

# The Spirit of St. George

St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church Phoenix, Arizona

Volume 9 Number 6

June, July and August 2002

Who is our patron and protector? Who is this Great Martyr that keeps watch over our church family? As we gather in fellowship to celebrate his memory this month, let us learn more about whom we are celebrating. I pray that his life truly inspires us to greatness in the eyes of Christ!

## St. George the Victorious

*Memory Celebrated on April 23*

Glorious, wonderful, and great martyr of Christ George lived during the reign of emperor Diocletian in 296. He came from Cappadocia and descended from a glorious and well-known family. He first shone in the order of Tribunes and then, when he was about to suffer martyrdom, he became a count (i.e. a prefect or a governor or even a victorious general). Then impious Diocletian started a persecution against Christians and he issued a royal order so that all the Christians who denied Christ should be worthy of royal honors while all those who would not be convinced to do so would be punished with death.

Great George happened to be present when these orders were issued. He declared himself to be a Christian and he criticized the delusion of the idols mocking those who believed in them. The saint was convinced neither by the flatteries and the many promises of the tyrant nor by his threats and intimidation. Instead, he scorned all of this. So, they first hit him on his belly with a spear, which pierced the saint's flesh so much that a lot of blood poured out from the wound--- but the head of the spear turned back and, thus, the saint was kept unharmed. Then, they tied him on a wheel which had sharp knives embedded in it. They let it roll down a slope and, so, the martyr's body was cut to many pieces. However, he was again made healthy with the help of a divine angel. Then, the saint was presented to Diocletian and his co-emperor Magnentius, who were offering sacrifices to the idols at the time.

Because he appeared to have been kept safe and sound from such a terrible torture, St. George attracted many Greeks to the faith of Christ. The emperor ordered them to be beheaded immediately. Then, even empress Alexandra came to the faith of Christ and confessed Christ to be true God in front of her husband Diocletian. Many more people believed in Christ seeing that the saint was kept unharmed when he was thrown into a pit full of lime. Then they nailed iron shoes into the saint's feet and made him run. After this they whipped him mercilessly with dry bull-nerves.

Magnentius asked the saint to make a miracle and raise a man who had died many years before and was buried in a grave that lay in front of him. After the saint had prayed on the gravestone, a great miracle happened! The dead man rose and bowed before the saint, glorifying the divinity and power of Christ. The emperor asked him who he was and when he had died. The dead man answered that he was one of the men who lived before the coming of Christ, i.e. three hundred years before, and that due to his error regarding the idols he was being burnt in fire all these years.

When they saw this miracle, many Greeks believed in Christ and glorified God in one voice. Glykerios the farmer, whose ox the saint had raised, was with them. This miracle made him stand firm on the faith of Christ and, thus, he was cut to pieces by the swords of the unbelievers, receiving the crown of martyrdom. Moreover, many more men believed in Christ, when they saw the saint enter the temple of the idols and order a statue to say whether Christ is God alone.

Upon this word of his all the idols shook and fell on the earth with a crash. However, the worshippers of the idols could bear with the saint no more. So, they caught him and brought him to the emperor asking from him to issue his decision against him. The emperor ordered the saint to be beheaded together with empress Alexandra. The saint was beheaded, while empress Alexandra prayed in prison and commended her soul to the hands of God.

***O Holy and Great Martyr George! Pray unto God for us!***

# Surrounded By A Cloud

By Sub-Deacon Ron Abrahams

*Fr. Chris asked me to write a new, regular column for our Spirit of St. George Newsletter. He wanted me to feature a saint for each issue.*

*As you can tell, I have decided to call it "Surrounded By A Cloud." In The Epistle to the Hebrews, in chapter 11, is a list of great men and women of faith. This chapter is like a hall of fame: who was faithful and what they did that made them faithful. Then in Hebrews 12:1 the writer connects their faith to ours, "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."*

*The Orthodox faith remembers the faithful through the Bible, icons, and books. It is important to remember the faithful who have gone before us not just for their interesting stories, but that their lives are a lesson for us. We too can be victorious in Christ. They are cheering us on...*

We commemorate St. Elijah on July 20. He is also referred to as St. Elias in some versions of the Bible. His origins are a mystery. There is no mention of his parents, only that he is from Thesbon in Gilead.

Many miraculous events took place in his life. His story begins in I Kings 17:1 where he suddenly appears to the evil King Ahab, initiating a 3-1/2 year drought. It ends in II Kings 2:11, the account of his being taken up in a fiery chariot to Heaven.

He spent the first year of the drought hiding near the brook Cherith, East of the Jordan River. Here he was fed by ravens. After it dried up he went to another country where a widow took care of him. Her containers of oil and meal never ran out during this time. Elijah also raised her son from the dead.

The drought was brought on because of Israel's unfaithfulness to God. The worship of Baal had infiltrated Israel. King Ahab's wife, Jezebel (from Tyre), used her position as queen to promote her god Baal in her husband's kingdom. She ordered the deaths of many prophets of God, built temples, and got her husband to sacrifice to her false god.

Baal was evil for three main reasons. 1) Baal means lord or owner: his worship meant that the people of Israel no longer recognized themselves as God's people. 2) Baal worship frequently included sacrificing children, a particular no-no with God. 3) Baal worship normally included illicit sexual behavior. Baal worship is really a me-centered religion, not unlike many attitudes in our society today.

Elijah was a loud voice protesting the corruption of his age. The apocryphal book Ecclesiasticus describes his words as, "a fire, and burned like a torch." This is probably why so many people in Jesus' day thought he was Elijah.

The highlight of Elijah's ministry was his 'showdown' with 950 prophets of Baal and Asherah. Elijah challenges the prophets to a kind of duel. Two altars would be built. An ox would be sacrificed on each. The God who lit the fire for the altar would be the one true God. Everyone agreed. The prophets of Baal spent most of the day praying, raving really, without success. Then it was Elijah's turn. Only he did something he didn't ask the prophets of Baal to do: he drenched his altar with water. When he prayed his altar was immediately consumed with fire. Then he killed all of the prophets of Baal. This day also ended the 3-1/2 years of drought.

Like most of God's faithful people, they wobble in their faith. So it was with Elijah. After his impressive display of faith he ran away when he heard that Jezebel wanted to kill him. Yet God did not abandon him. What God does for Elijah is a good example for how we ought to encourage each other when faith wears thin: God fed and encouraged him (19:4-14). His faith was renewed and he continued to serve God.

Elijah is considered one of the greatest prophets. He appeared to Christ with Moses at the transfiguration. I'm sure if you read about him (I Kings 17:1 – II Kings 2:11) you too will see that his faith was impressive. I believe the real lesson Elijah provides for our faith is his life of prayer. When he raised the widow's son he prayed (I Kings 17:20), before the altar was consumed by flames he prayed (17:36), for rain after the drought he prayed (17:42), and even when he ran away he prayed (18:10). When James, in his epistle, speaks about prayer, he uses Elijah as an example of what prayer can do, (James 5:13-18).

Please read the passage about Elijah. When you consider the great things in his life, remember that his was a life of prayer. This is something we must make time to do if we want to be faithful. This is something we must also take time to teach our children.

**~ Bishop JOSEPH'S Visitations ~**

**June 30<sup>th</sup>**

St. Nicholas Cathedral, Los Angeles, CA ~ Honoring V. Rev. Michel Najim – 25 years in the Priesthood.

**July 3<sup>rd</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup>**

St. Anthony church, San Diego, CA ~ Western Region Parish Life Conference.

**July 15<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup>**

Antiochian Village ~ Clergy Symposium

**~ The Ladies Corner ~**

Ladies Meeting and Luncheon will be on Thursday, June 13<sup>th</sup> at 11:30am. Pot Luck lunch, so bring your favorite dish to share.



**Congratulations To Our Graduates 2002**

- ∂ Adel Horan, from The Widener University School of Law, Wilmington Delaware
- ∂ Leah Oma Assad, from Arcadia High School.
- ∂ Nicole Gharieb from Shadow Mountain High School
- ∂ GJ Hadeed from Brophy High School
- ∂ Katy Saliba from Mountain Ridge High School

**2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Golf Tournament Saturday,**  
June 29<sup>th</sup> 6:30 am – 2:00 pm  
At the Orange Tree Golf Resort

**Pick up a blue flyer and see what is in store for a great day of golf and all the fantastic prizes to be won. There is also hole sponsorship information if your company or place of business would like to advertise. To register, contact John Karadsheh: voice: 602 615-0843 or fax: 602 277-8337, Majed Sayegh @ 602 576-7906, or Adam Labbe @ 602 518-1414. Lunch will be catered at Roadrunner Park, 3202 E. Cactus Rd.**

**Bunko Sunday Evening June 9<sup>th</sup>!**

St. John of the Divine Fellowship will be sponsoring that fun game again at 6pm on Sunday the 9<sup>th</sup> of June. Did you miss out last time? Don't be left out this year. Tickets will be \$8.00 each. It's fun and so easy to learn. Lots of laughs and loads of prizes too! To get your tickets just call Shirley Abraham ~ 480 948-1989, Lorraine Florence ~ 480 837-2710, Marion Saba ~ 480 991-0663 or Rose Marie Toronto at 480 614-9499. Bring a friend or two to join in this great evening of fun.

**St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church**  
4530 E. Gold Dust Avenue  
Phoenix, AZ 85028-4221

**Office:** (602) 953-1921  
**Fax:** (602) 953-2460  
**E-mail:** [AbounaChris@AOL.com](mailto:AbounaChris@AOL.com)  
**Website:** [www.stgeorge-az.org](http://www.stgeorge-az.org)  
Office Hours 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Monday thru Friday

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

Church Service Times

**No Great Vespers Until October** -----  
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. Chris

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.