

# The Spirit of St. George

St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church  
4530 E. Gold Dust Ave., Phoenix, Arizona 85028-4221

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December 2002

## A Message From Fr. Chris...

As we draw nearer to the Feast of the Incarnation of the Word of God, it is hardly possible for us to do anything but rejoice in the saving condescension of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Indeed, as the Orthros hymn declares, "Christ is born, glorify Him! Christ is come from heaven, receive Him! Christ is on Earth, be ye lifted up! Sing to the Lord, all the earth; and ye nations, praise Him with joy; for He has been glorified." As we reflect upon the fallenness of our human nature, we see the need we have for salvation from God. Furthermore, we celebrate at Christmas, the Blessed and most Holy Theotokos, who gave birth to God in the flesh. While the true commemoration is the Word of God becoming man, Orthodox Christians simultaneously rejoice in her who gave Him His flesh!

In Orthodox theology, Mary is called Theotokos (literally birth-giver of God). Additionally, we believe that Mary is EVER-VIRGIN. That means that at no point did she ever relinquish her virginity. From the moment of her birth, until the moment of her falling-asleep she remained "ever-virgin." By believing the Theotokos to be ever-virgin, the divinity of Christ is assured, because as we all know, it is biologically impossible for anyone to be born of a woman without a father. Therefore, only by God's hand through the Holy Spirit is the virgin with child. Again, we rejoice in God's ever abundant love for us! This belief manifests itself in our Orthodox iconography. If we look at any icon of the Theotokos, we will see that she bears three stars: one on each shoulder and one on her forehead. The three stars represent the "ever-virginity" of the Theotokos: She was virgin **before** birth (star on right shoulder), **during** birth (star on forehead) and **after** birth (star on left shoulder).

While this Orthodox belief seems somewhat easy for us to understand, quite often we find ourselves in a quandary when asked to defend it. Very often people quote from Matthew 1:25 and 13:55 to discredit the Orthodox. Matthew 1:25 says, "**but he (Joseph) knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.**" The challenge is in the word "until." Many Protestant theologians try to highlight the use of this word in order to show that *after* giving birth to Jesus, Mary *did* know Joseph. (By the way: "knowing" someone in Semitic language refers to sexual intercourse) They go one step further and claim that the same Scripture verifies this by citing from a later chapter in Matthew. In 13:55 Matthew writes, "**is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?**" The conclusion is that Mary did know Joseph after Jesus' birth and had other children to whom even Matthew refers.

For Orthodox Christians this line of reasoning is absurd! St. John Chrysostom even calls those who believe this heretics. If we examine honestly, we will find that our belief is not only correct, but totally substantiated by the facts in Scripture.

First, we understand Joseph (the husband of Mary) to have been married at least once prior and had children from that marriage. Our Tradition explains James, the Brother of the Lord, to have been from the other wife, Salome. Interestingly enough, this same debate arose last month with the discovery of an ossuary from 63 A.D. in Jerusalem. This ossuary (box built for burial) had the inscription, "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus." In the debate, scholars show James' lineage as being from Joseph and his other wife, Salome. This historical information allows the Orthodox to refute the claim of some Protestants that Mary gave birth to other sons after Jesus.

Secondly, and this may be a little heavy, the use of the verb "to know" in the original Greek text of Matthew 1:25 sheds light on the situation. The word "knew" of our passage is written in the imperfect tense. Because of the difficulty (indeed impossibility!) of flawless translation, there is no way to render the full meaning of the imperfect use of the verb "to know/knew" in this case. The imperfect tense of a verb implies an action that began in the past and has not yet come to completion. It would be like saying, "I am **opening** the door." I've started the process of opening the door, however, I have not yet **opened** the door. When I have **opened** the door then it will be **open**. But since I'm in the imperfect, I'm in the **process of opening** the door and therefore it is **not yet opened**. The door will only be opened once I complete the action. (I hope that made some sense!) This is exactly how the Greek word "to know/knew" of Matthew 1:25 is conjugated. Joseph's action of "not knowing Mary" began in the past, but it is not yet completed. For all intensive purposes, Joseph's "not knowing Mary" still hasn't been completed! In other words, what we see in the English translation of the Bible isn't really what Matthew intended to say. I believe that at no point did Matthew intend anything but to safeguard the sanctity and virginity of the Theotokos.

These two facts should suffice in any discussion regarding the ever-virginity of the Theotokos. However, for Orthodox Christians, we need not worry whether others "get it" or not. For us, the belief in the virgin-birth of the Word of God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is not negotiable. There can be no other way for us to be saved from Death. We are not afraid of other people who don't share our belief and yet we pray for them that God will open their minds to see the truth of His Gospel.

As the Nativity of Christ draws ever closer, may the Incarnate, Crucified and Risen Lord bless each and every one of your families with peace and health and happiness. Through the prayers of all the saints, most especially the Blessed and EVER-VIRGIN THEOTOKOS MARY, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy upon us and save us!

## Bishop JOSEPH'S Visitations For December 2002

8	St. Nicholas Cathedral, Los Angeles, CA	Patronal Feast Day
14 - 15	Ss. Peter and Paul Church, Salt Lake City, UT	Episcopal Visit
20 - 26	All Churches in Alaska	المسيح ولد ، فمجدوه ! Episcopal Visit

### Worldly Success in Christian Life

#### "Worldly Success: The Acts of the Steward" (Part Four in a Six-Part Series)

Worldly success goes hand in hand with stewardship over the gifts that God has given us. As stewards, we must act to identify, develop and use our talents in Christ's name.

Identify Your Talents — Every person has talents and abilities that are inherently part of their nature. We, as individuals, are not gifted in everything that we do: the prophet Moses was a great leader, but he needed Aaron, his brother, to help as a spokesman. Exodus 4:14-16. Likewise, some of us are talented to lead, while others are talented to speak. Others have received the ability to sing well, play an instrument, or are gifted in art, drama or writing, or sewing and baking, or sawing wood or laying bricks. Still others have the talent of understanding, patience, cheerfulness, or the ability to teach others. We all have peculiar talents and those talents are given to use as part of our individual ministries to one another. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all." 1 Corinthians 12:4-7. Identifying and finding opportunities to use these talents in Christ's name, then, becomes a goal and responsibility of every Orthodox Christian.

Sometimes we may think we do not have many talents or that other people have been blessed with more abilities than we possess. But God has entrusted us each of us with his blessings and we have a responsibility to ourselves and to God to evaluate ourselves to find our strengths and abilities so that we may develop and use His unique gifts that have been entrusted to us. Prayer, along with input from our clergy, family and friends, can help us accomplish identify our talents.

Develop Your Talents — Once we have identified these talents and abilities, we may believe we have several choices: (1) we can set them aside and pursue something that looks better in our own eyes; (2) we can develop them solely for our own personal gain; or (3) we can cultivate, multiply and practice them as our own gifts back to God. In truth, however, there is no choice. The first is a derogation of our duties to God; we become like the man who buries his one talent in the ground, or like the unwatchful virgins who let their lamp run out of oil. Matt. 25:1-46. The second is no less than embezzlement, for we would wrongfully convert that which God intends for his purposes exclusively to our own. God gives according to our ability, but accountability for those gifts is up to us. Compare Luke 16:19-31. Only the third option is available to us, and that option should be fully embraced. "Honor the Lord with your wealth, then your barns will be filled to overflowing." Proverbs 3:9, 10.

As servants of God, we are called to commit ourselves to developing our skills in support of our talents. This means that we must spend the time and effort to develop our talents. We must have faith in ourselves to accomplish that which God has planned for us, even if we do not fully understand that plan. And we must also have faith that the Holy Spirit will help us – particularly during those inevitable times when we are temporarily confused or discouraged.

Acts of training, education, practice and preparation, therefore, are not merely secular activities, but are gestures of life for God and appreciation for the talents He has bestowed. Love for God can be shown by, among other things, a real commitment to education and self-improvement, because the educational process us to both discover our areas of aptitude and to develop to our full potential. All of these steps are easier if we pray and seek the Lord's help. He wants us to develop our talents, and He will help us.

Use Your Talents — We have all been in the position where we shop for "the perfect gift" for someone special. We are delighted when that person appreciates the gift, but are disappointed if that person is ungrateful. How similar God must feel when we neglect the perfect gifts He has given us. As a loving Father, He has created us with natural abilities and strengths and then, on top of that, bestowed spiritual gifts as well. God granted us these gifts and abilities so we can serve others, as well as give part of ourselves back to Him. "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints *for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ*" Ephesians 4:11, 12.

Every Christian must be willing to practice their talents in ways that glorify God. We must practice using our talent, for every talent takes effort and work to develop. The mastery of a talent must be earned. We must also share our talent with others, for it is by our using our talents that they grow. Matthew 25:29. "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." 1 Peter 4:10.

We may hesitate to use our talents because we are afraid that we might fail or be criticized by others. Take heart: Christ was also criticized and was roundly deemed by the Jews to have had a failed ministry that resulted in crucifixion. Nevertheless, it was Christ's perfect obedience to God the Father, in the face of that criticism and persecution, which resulted in His ultimate and life-giving victory. Therefore, we should not hide our talents, but should preserve and use them. Then others can see our good works and glorify God. Matthew 5:16. — Deacon Anthony

*Coming Next Month – Part Five: "Worldly Success: The Church as Partner in Success"*

# Surrounded By A Cloud

By Sub-Deacon Ron Abrahams

## St. Herman of Alaska

If we think of a saint in December, we would typically think of St. Nicholas. Actually there are many recognized in December. Among them is another popular saint, St. Herman of Alaska, thought to be born in 1756.

Originally from Russia, he entered the monastic life at Trinity Sergius Hermitage at 16, near St. Petersburg. St. Herman is a man associated with many known prophesies and miracles. There he experienced his first miracle. Under his chin there appeared an abscess. The swelling grew rapidly disfiguring his face. Swallowing was difficult and the smell was unbearable. It was thought he would die. One night he prayed with tears before an icon of Mary. Some time during the night he wiped the icon with a wet towel and wrapped it around his neck. Finally he fell asleep from exhaustion. He dreamed the Virgin healed him. When he awoke he discovered he was healed, though a scar remained, as if a reminder of the miracle.

In his early twenties he transferred to Valaam Monastery. He loved this place, but in 1793 he was chosen with nine others in his monastery to start the first Orthodox mission in the New World – Russia's Kodiak Island in Alaska. Soon after arrival they built a monastery, church, and school for orphans.

St. Herman was humble in all his ways. He worked hard to feed and clothe the Aleut people, especially the orphans. Though he cared for the needs of others, his own needs were sparse: his bed was a board covered in a deer skin; his pillow was two bricks. He worked hard, but in his spare time he spent his time in vigils and fasting.

He was always teaching too. On one known occasion he was a guest of visiting Russian officials. He was invited to their frigate where he asked his hosts, "What do you love above all, and what do you wish for your happiness?" Some wished for wealth, glory, a beautiful wife, and so on. After all shared their answers St. Herman told them their decisions were the most worthy of their love, but asked another question, "Is not Jesus Christ more worthy of our love than any other?" They all agreed, yet admitted they fell short of what they knew to be true. "Then," he responded, "let us at least promise ourselves that from this minute to try to love God more than any thing and to fulfill His holy will."

Eventually St. Herman returned to the life of a hermit on nearby Spruce Island. There was no water there so he knelt and prayed. A spring emerged from the earth there. Because of this miracle, the water there is holy without any ceremony. The spring continues to run to this day.

St. Herman's was a pious life dedicated to God and service to others. He is an example to us that we must endeavor, at least, to love God with all our hearts, minds and actions. He passed away on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1836.

## Ladies Auxiliary of St. George Orthodox Church

The ladies will be hosting our annual Cookie Exchange on Monday December 2nd at 7:00pm in the fellowship hall. Each lady is asked to bring six-dozen home baked cookies. One dozen is to share during our social that night and five-dozen are to share with others to take home. At the same time those who participated in the Secret-Sisters-in-Christ program this year will be revealing themselves. We will also draw names for the upcoming year. You do not have to participate in the Secret Sister program to attend the Cookie Exchange so we would love to see all of you ladies there!

Christmas flower forms are now available in the Sunday bulletins and at the bookstore. Please see Evelyn Kosobud to make a donation and to have your Holy Oblations printed in the Christmas Bulletin before December 18<sup>th</sup>.

Our 24kt Gold Christmas ornaments are here and now on sale. They will be \$15 each. The ornament is a replica of our own church building, which makes it a great Christmas gift.

The next Ladies meeting will be held on Saturday, December 7<sup>th</sup>. It was decided that the meeting would be held at a restaurant at 11:00 a.m. We have contacted a few places near the church to see what is available. Please watch the bulletins for an update.

We collect Food for the Hungry all year long, but especially during the Holiday Season, canned foods and non-perishable donations are needed. Let's not forget those in our community that are not as fortunate as we are! You may drop off your donations into the big box in the Narthex. We have dropped off 215 lbs of canned goods and other items so far this month. Thank you in advance for helping with this worthwhile project.

The St. George Ladies Auxiliary is collecting recipes to put in a new cookbook. Do you have a favorite dish that you would like included? Submit your recipes, (typed or handwritten clearly) and don't forget to include your name. Give to Khouriyee Allyson (602) 765-6069, Sandy Khoury (480) 515-1423 or Briggette DeRienzo (480) 575-8860. They are collecting the recipes and will answer any questions you may have. Thank You!

## Church Records

**Baptisms:** Roman Shafik Karadsheh 10/19/02, Parents ~John & Natascha: Olivia Sutton Hidder 11/7/02, Parents ~Greg & Jennifer  
Joshua Mills Derrickson 11/17/02, Parents ~John & Ann Marie

**Chrismation:** Caraline Lavonne Saigh 11/16/02  
Sponsor ~May Sayegh

**Marriage:** Adam & Heather McLeod Labbe, 11/9/2002

**Funeral:** Edmund Nassar 11/20/02

St. George Church is once again sponsoring the "Angel Tree". We have adopted 125 "Angels" this year, so you may pick several children in the same family, if desired. Please pick up your "Angel" card in the Narthex. See Connie Abdoulah 602 938-2258 or Tammy Belt 480 451-6939 for more information. The children are always very appreciative for all we do for them each year. Thank you so much for your giving spirit on this outreach project! You will surely feel the warmth within from reaching out and giving to a child in need at Christmas!

### The Order of St. Andrew the First-Called cordially invites you to a "Day Time Bible Study"

Saturday, December 7, 2002 from 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm @ St. George Church

R.S.V.P. by December 2<sup>nd</sup> to:

Becky Abrahams (623) 435-2056 or Rima Iacovelli (480) 421-6486

Transportation is available for those that need a ride. Please let Becky or Rima know.

*Mark your calendars early for the 2003 Annual Parish Meeting January 19<sup>th</sup> directly after  
Divine Liturgy in the Fellowship Hall!*

#### **HALL RENOVATIONS ARE COMING ALONG! TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO BE PART OF IT!**

As we are sure many of you have noticed, the initial phases of the renovations to our Fellowship Hall are underway. The interior has been painted with a fresh coat of paint, and the fabulous new carpeting has been installed and looks great and our beautiful new banquet chairs have arrived! Have you checked out our new granite counters? We still have more upgrading to do in the ladies powder room.

Things still on the wish list:

1. New draperies for the stage area.
2. A painted mural for the wall behind the stage.

The Facilities Fund has set as its first project the Fellowship Hall renovation. In order to accomplish this goal, we have established the Hall Renovation Committee. This Committee is offering all of the families of St. George Church the opportunity to become permanent, life long sponsors of these well-needed upgrades and improvements.

Any support you can offer, would be greatly appreciated. Please earmark your donation for "Hall Renovation". If you have any questions, suggestions or input, please feel free to contact Briggette DeRienzo, who will spearhead the fundraising efforts, at (480) 575-8860.

#### **HALL RENOVATION DONATION FORM**

I/we are happy to help support the Hall Renovation and have attached my/our tax-deductible donation to help the ongoing growth of St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Donated: \$50 \_\_\_\_\_ \$75 \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_\_\_ \$250 \_\_\_\_\_ Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

We have a beautiful facility that is highly sought after by many in and around the community for rentals of varying functions. The majority of the referrals is by word of mouth! All the comments made with the upgrades so far have been very complimentary by the renters that saw the hall before we started.

## **48<sup>th</sup> Annual Western Region Parish and Family Life Conference Memorial Day Weekend 2003**

Greetings in the Name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

We pray that all is well with you and your families. It is not too early to think about your summer plans and we hope you will be including the 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Western Region Parish and Family Life Conference in them! This year, the Conference is hosted by our great Church and will be held at the Scottsdale Radisson Resort & Spa.

In preparation for the Conference, we have created a web site that will address almost all of your questions relating to this year's Conference. You will find this web site at the following link:

<http://www.stgeorgephoenix2003.com>

Please bookmark this site as changes are made often! You will find all that you need for the Conference right there, including the Conference Schedule, Vendor Form, Souvenir Journal Form, Online Hotel Reservations and much, much more especially our Conference video! Please visit today!

We hope to see you all there, Memorial Day Weekend 2003! If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

Take care and God Bless!

In Christ, Michael Haddad & Issa Sweilem,

Technology Committee, 2003 Western Region Parish and Family Life Conference

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**The Rev. Fr. Christopher Salamy**  
(602) 765-6069

Office Hours 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Monday thru Friday

Church Service Times

Saturday Great Vespers 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday Orthros (Matins) 8:50 a.m.  
Sunday Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.  
Confession: Sundays 9:00-9:25 a.m.  
Or by appointment with Fr. Christopher

Articles are welcomed to be submitted for consideration. They must be turned into the office by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month to be published. Please call or send name and address changes to the church office.



**Evening Divine Liturgy**  
**For Feast of the Nativity of Jesus Christ**  
**Tuesday, December 24<sup>th</sup>**  
**Orthros @ 7:00 pm ~ Liturgy @ 8:00 pm**

**The Annual Fellowship of St. John the Divine**  
**Winter Retreat @ Camp St. Nicholas**

**Topic:** Why We Do What We Do When We Worship  
**Guest Speaker:** Father Jon Braun (A Great and Funny Man)  
**When:** December 13-15, 2002  
**Where:** Camp St. Nicholas ~ Mount Pinos, CA  
**Prices:** \$90.00 per person (includes meals & sleeping accommodations)

Please R.S.V.P. to Irene Saigh by email: [lilirenel9@aol.com](mailto:lilirenel9@aol.com) or phone: 602 617-8609

If you have any questions please contact Irene Saigh. This is not only a time to get away from the worries of the outside world, but to rekindle old friendships while making new ones.

## T.L. FRAZIER LECTURE SERIES

The Orthodox Christian Eschatology Association is pleased to announce a lecture engagement in Phoenix by nationally recognized end times author T. L. Frazier. Mr. Frazier's ground-breaking book, "*A Second Look at the Second Coming*" is a brilliant analysis of the end times based upon a seldom articulated *Orthodox Christian perspective*.

### I. Lecture Series Admission is Free! What Orthodox Christian's Believe About the End Times:

Saturday, December 14<sup>th</sup>, from 10 AM – 1 PM

The Orthodox Christian Position on the "Rapture", & The "Millennial Kingdom":

Saturday, December 14<sup>th</sup>, from 2 – 3:30 PM

@

**St. Katherine's Greek Orthodox Church Community Center**

**2716 N. Dobson Road, Chandler, AZ Phone (480) 899-3330**

(Contacts: Tony Tangalos @ 602 321-4100 or Fr. Phil Armstrong @ 480 899-3330)

Refreshments and snacks will be served from 1:00 to 2:00 PM.

Personally autographed copies of T.L. Frazier's book will be available for purchase.

### II. RADIO SHOW T.L. Frazier will be a guest speaker on "**COME RECEIVE THE LIGHT**" PROGRAM at 1360 AM on Sunday, December 8<sup>th</sup> from 4:00-5:00 PM. Plan to tune in and hear a prelude to the lecture series.

## December 2002

	Dec 1	Dec 8	Dec 15	Dec 22	Dec 25	Dec 29
Epistle Reader	Eph. 2:4-10 Jim Bogues	Eph. 2:14-22 Larry Haddy	II Tim. 1:8-18 Marwan Sayegh Scott Ferris	Heb. 11:9-10; 17:23, 32-40 Richard Nichols	Gal. 4:4-7 Irene Saigh	Gal. 1:11-19 Philip Abdoulah
Greeters	Adel & Enaam Hweimel	Louis Hasbany & Joe Abraham	Maram & Eva Quomsieh	Tony & Bonnie Karraz	Hani & Amal Farah	Michael & Ruby Rideout
Ushers	Maram Quomsieh Samira Sayegh Christine Sayegh Aziz Haddad Michael Haddad David Durgam	Eva Quomsieh Jane Romley Sarah Foster Majed Sayegh Adam Labbe, Bob Foster	Molly Abrahams Natascha Karadsheh Mary Karadsheh Jamal Sayegh Michael Rideout Eddie Khoury	Mary Karadsheh Sally Ghiz Marion Saba John Karadsheh David Ghiz Tony Karraz John Doumani	Rachel Abrahams Marion Saba Enaam Hweimel Adel Hweimel Jim Bogues Bruce Florence	Carrie Sayegh Anna Bronnenkant Sally Ghiz Louis Hasbany James Saliba, Jr. George Maloley
Altar Servers	Alex Saliba Basil Dahlan Brian Johnson Anthony Sahawneh Brandon Fuja	Andy Leahu Michael Aboud- Rihani Alexander Thomas	Mathew Saliba Ronnie Sayegh David Yates Gus Sahawneh Abanoob Sayegh	Simon Abrahams Chris Doumani Rami Khoury Butros Sayegh	Mathew Saliba Simon Abrahams Danny Sayegh Musa Sayegh Chris Doumani	Danny Sayegh Philip Boulanos James Sayegh Nick Kalinichenko III
Hall Lock-up	Joyce Bogues	John Karadsheh	Sandra Hasbany	John Doumani	x	Issa Sweilem
Coffee Hr	Open	Philip & Connie Abdoulah	Open	Sunday School	x	James & Briggette DeRienzo
Stewardship Table	Margaret Raymond Briggette DeRienzo	Sam Nassif Sam Hanna	Richard & Marion Saba	Faisal Saigh Jack Khoury	x	Aziz & Samar Haddad