

# The Spirit of St. George

St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church Phoenix, Arizona

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## A Message from Archmandrite Seraphim...

God has commanded us to put an end to our quarrels and strife and to forgive insults not because He needs these things, but because they are beneficial to us. Whoever forgives his neighbor's sins will himself receive pardon from God according to the promise of the Savior, and how many sins we have before God! What fear should come over us when we remember that we will have to answer for all of them at the Day of Judgment! To our great shame, all our dark deeds will be revealed to the universe at the terrible Judgment of God. Then we will not be able to expiate them in any way. However, now the Savior is offering us an easy way to erase all our sins: ***Forgive, and you shall be forgiven.***" (Luke 6:37). Forgive from your heart the small sins of your brother against you, and you will receive pardon for all your countless sins before God! Is there anything better and more favorable than this? If love for God and His holy commandments cannot make us forgive, then let us forgive for our own interest at least! But alas, often not only the high motives of disinterested virtue, but even the insistent calls of our own interest are not able to induce us to forgive. Our spitefulness has blinded us so that it has made us our own greatest enemy. In strife we are going against God with open eyes; we aim the blade of our spite at our own heart; we poison our health; and we ourselves seek eternal doom for our soul. Is there anything more foolish than this?

How good it is to forgive! The soul feels so light and pleasant afterwards! One feels such a tenderness after having forgiven that he is ready to embrace the whole world, to start loving everyone and to forgive everything. At that, it is not difficult to forgive; a little courage of the soul and some mercy of the heart are all that is required for the purpose. Numb your pride, and it will be easy to forgive your neighbor! Drive away the hatred from your heart, and you will win the love of your brother! Defeat spite, that enemy of yours, in your soul, and you will make a friend out of your enemy. When you overcome in this way the enemy within you, you will disarm the enemy without as well. It is not required of you to give anything to the person with whom you have quarreled. Only forgive him from your heart! For such forgiveness, God will not only forgive your own innumerable sins, but He will also present you with the most precious of all treasures – the Kingdom of Heaven, the eternal joy of Paradise!

The Holy Fathers teach us that the one who forgives always wins. Whatever the occasion may be, if you forgive, you immediately cleanse your soul and become fit for Paradise. If you have forgiven those who have plotted to murder you, you have become equal to the martyrs. If you have forgiven an insult, you have gained peace and have won the Kingdom of Heaven. If you have generously overlooked the rumors and slanders against you, you have dulled the sting of your foe. If you have returned good for evil, you have shamed your enemy. If you have swallowed a sarcastic insult to your honor, you have become worthy of heavenly honors. If, being of higher rank in life, you have asked the pardon of a lesser man, you have not only *not* disgraced yourself, but you have furthered your spiritual maturity. If you were not to blame but asked the offender to forgive you, you have thus helped his soul to be delivered from the hell of hatred and have covered many of your own sins, too. If you have abased your pride, you have exalted your humility.

Let us suppose that you are quarreling with your neighbors because they have taken and misused money belonging to you, and they do not want to return it. What should you do to respond in a Christian way? Let us discuss this case thoroughly, since it is very often that quarrels and even bloody fights occur between contemporary Christians over money, land, and inheritances. The vice of avarice makes us feel deeply hurt when someone has misappropriated money of ours but denies that it is ours, and refuses to return it. We are ready to slander and revile such a man before all, to call him a thief, a bandit, and even to take him to court. Thus, on the occasion of his sin, we too begin to sin, and this is not right. He is headed to hell, and we are in a hurry to catch up with him, so that we will not be left out of the eternal fire.

What should we do so as not to sin? Jesus Christ says that we should forgive! Of course, we could gently ask him to pay the sum back. If our debtor realizes that it is a sin to steal other people's money and returns it to us, it will be good both for him and for us. But if he does not do so, we should leave everything to God and forgive. God has the ways and the power to reimburse us. We should have only one priority in mind – to shun sin! It is better to let ourselves be cheated than to take someone to court (cf. 1 Cor. 6:7)

It is true that in this way we will lose something very precious to the body, but at the same time we will gain something even more precious for the soul: we will show that we esteem love for our neighbor more than money, and we will cut off the advance of hate into our soul!

The Holy Fathers always endured with thanksgiving all misfortunes in their lives. They knew that the man who endures patiently every suffering, unjust insult, or intentional harm to their personal interests is saving his soul with his patience. By losing the temporal, he gains the eternal. This is why they never got angry with other people nor quarreled with their enemies. Patience and long-suffering toward their personal enemies were important virtues in the development of their holy personal life. How right the Holy Fathers were! Do you realize this, dear reader? If you do, it is good for your soul, but if, remembering about your enemies and debtors, you shake your head with disapproval because you cannot imagine how you could forgive the villain who has stolen and used your money, nor how you could be reconciled with the hag who has insulted you so viciously, then you are not on the right road – for it is exactly those personal and hateful enemies that we are commanded to forgive. If you are still tormented by malevolent moods, you have not yet tasted the sweetness of forgiving; your fleshly interests still stand higher than your spiritual ones. You, entangled in the nets of earthly things, cannot fly up to the horizons of the spirit where Jesus Christ is preparing great bliss for His followers. If, however, you feel that the Holy Fathers advise us correctly, even though they neglect our material and temporal interests somewhat by teaching us to forgive our enemies, if you are moved and gladdened at the reading of these lines, however foolish they may seem to the world, happy are you – for you have found the path that leads to the Kingdom of Heaven!

*Archmandrite Seraphim Aleksiev (1912-1993) was an outstanding pastor, spiritual writer, and theologian in contemporary Bulgaria.*

*This excerpt is from his book entitled, Strife and Reconciliation, published by St. Xenia Skete Press.*



## Surrounded By A Cloud

By Sub-Deacon Ron Abrahams

### **Bishop RAPHAEL of Brooklyn**

Bishop RAPHAEL was a remarkable man. While his ministry in America was primarily to those of the Antiochian Orthodox Church, ironically he was a Russian Orthodox priest.

He was born in Beirut in 1861, but raised in Damascus. He was tonsured a monk at 18, then, sent to a theological school at Halki, Turkey where he was ordained Deacon. After graduating, he returned to Damascus and served the Antiochian Patriarch, on his pastoral visits to various parishes.

After a few years he continued his education at the Theological Academy at Kiev, Russia. In 1889 he was appointed metochion in Moscow. (This was like being an ambassador for the Patriarch of Antioch to the Patriarch of Russia). At the request of the Patriarch of Antioch, he was ordained a priest in Russia and raised to the rank of archimandrite.

Soon Fr. Raphael found trouble. The See of Antioch at that time was ruled by foreign bishops. He became critically outspoken and Patriarch SPYRIDON suspended him. Eventually he asked for and received forgiveness, but was reinstated in the Russian Church. Perhaps it is at this point that he decided that the best way to serve the Lord is in humility. That is when his ministry flourished.

In 1895, while teaching at Kazan's Theological Academy, Archimandrite Raphael accepted an invitation to start and pastor a church for the Syrian-Arab community in New York. He was the founding pastor of St. Nicholas Cathedral of Brooklyn. He took his calling very seriously, however, and became pastor instead to all of America. Traveling across the continent many times, he sought all those who didn't have an Orthodox parish.

Saint Raphael is described as "the good shepherd of lost sheep in America." This is because so many came to America from the Middle East without an Orthodox Church to welcome them. From his many journeys across this continent, he is seen as a shepherd finding those lost from the church. He worked selflessly to establish 30 parishes in the 19 years he ministered here. He also established the Word Magazine.

In 1904, Fr. Raphael was ordained a bishop, the first Orthodox bishop of any jurisdiction ordained in North America by Archbishop Tikhon of Zadonsk. (Remember, before the Russian Revolution all Orthodox churches in America were under the Russian Patriarchate).

Saint Raphael's life is a model of humble service to his flock and in doing so his life was a reflection of Christ, a true saint. We commemorate his memory, an inspiration to us, on the first Saturday of November. Let us give thanks to God that He chose a man so holy to help supervise the development of Orthodoxy in North America.

# Worldly Success in Christian Life

“Worldly Success: The Ministry of the Steward”  
(Part Three in a Six-Part Series)

When God created human beings, He appointed them to be stewards of creation — to take care of the world, to cultivate food, to offer thanks to God for all His blessings. Every person, therefore, is a steward of God (1 Peter iv. 10). The meaning of the term “steward” is typically defined as an agent or trusted servant who: (1) has been entrusted with possession of certain goods belonging to another; and (2) is appointed by the owner of the goods to manage or administer those goods. The steward is therefore responsible to the owner not only for the care and safekeeping of goods that he has been given, but also for the faithful execution of his duties to manage and administer those goods. Christ’s Parable of the Talents exemplifies this concept, and makes clear that it is not sufficient to merely possess the blessings that God has given us, but that we must multiply those blessings through our faith and good works.

But to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of steward as that term applies to Christ and his Church, we should look to the Greek word “ikonomos,” from which the words “steward” and “economy” are both derived. Economy means more than balancing a budget or managing a checkbook; in a theological context, “economy” means God’s divine plan for humanity, from creation to redemption to ultimate theosis. A “Steward of God,” therefore, is much more than a mere administrator or manager of His blessings, for such a definition would imply that we are no more than functionaries who distribute His gifts only because we have a duty to do so. A fuller understanding of a Steward of God, however, is that we are fellow-workers with God (“synergia”) who labor as God’s agents to accomplish His plan for humanity’s salvation.

How often do you look at yourself as God’s agent? There is a reason why Christ warns us against the dangers of being angry with our neighbors, about our judging others, and about adulterous thoughts. (Matt. 5:21-30.) When we are angry with one another, we wield that anger not merely as individuals, but as God’s agents who have been charged to work toward our own salvation and the salvation of our neighbors. When we harbor angry or judgmental or adulterous thoughts, we do so not merely as men and women, but as the very representatives and the icons of Christ Himself.

Similarly, Christ warns us about material greed and hardness of heart. It is for this reason that, while there is nothing wrong with worldly success by itself, we who have been given possession of this blessing are called to possess it as His stewards in the *full* sense of the word. St. Clement of Alexandria made this clear when he wrote, “For he who holds possessions ... and houses as the gifts of God, and ministers from them to the God who gives them *for the salvation of humanity* ... is he who is called blessed of the Lord, and called poor in spirit.”

Our stewardship includes ourselves, all that we are, and all that we have; there is nothing that is in our hands that God, as the exclusive owner and source of all good things, has not given us. Our very persons are not our own, for we have been bought with a price; and this that we may glorify God in our bodies, and in our spirits, which are God’s. (1 Cor. 6:19, 20.) The Epilogue to the Canons promulgated by the Fathers of the meeting at Gangra (c. 340), amplifies this point by stating, “we do not condemn wealth enjoyed with uprightness and beneficence” since they “bless the exceeding charities done by the brethren to the poor, according to the traditions of the Church.”

Thus, as we strive to multiply the gifts given to us by God and work toward success that is of this world, we should remain mindful of our roles as stewards – as God’s living agents and icons in this world – and act accordingly with a sense of duty, but more importantly, with as sense of love and faithfulness for God. — Deacon Anthony

*Coming Next Month – Part Four: “Worldly Success: The Acts of the Steward.”*



## St. George Parish Christmas Card

The Ladies Auxiliary is offering their Annual Parish Christmas Card for 2002. Just complete the form and give to Evelyn at the Bookstore or mail the form and your donation to: Evelyn Kosobud, c/o St. George Orthodox Church, 4530 E. Gold Dust Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85028

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

(Please print name clearly as you want it to appear on the card, no messages, name only)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

DONATION: \$20 \_\_\_ \$10 \_\_\_ \$5 \_\_\_

## Ladies Auxiliary of St. George Orthodox Church



Thanks to all of the ladies who made it to our first Saturday meeting in October. We will hold our next meeting on Saturday November 16<sup>th</sup> at 11:00am in the Fellowship Hall. It will be our annual Thanksgiving potluck lunch so please see Jennifer Sweilem to see what we still need. We hope to see some new faces that would not be able to attend our normal Thursday meetings.

Elections were held at our October meeting, so please join me in welcoming our new officers:

Vice President Michele Paise  
Secretary Joyce Bogues  
Treasurer Evelyn Kosobud  
Sunshine Leader Yvonne Tibsheraney

We are still in need of a new president, so all of those interested should attend our November meeting.

Our annual Cookie Exchange will be held on Monday December 2<sup>nd</sup> at 7:00pm in the Fellowship hall. The Cookie Exchange is open to all of the ladies of St. George. We ask that you bring a total of six dozen of your favorite home baked cookies. That is one dozen to share during our social and five dozen to trade. We will also be revealing our Secret Sisters in Christ during the Cookie Exchange as well as picking new names for the upcoming year. Please remember that you do not have to participate in the Secret Sisters program to attend the Cookie Exchange.

Enaam Hweimel will be hosting a Christmas Pastry sale during the month of December. She will be organizing baking parties, so please make yourselves available to help.

The Ladies will be selling the St. George Christmas cards beginning this month. Please see Evelyn Kosobud to have your family's name added to the card before November 30<sup>th</sup>. We will also be selling Christmas Flowers during the month of December to decorate our church for Christmas. If you would like to purchase flowers please see Evelyn as well.

Lastly, the ladies will be selling a 24 karat gold ornament of St. George Church as a fundraiser before Christmas. We will be pre-selling the ornament beginning now until November 30<sup>th</sup> for \$12.00 each. After November 30<sup>th</sup> the ornaments will be priced at \$15.00 each. If you would like to place an order, please see Jennifer Sweilem or contact her at 480-373-8123.



The St. George Ladies Auxiliary is collecting recipes to put together in a new cookbook for all to enjoy. 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!

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

As we are sure many of you have noticed, the initial phases of the renovations of 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! Listed below are some of the other upgrades that will be occurring over the next couple of weeks:

1. New counter tops will be installed in the pass through windows and in the kitchen.
2. The Ladies bathroom and powder room get a facelift too, counter tops, furniture and fixtures.

Things still on the wish list:

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

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. The idea is to allow our families to financially support the costs of the renovation in whatever capacity possible and in return for this support, be recognized on a beautiful wall plaque that will be placed in a permanent location in the hall. This plaque will be preserved for many generations ahead to see and feel the impact we have made on our community. Any support you can offer, would be greatly appreciated. Please earmark your donation for "Hall Renovation" so that we can keep proper track of how to format the

permanent plaque. 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.

**St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church**

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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

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 The Presentation of the Holy  
Theotokos into the Temple  
Wednesday November 20<sup>th</sup> @ 6:30 PM**

# November 2002

## Sunday November 3

<b>Epistle Reader</b>	II Cor. 11:31 to end; 12:1-9	James Saliba, Jr.
<b>Greeters</b>		Bruce & Lorraine Florence
<b>Ushers</b>	Molly Abrahams, Evelyn Kosobud, Anna Bronnenkant, Michael David, Sam Hanna, Tony Karraz	
<b>Altar Servers</b>	Mathew Saliba, Ronnie Sayegh, David Yates, Gus Sahawneh, Abanoob Sayegh	
<b>Hall Lock-up</b>		John Karadsheh
<b>Coffee Hour</b>		Open
<b>Stewardship Table</b>		Jim & Kathy Saliba

## Sunday November 10

<b>Epistle Reader</b>	Gal. 1:11-19	Ken Haddad
<b>Greeters</b>		Ray & Rose Marie Toronto
<b>Ushers</b>	Kathy Sayegh, Sally Ghiz, Marion Saba, David Ghiz, Farhat David, Dale Belt	
<b>Altar Servers</b>	Musa Sayegh, Rick Khoury, Joseph Sayegh, Odeh Sayegh, Andre Nelson	
<b>Hall Lock-up</b>		Sandra Hasbany
<b>Coffee Hour</b>		Robert & Buthaina Salem
<b>Stewardship Table</b>		Anna Bronnenkant & Stephanie Haddy

## Sunday November 17

<b>Epistle Reader</b>	Gal. 2:16-20	Marion Saba
<b>Greeters</b>		Richard & Marion Saba
<b>Ushers</b>	Irene Saigh, Enaam Hweimel, Margaret Ann Raymond, Sam Nassif, Ralph Clair, Richard Nichols	
<b>Altar Servers</b>	Simon Abrahams, Chris Doumani, Rami Khoury, Butros Sayegh	
<b>Hall Lock-up</b>		John Doumani
<b>Coffee Hour</b>		Ralph & Camilia Saigh
<b>Stewardship Table</b>		Bob & Sarah Foster

## Sunday November 24

<b>Epistle Reader</b>	Gal. 6:11-18	Bruce Florence
<b>Greeters</b>		Anna & Tess Bronnenkant
<b>Ushers</b>	Carrie Sayegh, Suzanne Sayegh, Salwa Nassar, Mike Ziton, Hani Sayegh, Ray Toronto	
<b>Altar Servers</b>	Danny Sayegh, Philip Boulanos, James Sayegh, Nick Kalinichenko	
<b>Hall Lock-up</b>		Marion Saba
<b>Coffee Hour</b>		Open
<b>Stewardship Table</b>		Ken & Lynda Haddad