

The Spirit of St. George

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

Volume X Number 3 Monthly except July & August

March 2003

Teen SOYO Travels to St. Anthony's Greek Orthodox Monastery

I was privileged to travel to St. Anthony's Greek Orthodox Monastery south of Florence, AZ, with St. George's Teen SOYO on Feb. 15, 2003. Although I'd worked as an Administrator for the Pinal County Community College District for many years, and had passed the Monastery site many times in my travels to our 3 campuses, I had never taken the time to stop at the Monastery and tour the grounds. What a wonderful trip we had. Although we'd been coached by Fr. Chris, and Youth Director, Katrina Bitar about the strict dress requirements, some of our group was surprised to find that even a small slit to allow foot movement in a very modest long skirt, had to be pinned closed. As we discussed before our tour of the grounds though, the Monks maintain a Cenobitic or common lifestyle that is centered on prayer and submission of personal will. The Monks were so helpful in providing us with loaners of proper attire. Our group agreed that this was a small price to pay for a lovely visit. When we arrived at the Monastery we were immediately provided with hospitality in the form of water and loukoumia (greek candy).

We then toured the lovely well-manicured grounds of the Monastery and each of the chapels. I was fascinated with the many different architectures. Issa Sweilem explained to me that the many styles are modeled after the many styles of Monasteries found on Mount Athos in Greece. For those who have internet access, check the Monastery's home page at <http://www.stanthonysonastery.org/anthon.htm> for additional color pictures of both the chapels and grounds.

I was impressed with the intricate craftsmanship in each of the many chapels. Beautiful Mosaic tile and imported marble was carefully laid for flooring. There were many hand carved benches, and beautiful icons. It seemed that each chapel that we toured was more beautiful than the former.

Touring the grounds was also a fascinating horticultural experience. The Monks have carved a beautiful oasis of plants in the virgin desert. There were beautiful gardens, with all types of native and European plants. Someone explained that the original site was selected because one of the Monastery's founders had heard the cactus chanting in the open desert.

The site also has water fountains in many different styles. The quiet, peaceful grounds were a joy to walk. We found many tourists taking day tours. The Monks also offer housing for pilgrims seeking longer stays. Guests are required to adhere to the Monks' daily schedule.

One of my favorite structures was St. George's Chapel. We paused to listen to Fr. Chris and several of our SOYO members chant from the Psalms. The chapel boasts a level of craftsmanship rarely seen in the United States.

We visited the Monastery's book store and found many wonderful souvenirs of our trip.

We went on to join the Monks for Vespers in St. Anthony's chapel. We had been asked not to take pictures of the monks, so there are no pictures from that part of our trip, but it was one of the most beautiful sanctuaries I'd ever seen. The lovely Solemn Vespers service was chanted in Greek. I was surprised at the attendance by so many people on a Saturday night so far out in the desert.

After Vespers, we went on to enjoy dinner with the Monks in their Trapeza. I found this to be an unusual experience, as I enjoy socializing with meals, and we'd been asked not to talk during dinner. We dined on a delicious vegetarian stew, cabbage salad, and the wonderful bread baked at the Monastery. Fr. Chris explained to us that the Monks maintain a diet that is designed to maintain life, but not to be rich. There were many types of citrus fruits for dessert. As per the rules, we were asked not to begin dining until the Abbot rang the bell, and further not to drink until a second bell was rung. As we dined, one of the monks, perched in a pulpit high above the Trapeza, read to us from the lives of the Saints. Several of our SOYO group were asked to help with clean up after our dinner.

This trip provided our members with a wonderful experience of Monastic life. I urge anyone who has not seen the Monastery to make a day trip from Phoenix. Kudos to our SOYO group for their thoughtful, sensitive questions. And many thanks to Fr. Chris and Katrina for their guidance. Jim Truscott

Bishop JOSEPH'S Visitations For March 2003

2	Holy Cross Mission, Palmdale, CA	Episcopal Visit
8 – 9	St. Mark Church, Irvine, CA	Episcopal Visit & PARISH COUNCIL SEMINAR
10	<i>Great Lent Begins</i>	
14 - 18	Ss. Peter and Paul Church, Potomac, MD	Sunday of Orthodoxy
23	St. Peter the Apostle Church, San Dimas, CA	Episcopal Visit
30	St. James Mission, Anaheim, CA	Episcopal Visit

SURROUNDED BY A CLOUD By Sub-Deacon Ron Abrahams

St. Caesarias, March 9th

Little is known of St. Caesarias. He lived for many years in the court of Constantius II, second son and successor of Constantine. It is known that he was the chief royal physician but also the emperor's friend.

In the year 368 a great earthquake hit Constantinople. It was very destructive and St. Caesarias was nearly killed by it. He was trapped under the rubble but was found and dug out in time to save his life without mishap. In this narrow escape it crystalized for him that the Lord watches over His own and without His will not one hair falls from the head of a man. Because of this experience St. Caesarias left the world and gave himself completely to the service of God.

His life is somewhat obscure, but St. Caesarias' life holds a valuable lesson for every Christian. In his near death experience he realized two truths of his (our) faith: our God is in absolute control and cares for His people. You might respond to his observations, "Well yeah, he nearly lost his life; that's an easy conclusion for him." And yet, how many live their lives one experience after another with very little regard for our great and loving God. When things go good, things are good – with little or no thanks to God. When things go bad, things are bad – we blame or disregard God. He is our Father, and as Jesus taught in His Sermon on the Mount, He cares for us more than birds or flowers (Mt 6:25-34). As our Father he gives us bread when we ask for it, and not rocks to eat (Mt 7:9-12).

The real lesson of St. Caesarias is not simply these facts, but that he contemplated their meaning for his life which resulted in life-changing habits. His contemplation took him to a point of action in that he 'left the world' and gave his whole life to the service of God. Again, you might say, "But I have a family to feed, my home is not yet paid for..." or other reasonable objection. But then, if we contemplate our situations as opportunities to draw closer to God - instead of making them barriers or delays in drawing closer to God - then we have realized the impact of the lesson of his life... pray for us St. Caesarias!

Church Records

Baptisms: Thomas Raymond Vincent Roberts ~ February 9, 2003 Parents: Thomas & Noel Roberts
Sara Taamneh ~ February 6, 2003 Parents: Mehyar & Hilanea Taamneh
Catherine Jie Baxter ~ February 22, 2003 Parent: Jean Baxter
Anthony George Sayegh ~ February 23, 2003 Parents: Marwan & Manal Sayegh

Funerals: Yacub Sayegh ~ January 31, 2003 Raymond Freije ~ March 6, 2003

Ladies Auxiliary for March

As we all know, the Antiochian Archdiocese recognizes March as Ladies Month and everyone's support throughout the month is greatly appreciated. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Ladies for all of their work and their continuing participation. I would also, like to acknowledge the newest participants in the Ladies Auxiliary meetings and functions. The more the merrier and as said time and time again, no invitation is required to attend the meetings or to participate when you can. Ladies of St. George Church, you are all members of this auxiliary and you all are welcome to join our projects and activities.

The Ladies Auxiliary of St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church would like to thank everyone for their support of the Bunko Night. Everyone had a great time and we count that as a big hit! They played Bunko, Wist and gained a few calories with the many wonderful desserts baked by the Ladies. THANK YOU.

The Ladies will be hosting refreshments on the first evening of Pan Orthodox Vespers, hosted by our church on Sunday, March 9th at 6:00 p.m. All contributions for refreshments to help us out would be greatly appreciated. Remember, Lenten dishes only.

And last but not least, on Sunday, March 30th, during Coffee Hour the ladies Auxiliary will be hosting a Lenten Lunch to help raise money for the Orphanages that they sponsor in the Middle East and through Project Mexico.

Orthodox Christianity: It's More Than Just "Right Belief"

Orthodoxy Christianity is not merely a ritual, or belief, or pattern of behavior. Rather, it is rather an elemental reality or power which transforms a person and gives the strength to live in the most difficult and tempting conditions, and prepares that person to depart with peace into eternal life. The essence of the true Orthodox Christian life is godliness or piety, which is "holding what is God's in honor." This is deeper than mere "right doctrine" and broader than merely adhering to the outward customs or behavior that characterize Orthodox Christians. Orthodox Christianity is these things and more: it is no less than the entrance of God into every aspect of life. It is a life lived in faith and love and fear of God.

Such an attitude toward Orthodox Christianity produces a way of life that entails the conscious struggle of humanity to unite itself with God. It entails the Church and its laws, and the shared, purposeful experience of this way of life, centered on the daily Divine services and a genuine Orthodox community, with its feeling of lightness, joy, and inward quietness.

Without a constant and conscious spiritual struggle even the best Orthodox life or community can become an artificial Orthodox atmosphere in which the outward manifestations of Orthodox life are merely "enjoyed" or taken for granted, while the soul remains unchanged. Without a constant and conscious spiritual struggle, Orthodox Christian life can become relaxed and comfortable, instead of focused on the struggle for salvation. There is no "formula" for the truly God-pleasing Orthodox life; anything that is merely outward can become a counterfeit; everything depends on the state of the soul, which must be trembling before God, having the law of God before it in every area of life, every moment keeping what is God's in honor, in the first place in life.

St. Theophan the Recluse offers the following guidance on leading an Orthodox Christian life:

- a) *Repent, and turn to the Lord, admit your sins, weep for them, with heartfelt contrition, and confess them before your spiritual father. Vow in word and in your heart before the face of the Lord not to offend Him further with your sins.*
- b) *Then by abiding in God in mind and heart, endeavor to, fulfill in body the duties and affairs which your station in life imposes upon you.*
- c) *In this labor most of all guard your heart from evil thoughts and feelings—pride, vainglory, anger, judging of others, hatred, envy, scorn, despondency, attachment to things and people, scattered thoughts, anxiety, all sensual pleasures and everything that separates the mind and heart from God.*
- d) *In order to stand firm in this labor, resolve beforehand not to: withdraw from what you recognize to be necessary, even if it may, mean death. To achieve this, when you first resolve to do so, offer your life to God in order to live not for your own sake, but for God alone.*
- e) *A support for life in this manner is a humble offering of one's self to the will of God, and not depending on one's self; the spiritual arena in which this life is accomplished is patience or an unswerving stand in the ranks of redeemed life, with a cheerful endurance of all the labors and unpleasantness that are linked with this.*
- f) *A support for patience is faith, or the assurance that, working in this way for God, you are His servant and He is your Master, Who sees your efforts, is gladdened by them and values them; hope that the help of God which is ever protecting you, is always ready and waiting for you, and will descend upon you in your time of need, that God will not forsake you to the end of your life, and preserving you as one faithful to His commandments here, among all temptations, He will lead you through death to His eternal Kingdom; love, which meditates day and night upon the beloved Lord, In every way strives to do only what is pleasing to Him, and avoids everything that might offend Him in thought, word or deed.*
- g) *The weapons of such a life are: prayers in church and at home, especially mental prayer, fasting according to one's strength and the rules of the Church, vigilance, solitude, physical labors, frequent confession of sins, Holy Communion, reading of the Word of God and the writings of the Holy Fathers, conversations with God-fearing people, frequent consultation with one's spiritual father about all the events of one's internal and external life. The foundation of all these labors in measure, time and place is wisdom, with the counsel of those who are experienced.*
- h) *Guard yourself with fear. For this remember the end—death, judgment, hell, the heavenly Kingdom. Most of all be attentive to yourself: preserve a sober mind and an untroubled heart.*
- i) *Set as a final goal the kindling of the fire of the spirit, so that the spiritual fire will burn in your heart and, gathering up all your strength into one, will begin to build your inner man and finally burn up the tares of your sins and passions.*

Arrange your life in this manner, and with God's grace you will be saved.

— Deacon Anthony

Adapted from St. Theophan the Recluse, How to Save the Soul, *Orthodox Life*, Vol. 27., No. 6 (Nov.-Dec., 1977), pp. 37-38; Archbishop Andrew of New-Diveyevo, The Restoration of the Orthodox Way of Life, St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1976.

O C M C Orthodox Christian Mission Center

Dare to Make a Difference... Be part of a 1-4 week

Mission Team this Summer!

- ALASKA - teaching / evangelism
- GHANA - construction / evangelism
- GUATEMALA - work with orphans
- ROMANIA - work with infants
- UGANDA - health care mission
- ALL OF THE ABOVE- Share God's love with those need!

CONTACT: teams@ocmc.org (904) 829-5132 www.ocmc.org/teams

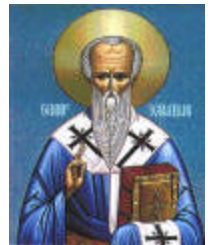
APPLY NOW! TEAMS ARE FILLING UP FAST !!

Orthodox Christian Mission Center ~ P.O. Box 4319 St. Augustine, FL 32085-4319

New Location for St. Ignatius of Antioch Antiochian Orthodox Mission

As of February 24, 2003, the Mission has moved to 3820 E. Main Street, Unit #11 in Mesa. This location can be found in the Pollack Trailside Center, East of Val Vista Drive and West of Greenfield Road on the north side of Main Street.

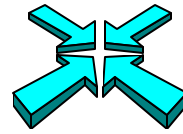
Log on to the Mission link: www.saintig.org/map.html



Rev. Fr. Elias Ziton ~ Pastor

Mission Phone # 480 892-6224 Mailing address: P.O. Box 4253, Mesa, AZ 85211-4253

YOUTH CONNECTION



A BLESSED LENTEN SEASON TO ALL!

Remember, children, that Great Lent is a time for ALL of us to prepare for the blessed feast of the Resurrection of our Lord.

We are asked to give up something important to us so that we may focus on the most important thing in our lives: our relationship with God.

Here's a little something that I hope will help you on your Lenten journey!

God bless you and be with you always!

HOW TO FAST FROM FAST FOOD!

(* = foods that are not permitted if you are fasting strictly from dairy)

Wendy's

- Deluxe Garden Salad
- Garden Veggie Pita
- Baked Potato *with broccoli & cheese or sour-cream and chives
- *French Fries!!!*
- **Frosty!!!*
- **Chocolate Chip Cookies!!!*

Mcdonald's

- *Breakfast Sandwiches w/out meat
- Hash browns
- *pancakes
- Filet 'O Fish
- McSalad Shaker Garden Salad
- Low-fat bran muffin
- *French Fries!!!*
- **The entire dessert menu!!!*

Carl's Jr.

- *Breakfast croissant
- *Scrambled Egg Breakfast
- *Sunrise Sandwich
- Carl's Catch Fish Sandwich
- *Criss Cut Fries!!!*
- *Regular French Fries!!!*
- **Yeah Dessert Menu!*

Taco Bell

- Bean Burrito
- 7-layer Burrito
- Nachos w/out meat
- Veggie Burrito or Taco
- *Cheese Quesadilla
- Cinnamon Twists

LIVE FROM THE CLASSROOM!

The fifth/sixth grade class has been studying very hard using our curriculum, "God Calls Us". To date we have studied Old Testament events and faithful men and women of God. We are now moving into New Testament studies beginning with the apostles and the earliest church fathers. Throughout the year we have enjoyed fun and friendship as these young people learn to live as Christ taught us. They are a lively group and really enjoy learning the truths of our Orthodox faith. An especially enjoyable event is "Bible or Babble?", a game we play frequently which challenges the students to determine which of three readings is "Bible" and which two are "babble"—it is always fun! Challenge your fifth or sixth grade student to a round at home! As we approach the season of Lent we are looking forward to incorporating lessons into our time which will deepen the students understanding of this very special occasion.

Tammy Belt & Shannon David, teachers

**PLEASE TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ALL THE LENTEN ACTIVITIES THAT YOUR
YOUTH DEPARTMENT HAS TO OFFER! 😊**

March

- Saturday, 1st- SOYO Progressive Dinner
- Thursday, 6th- HOPE- 10am
- Sunday, 9th- Let's talk about Lent! Pre-Lenten Retreat for all Sunday School Children-
CREATIVE WRITING IN SUNDAY SCHOOL
- Sunday, 16th- Sunday of Orthodoxy—No Sunday School
Children process with Icons
- Sunday, 23rd- ALL CREATIVE PROJECTS DUE
-SOYO Falafel sale
- Sunday, 30th- Holy Cross- No Sunday School
SOYO Desert Deanery Retreat, Friday 28th- 30th

April

- Thursday, 3rd- HOPE- 10am
- Saturday, 19th- Lazarus Saturday Sunday School Retreat
- Sunday, 20th- Palm Sunday--- No Sunday School
-SOYO Basket Auction
- Friday, 25—Good Friday, All-Night Vigil
- Sunday, 27---Pascha!--- No Sunday School--- Easter Egg Hunt

March 2003 Servers

Sunday March 2

Epistle Reader	I Cor. 8:8-9:2	Becky Abrahams
Greeters		Connie Abdoulah, Marybeth Saliba
Ushers	Rachel Abrahams, Evelyn Kosobud, Liz Kalinichenko, Jennifer Saigh, Margaret Ann Raymond, Natascha Karadsheh	
Altar Servers	Danny Sayegh Alex Saliba, Nick Kalinchenko, Basil Dahlan, Rami Khoury, Issa Sayegh, Butros Sayegh	
Hall Lock-up		Issa Sweilem
Coffee Hour		Ralph & Dina Sayegh
Stewardship Table		Aziz & Samar Haddad

Sunday March 9

Epistle Reader	Hebrews 12:1-10	Salwa Nasser, Irene Saigh
Greeters		Marion Saba, Kim Johnson
Ushers	Eva Quomsieh, Anna Bronnenkant, Sally Ghiz, Marion Saba, Enaam Hweimel, Suzanne Sayegh	
Altar Servers	Andy Leahu, Musa Sayegh, Odeh Sayegh, Brandon Fuja, James Sayegh, Abanoob Sayegh	
Hall Lock-up		Aziz Haddad
Coffee Hour		Suleiman & Najla Saigh
Stewardship Table		Ray & Rose Marie Toronto

Sunday March 16

Epistle Reader	Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-40	Tammy Belt
Greeters		Jeanette Clair, Kathy Saliba
Ushers	Molly Abrahams, Salwa Nassar, Irene Saigh, Heather Labbe, Ruby Rideout, Samira Sayegh	
Altar Servers	Simon Abrahams, Brian Johnson, Ronnie Sayegh, Joseph Sayegh, Alexander Thomas, Anthony Sahawneh, Jiries Karadsheh	
Hall Lock-up		Ralph Clair
Coffee Hour		Richard & Marion Saba
Stewardship Table		Faisal Saigh & Jack Khoury

Sunday March 23

Epistle Reader	Hebrews 1:10-2:3	Anna Bronnenkant
Greeters		Anna Bronnenkant, Heather Labbe
Ushers	Kathy Sayegh, Christine Sayegh, Jane Romley, Sarah Foster, Maram Quomsieh,, Mary Karadsheh	
Altar Servers	Mathew Saliba, Chris Doumani, Michael Aboud_Rihani, Philip Bolanos, Rick Khoury, Andre Nelson, Gus Sahawneh	
Hall Lock-up		Heather Sayegh
Coffee Hour		TEEN SOYO
Stewardship Table		Richard & Marion Saba

Sunday March 30

Epistle Reader	Hebrews 4:14-5:6	Marion Saba
Greeters		Christine Sayegh, Jennifer Saigh
Ushers	Carrie Sayegh, Samira Khoury, Bonnie Karraz, Nicole Doumani, Manal Sayegh, Sherry Nichols	
Altar Servers	Danny Sayegh Alex Saliba, Nick Kalinchenko, Basil Dahlan, Rami Khoury, Issa Sayegh, Butros Sayegh	
Hall Lock-up		Dan Thomas
Coffee Hour		LADIES AUXILARY LENTEN LUNCH
Stewardship Table		George & Sharon Maloley

**March
is Ladies Month**

