on the Last Judgment. Metropolitan Kallistos Ware of blessed memory offered the following summary of Matthew 25:31-46:

“The two past Sundays spoke to us of God's patience and limitless compassion, of His readiness to accept every sinner who



returns to Him. On this third Sunday, we are powerfully reminded of a complementary truth: no one is so patient and so merciful as God, but even He does not forgive those who do not repent. The God of love is also a God of righteousness, and when Christ comes again in glory, He will come as our Judge. ‘Behold the goodness and severity of God’ (Romans 11:22). Such is the message of Lent to each of us: turn back while there is still time, repent before the End comes. In the words of the Great Canon, ‘The end draws near, my soul, the end draws near; Yet thou dost not care or make ready. The time grows short, rise up: the Judge is at the door. The days of our life pass swiftly, as a dream, as a flower.

“This Sunday sets before us the ‘eschatological’ dimension of Lent: The Great Fast is a preparation for the Second Coming of the Savior, for the eternal Passover in the Age to Come. (This is a theme that will be taken up in the first three days of Holy Week.) Nor is the judgment merely in the future. Here and now, each day and each hour, in hardening our hearts toward others and in failing to respond to the opportunities we are given of helping them, we are already passing judgment on ourselves.” [from *The Introduction of the Lenten Triodion*]



In every parish, various possibilities arise that present these opportunities to serve others. To minister is to serve; and that is the basic meaning and goal of all parish ministries. As a parish attempts to embody the Gospel beyond its walls, those ministries directly connected to the teachings of Christ in Matthew 25:31-46 should include the following.

- Establishing a food and beverage pantry that feeds local residents in need.
- Offering financial assistance that feeds, clothes, and educates needy children and orphans.
- Visiting those who are hospitalized or home-bound.
- Initiating a prison ministry that includes visits to inmates, preparing food items, etc.
- Providing Christmas gifts for poor and needy families, especially those with children.
- Collecting and distributing clothing to the needy, and especially the homeless.
- Befriending the lonely, those without families, and others who have no one upon whom they can rely in times of need.

Inevitably, questions arise concerning the extent to which we participate, support, and embrace such ministries. Are these ministries a part of our Christian stewardship of time, talent, and treasure? Are our hearts “in it” or “out of it?” How do we coordinate the proclamation and teaching of the Gospels – heard at every Liturgy – within our lives as lived out as members of a concrete community? Does our self-absorption minimize our care for the “other?” Do we truly believe that we will be judged as Christ declares in the parable?



These very questions can form the basis for a “preparation for Confession” during Great Lent. We usually find ourselves examining how well we fasted or failed to fast during that holy season. Yet, in addition to prayer and fasting, almsgiving and charity are essential for a holistic embodiment of an “evangelical” – i.e., Gospel-based – way of life. Perhaps such self-examination will prepare us for the ultimate examination before the Son of Man, when everything will be revealed in absolute clarity. Of this, we are reminded during Vespers for the Sunday of the Last Judgment as we sing, “But, O Savior Who alone loves mankind, King of the ages, before the end comes, turn me back through repentance and have mercy on me.” [from <https://www.oca.org>]

HYMN TO LOVE

I Corinthians 13, 4:8

Love:



suffers long



is kind



does not envy



does not parade itself



is not puffed up



does not behave rudely



does not seek its own



is not provoked



thinks no evil



does not rejoice in iniquity, but
rejoices in the truth



bears all things



believes all things

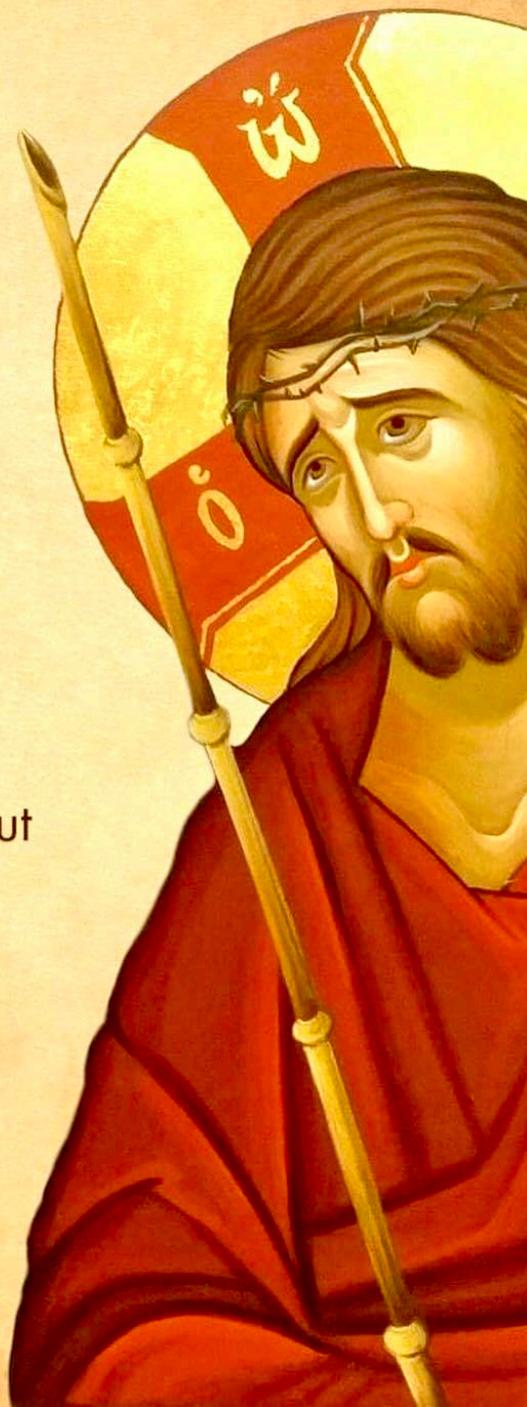


hopes all things



endures all things

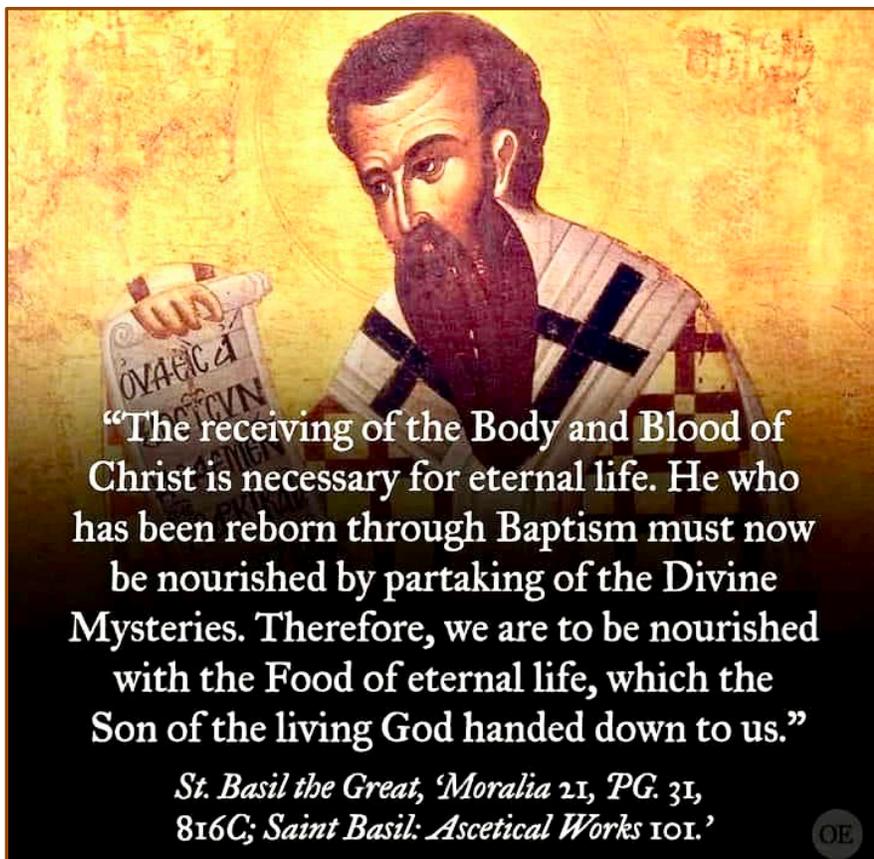
Love never fails.



“

DEAR GOD, speak
gently in my silence.
When the loud outer noises
of my surroundings and
the loud inner noises
of my fears keep pulling
me away from you,
help me to trust that
you are still there even when
I am unable to hear you.

HENRI NOUWEN



Holy Unction: The Sacrament of Healing - March 6, 2023

Join St. Christopher's parish family to pray for healing of the souls and bodies of our faithful – Monday, March 6, 2023, at 5:00 p.m.



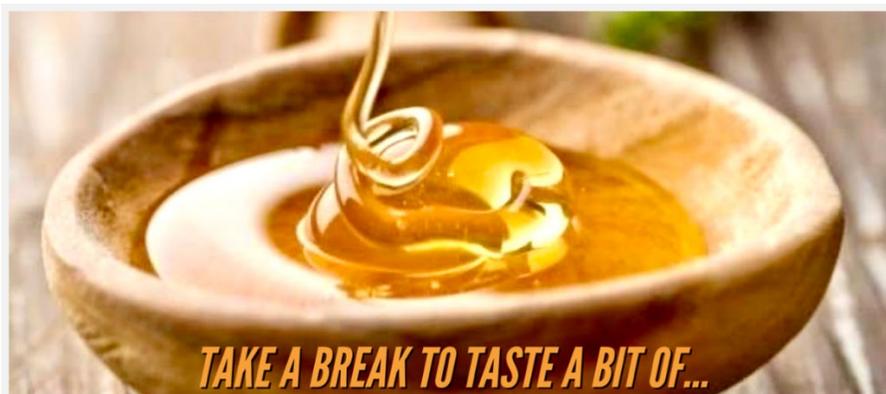
Holy Unction is a sacramental act whereby the Church seeks wholeness and well-being for its members, especially the sick and the suffering. It provides both physical and spiritual healing with holy oil blessed by the Holy Spirit.

In Greek, the mystery is called Εὐχέλαιον (*Euchelaion*, from εὐχή, 'prayer', and ἔλαιον, 'oil'). The oil carries God's grace both to renew the body and to cleanse the spirit. The service follows the apostolic tradition mentioned in the New Testament: *"Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven."* (James 5:14-15).

Holy Unction is a mystery of great comfort to the faithful. It provides uplifting and asks for patience to accept the will of God whatever the physical outcome.

Join us every Wednesday morning during Great Lent

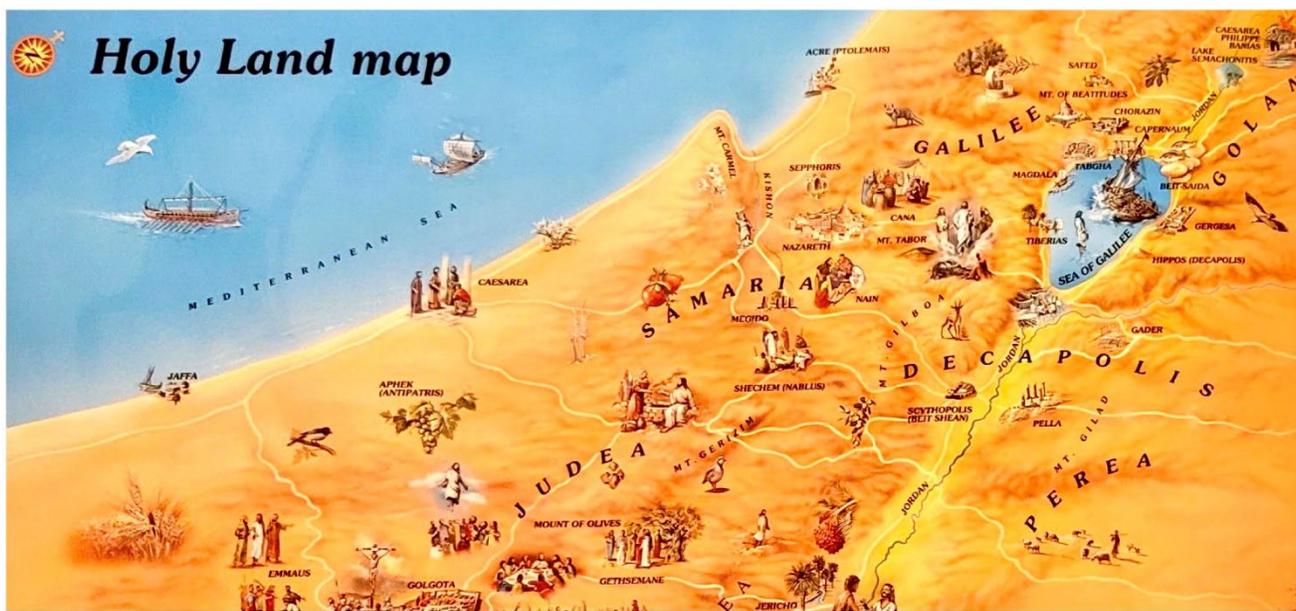
*After our Wednesday morning
Presanctified Liturgies, Fr.
George invites you to taste some
of his Greek honey with
Mountain tea and a bagel, and
reflect on spiritual opportunities
from the "Be the Bee" series.*



TAKE A BREAK TO TASTE A BIT OF...

Honey for the Body & Soul

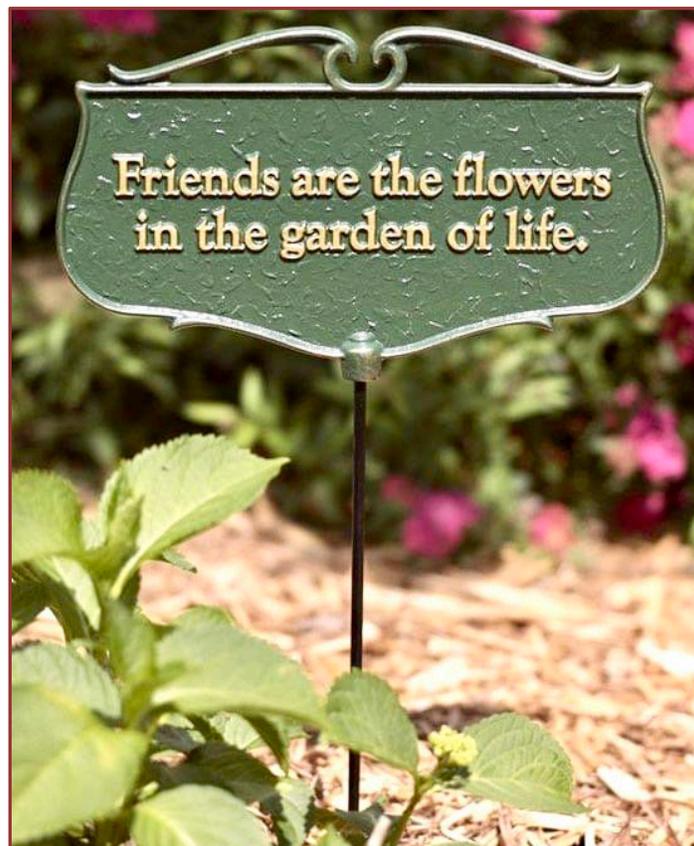
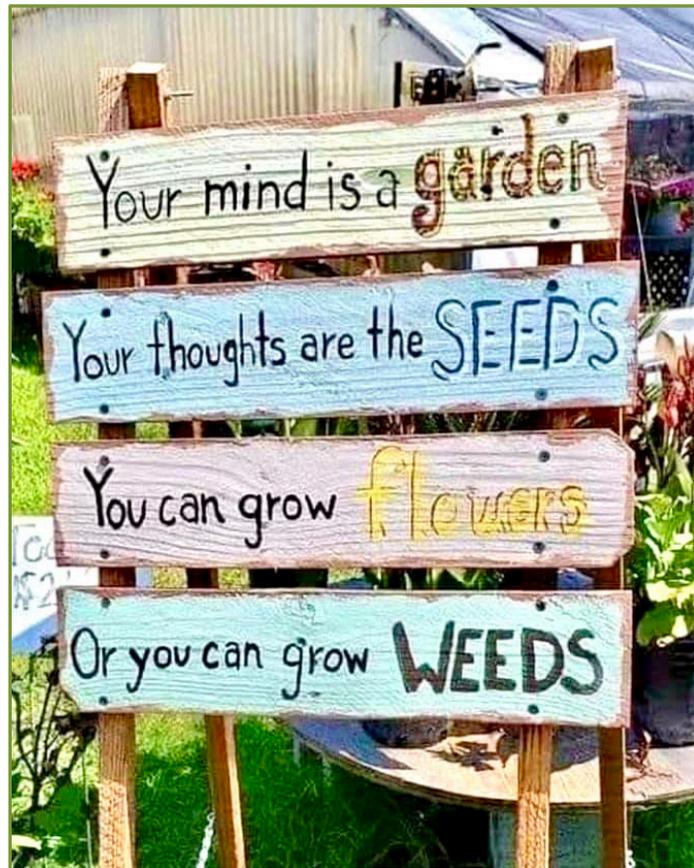
Love of others is our first lenten topic.



Holy Land Pilgrimage



Join us on the 2nd and 4th Fridays of Great Lent as we share photos and stories from our recent trip. Everyone is invited to bring Lenten foods for our community dinners after Salutations Services that begin at 6:00 p.m. Friday programs end at 8:00 p.m. Fr. George will offer brief family videos and discussion on the 1st and 5th Fridays. Please join us with your family.



Family Connections Survey - Helping our Youth Stay Connected with Christ?



Use the QR Code above or [click here](#) for an opportunity to help you – our parents, grandparents, and Godparents – gauge your children's connections with Christ Jesus and His Holy Church. Our aim is to improve family connection relationships during Great Lent and beyond. Your response is anonymous and cannot be identified or responded to by Fr. George or anyone else... only you!