

# The Spirit of St. George

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

Volume X Number 7 Monthly except July & August

September 2003

## Reconciliation ~ A Message from Fr. Chris...

We think that *Paradise* and *Calvary*,  
*Christ's* cross, and *Adam's* tree, stood in one place;  
Look Lord, and find both *Adams* in me;  
As the first *Adam's* sweat surrounds my face,  
May the last *Adam's* blood my soul embrace.

So, in his purple wrapped receive me Lord,  
By these his thorns give me his other crown;  
And as to other's souls I preached thy word,  
Be this my text, my sermon to mine own,  
Therefore that he may raise the Lord throws down.

How beautiful are these final two verses of the poem, "Hymn to God, My God, in My Sickness," by the 17<sup>th</sup> century English poet, John Donne. They resonate with the inner conflict of humanity: on one hand, the tragedy of dependence on the world and on the other hand, the sheer longing for a life of holiness. Simultaneously seeking to reject Adam but yet embracing him, and yearning to embrace Christ but yet rejecting Him. This is the consummate struggle of mankind; this is the "good fight" into which we are thrust.

Holding fast to the teaching of the Gospel, Donne closes his poem with an oxymoron. The Lord's victory of Resurrection is won through the defeat of Crucifixion. "Therefore that he may raise the Lord throws down." The only way to transform a life is to put the old one to death. In Christ, life is not the beginning that ends with death, in fact, quite the opposite. In Christ we must *first* die so that nothing but life lies ahead of us!

Transformation of a worldly life into a life of holiness is a process that requires the whole effort of man. It is a deliberate decision to leave behind sinful ways and to be reconciled to the One who is the source of life. It is –in short – to be the Prodigal son. When the young man who was living among the swine "came to himself," when he sought transformation, he left the pigpen –and all that went with it – and returned to his father's house. He said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son, treat me as one of your hired servants." (Lk. 15:21) In his search for reconciliation, he shattered his former existence, even going so far as to renounce his sonship. He knew that he could not live both lives; he must decide where to devote himself. But his longing to return to his father's house was so much greater than his dependence on the

pigpen that he was willing to die as a son so that he could be reconciled, even as a slave.

Reconciliation is the first step in changing our lives. To transform from the first Adam into the second Adam, we must stop dead in our tracks, leave the pigpen and return to our Father. Reconciliation is a process that begins by recognizing that we are all cloaked in sin. We start to identify the reality of the life we're leading. We start to realize that it is repulsive to live as the swine do. So we arise and leave the pigpen. Next, our reconciliation directs us to go back to the only place that we know is safe; the only place that we know to be life-giving: our Father's house. Deep in our hearts and in our minds we know that life is a gift that only God can bestow. And when we arrive we beseech our Father to accept us again, even if this acceptance is only as a slave, for it is better to be a slave in the Father's house than to be a son of the pigpen. This pleading with the Father to restore us is called reconciliation or repentance my beloved. This is the beginning of transforming our lives!

God is pleading with each of us to hear these words of Donne's poem,

"As the first *Adam's* sweat surrounds my face,  
May the last *Adam's* blood my soul embrace."

As the fallen world we live in drives us towards the pigpen, we can only escape its depravity by taking up our own cross. By being baptized into the crucifixion of Christ (Rom. 6), we leave behind the old Adam, returning to our Father seeking to be reconciled. And the beauty of the promise of our Father is that for those sons and daughters who seek reconciliation they are not only allowed to come home, but shall be restored to the perfection of being a son and daughter! To our God and Father who longs for our reconciliation be praise and glory forever!

Bishop JOSEPH is traveling  
during the month of September.  
His visitations will resume in  
October.

## Church Records

**Chrismations:** Derek Justin Sheriff July 9<sup>th</sup>  
Renetta Williamson July 11<sup>th</sup>  
Joseph Ramzy Khoury July 12<sup>th</sup>  
Christine Susan Khoury July 12<sup>th</sup>  
Raquel Christine Khoury July 12<sup>th</sup>

**Baptisms:** Katherine Rosemary Runyon  
June 20<sup>th</sup>  
Parents: Lee & Robin Runyon  
Samer Michael Zuraikat June 28<sup>th</sup>  
Parents: Husam & Jennifer Zuraikat  
Janee M Welsh Aug 15<sup>th</sup>  
Godmother: Shirley Abraham

**Marriages:** George & Monique Karadsheh  
June 21<sup>st</sup>  
John & Margaret Hoffmaster  
July 26<sup>th</sup>

**Funerals:** Aftim Hanna Hussary July 22<sup>nd</sup>

## Surrounded By A Cloud

St. Thekla - September 23

By Deacon Raphael

St. Thekla, also commonly spelled Thecla, was from a well-to-do family in Iconium, a city in south central Turkey. She came to meet the Apostle in unusual circumstances. He and his fellow missionaries had come to Iconium and stayed with her neighbor Onesiphorus. Thekla listened to his teaching of the gospel from her window. After three days of listening to his teaching she resolved to remain a virgin and devote her life to Christ. Remember, Paul personally advocated a celibate life in devotion to Christ.

Her family did not support her decision: she was engaged to a young man named Thamyris. He and Theoklia (Thekla's mother) were enraged with her and plotted together how they might convince her yet to marry, but could not.

Thamyris soon found two jealous enemies of Paul's fellow-travelers, Demas and Ermogenes. The apostle knew of their hatred for him, but hoped that with love and teaching of the gospel their hearts would change. They told Thamyris that he was not alone. Many others had decided to lead a life of chastity because of the Apostle Paul. He should go to the governor who, when he learned of what was happening, would destroy the apostle. Then he would get his bride back.

Paul was soon arrested and jailed. Thekla bribed the guards with her jewelry to stay with him in prison to hear more of his teaching of Christ. Thamyris and Theoklia soon discovered this and were enraged even more.

For Paul's part, he was scourged and banished from the city. Thekla, however, when questioned by the governor, gave no signs of a change of heart. Her angry mother fell into a rage and demanded her daughter be burned at a stake as an example for others.

A large pyre was prepared, but just as it was lit a great rain came and extinguished it doing her no harm. The governor decided not to persecute her any further, but to also banish her from Iconium.

Thekla quickly found Paul and asked to be baptised. He refused but told her it would happen in God's own time.

She travelled with him to Antioch, now the Apostle's disciple. There a nobleman, Alexander, was taken with her beauty but she rejected him. He attacked her to have her as his own, but in

## Ladies First Meeting Scheduled

The Ladies Auxiliary of St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church, will hold their first meeting of the 2003/04 Church year on September 6<sup>th</sup> in the Fellowship Hall at 11:30 a.m. This meeting will be a potluck luncheon and elections will be held. The position of President and Vice-President will be co-chaired so come prepared to vote.

## Your Trash...Our Treasure!

The Ladies Auxiliary will have a rummage sale in October. They will be looking for gently used furniture, clean clothing on hangers, toys, books, and any other household items that you no long want. Please set aside usable items in GOOD, CLEAN condition only! More information will be announced in the church bulletins following our next Ladies meeting. Thank you for supporting the Ladies Auxiliary of St. George Church.



defending herself she tore his royal robes and knocked off his crown. People witnessing this laughed. Alexander was humiliated. That was apparently enough to find herself in an arena awaiting hungry beasts. A lioness came out but defended her, killing a bear and lion. All the wild beasts were let out and the lioness was killed.

Thekla prepared for the worst. Crossing herself she prayed for courage. Just then she noticed a large tank of water for aquatic animals. She jumped in asking Christ to baptize her.

Alexander decided on another cruel death for Thekla: she would be tied to two bulls and torn apart. As the bulls were sent in opposite directions, the ropes fell off.

This was too much for a niece of the Caesar's, who was in attendance - she fainted. At first, supposing her dead, Alexander presumed this a bad omen (Caesar might not take it well that the event caused his niece to die). He decided to release Thekla. Some accounts say it was the crowds, observing her inability to die, chanting 'Great is the God of Thekla' that caused Alexander to release her.

Thekla stayed, ironically, with Caesar's niece for eight days converting her whole household to Christ. Then she caught up with St. Paul again. With his blessings she went to the desert in Selucia. While there she experienced other persecutions, started a nunnery, healed many people, and converted many to Christ. She lived to be ninety years old.



## **CONVICTS IN CHRIST**

The history of the Church tells of many people indicted, tried, sentenced and convicted of being "Christian." St. John the Baptist was charged and beheaded. (Mark 6:21-29). St. Stephen was put on trial and stoned to death. (Acts 7:58). Regarding the fate of the Apostles, all except for St. John were put on trial and martyred. Under the reigns of the Roman Emperors Nero through Diocletian, Christians were indicted, tried, convicted, sentenced and executed. Their deaths were not gentle. Those found to be Christians were tortured, crucified or sewn into the skins of wild animals and thrown before fierce dogs. Others were covered in wax or pitch, nailed to wooden posts, and burned as torches and human candles. Christian churches and

copies of the Gospels were burned. Food in the markets were sprinkled with pagan sacrificial wine, so that Christians either had to commit apostasy or starve. When people were even suspected of being Christians, they were given the opportunity to prove otherwise by offering sacrifice to the pagan gods under the scrutiny of a tribunal. But these early, persecuted Christians "proved" that they were Christians by enduring a cross-examination of torture and death.

Although the Orthodox Church (in America) is not persecuted in an historical sense, we are still subject to the same cross-examination endured by our predecessors, for this question is eternal:

***If you were put on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?***

Don't think that being a caring, loving person is enough evidence, for there are many caring and loving people who are not Christians. Don't think that being committed to your family and friends is enough, for there are many non-Christians who could claim the same thing. Don't think that believing in the Godhead of the Holy Trinity makes you a Christian, for "even the demons believe that and shudder." James 2:19. Don't think that because you have strong beliefs in God and the Bible, about Christ, or can recite the Creed or Bible verses or catechisms or Church doctrines is evidence that you are a Christian... for Satan can do the same, and better. See Matthew 4:5-6.

This is not merely a question of whether you are living an authentic and consistent Christian life, no matter where you are or whom you are around. Nor is it merely a question of whether you are the same person at home and in the workplace as you are in the Communion line.

Rather, think of the question this way: would your acts and omissions **prove** to The Judge that you are a true follower of Christ? A follower of the world? Or would there be a hung jury?

Imagine the following scene...

The prosecution makes their case with indisputable facts. "Your Honor, the Accused is clearly a Christian. The Accused attended Church on numerous occasions and was a member and supporter of the Church. There is record of the Accused's Baptism, that the Accused did charitable

acts and regularly partook of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. The record shows that witnesses from the Accused's workplace and community all testify that the Accused wore a Cross and professed to be a Christian, and not a Jew or Muslim. These are the plain facts, your Honor. The Accused must be convicted of being a Christian based on these facts."

But the defense makes the case for the Accused to go "free." "Your Honor," the defense would argue, "my client is a member of the Church and was, in fact, present when certain services and Sacraments occurred. But my client is not guilty of being a Christian; my client was coerced. My client's mother and family and friends, from the time of childhood to the time of adulthood, they all expected my client to go to those services. Often my client visited the Church merely to see old acquaintances or distant relations. The Court should not confuse merely being considerate to one's family and friends - as even the atheists are - with being a follower of Christ. As for the membership, yes, a membership in the Church does exist, and my client's name is found in the enrollment books. But that is merely a matter of depositing a small, annual sum of money; my client did so to maintain a respectful standing in the community and to vote on Church issues. As for the Baptism, your Honor, my client was merely an infant, and cannot be held responsible for the acts of eager parents. And, your Honor, as for the charitable deeds that my client is accused of; my client gave the minimum amount that was acceptable. Exhibits A through G, are my client's financial records. As you can see, your Honor, my client spent far more money on - well, its quite clear, I need not cause embarrassment - than on the Church or any Christian organization."

In closing remarks, the prosecution sticks to their undeniable facts. The defense, however, counters with two scriptures. "Your Honor, Jesus Christ gave a commandment. If it pleases the court - Luke chapter 10, verse 27... 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart, and with *all* thy soul, and with *all* thy strength, and with *all* thy mind, and thy neighbor *as thyself*.' Your Honor, we have found no witness who will testify that my client in any way has met this criteria. Indeed, the record shows that my client loved worldly things far more than Christ, and certainly more than any neighbor. What is more, your Honor, Jesus

Christ said in John 13:35: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.' But where are the prosecution's witnesses to prove my client had Christian love? Yes, family and friends have sworn that my client showed them affection, but no one else has. To the contrary, my client has testified that he is familiar with Matthew 25, verses 34-40. But no hungry, no thirsty, no naked, no sick, no prisoners, no strangers, none of these has come forward to accuse my client of Christian acts. Your Honor, this is a capital case; my client's life and death are in the balance. The prosecution may have proven my client was present at a few Church services and for some Sacraments, but the prosecution has not proven beyond a reasonable doubt that my client is truly a Christian. My client must be set free!"

If the accused were you or I, should we take the stand in our own defense? What would we say? Would we hang our head in shame? Or would we be convicts in Christ?

- Deacon Anthony

### Annual Orthodox Women's Retreat Coming In November!

Each year the women from all the Orthodox parishes get together for a retreat. This year St. Haralambos Church will be hosting the event Friday & Saturday, November 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>. Look in up coming newsletters and bulletins for further details as to times for the retreat as well as topics and speakers.

### Reminder Box:

- ❖ Sunday School Starts Sept. 7<sup>th</sup>
- ❖ Bible Study Starts Up Sept. 9<sup>th</sup>
- ❖ Pathways Begins Sept. 9<sup>th</sup>
- ❖ Pathways Begins Sept. 9<sup>th</sup>
- ❖ HOPE Begins Sept. 11<sup>th</sup>
- ❖ Teen SOYO New Members Party Sept. 13<sup>th</sup>

# September 2003

## Sunday September 7

<b>Epistle Reader</b>	Galatians 6:11-18	Philip Abdoulah
<b>Greeters</b>		Bob & Sarah Foster
<b>Ushers</b>	Carrie Sayegh, Anna Bronnenkant, Sally Ghiz, Adel Hweimel, Bruce Florence, James Saliba, Jr.	
<b>Altar Servers</b>	Mathew Saliba, Chris Doumani, Michael Aboud-Rihana, Philip Bolanos, Rick Khoury, Andre Nelson,	Gus Sahawneh
<b>Hall Lock-up</b>		Sandra Hasbany
<b>Coffee Hour</b>		Dr. Abraham & Christina Sayegh
<b>Stewardship Table</b>		Richard & Marion Saba

## Sunday September 14

<b>Epistle Reader</b>	I Corinthians 1:18-24	Becky Abrahams, Najla Saigh
<b>Greeters</b>		Daniel & Jane Romley
<b>Ushers</b>	Rachel Abrahams, Enaam Hweimel, Lillian Macoule, George Maloley, Joe Abraham, Jim Bagues	
<b>Altar Servers</b>	Danny Sayegh, Alex Saliba, Nick Kalinichenko, Basil Dahlan, Ramy Khoury, Issa Sayegh,	Butros Sayegh, Joseph Hasou
<b>Hall Lock-up</b>		John Doumani
<b>Coffee Hour</b>		Khalil & Jennifer Saigh
<b>Stewardship Table</b>		Sam Nassif

## Sunday September 21

<b>Epistle Reader</b>	Galatians 2:16-20	Anna Bronnenkant
<b>Greeters</b>		Bruce & Lorraine Florence
<b>Ushers</b>	Simon Abrahams, Margaret Ann Raymnd, Suzanne Sayegh, Tony Karraz, David Ghiz, Sami Lorenzo	
<b>Altar Servers</b>	Andy Leahu, Musa Sayegh, Odeh Sayegh, Brandon Fuja, James Sayegh, Abanoob Sayegh,	Jared Blackwell
<b>Hall Lock-up</b>		Brigette DeRienzo
<b>Coffee Hour</b>		Open
<b>Stewardship Table</b>		Margaret Raymond & Brigette DeRienzo

## Sunday September 28

<b>Epistle Reader</b>	II Corinthians 4:6-15	John Doumani
<b>Greeters</b>		Richard & Marion Saba
<b>Ushers</b>	Krystal Saigh, Salwa Nassar, Irene Saigh, Sam Nassif, Ralph Clair Richard Nichols	
<b>Altar Servers</b>	Simon Abrahams, Brian Johnson, Ronnie Sayegh, Joseph Sayegh, Alexander Thomas,	Anthony Sahawneh, Jiries Karadsheh
<b>Hall Lock-up</b>		Issa Sweilem
<b>Coffee Hour</b>		Mehyar & Helen Taamneh
<b>Stewardship Table</b>		George & Sharon Maloley

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## Change of Service Requested

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Monday – Friday

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

### Church Services

Sat. Vespers resume October 4<sup>th</sup> @ 5pm.  
Sun. Matins 8:50 a.m.  
Sun. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.  
Sunday School 11:00 a.m.  
Evening Feast Days 6:30 p.m.

Confessions are heard the following times, or  
by making an appointment with Fr. Christopher:  
Sunday 9:00-9:25 a.m.

Parishioners are encouraged to submit articles for  
consideration.

**Sunday ~ September 14th**  
The Feast of the Elevation of the  
Holy Cross

Please note the deadline for submitting an article is now the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month for the next month's issue.