

# THE SPIRIT OF ST. GEORGE NEWSLETTER OF ST. GEORGE ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



The Spirit of St. George

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*St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church  
A Parish of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North  
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## Orthodox Christianity and the Marketplace of Religion

Deacon Anthony J. Blackwell

### My Father's Beer; My Fathers' Church

I remember my father drinking Rheingold beer. Brewed in New York, by New Yorkers, for New Yorkers, Rheingold had captured as much as 35% of the state's beer market throughout the 1950s and 60s. As a boy of six or seven, I knew that when I grew up, I would drink Rheingold: The Beer Of My Father.

But I never got a chance. In 1976, when I was just 10, the last of Rheingold's breweries had closed, having been out-marketed, out-shelf-spaced, out-priced and out-sold by Budweiser, Coors and the other mega-breweries. I haven't heard the catchy TV jingle "My beer is Rheingold, the dry beer" for over 30 years -- except when I nostalgically hum it to myself and draw the uncertain stares of my children.

It's those uncertain stares that remind me of the Orthodox Church. Let me explain.

Christianity is a world religion. It transcends, through its adherents and influence, all geographic, ethnic and cultural limitations. You can find Christians on every continent, in every ethnic group and in every culture. In fact, in most places, Christianity is clearly dominant. There are more Christians on the continent of Africa than there are Muslims. In Europe and the Americas, Christianity has triumphed so clearly that the next largest "religious" group is the small minority who claim no religion at all. Indeed, the Christianity is so transcendent that, in the great melting-pot of the world -- the United States -- two-thirds of Americans consider the United States to be a "Christian nation." Given the world-encompassing, ecumenic and

evangelic victory of the Gospel, I know that I should feel secure in that fact that the Faith of our Fathers will endure until the end of days.

But I don't.

### Watered-down Beer; Watered Down Christianity

Anyone who lives in America knows that Christianity is amazingly diverse -- and competitive. With the constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and freedom of religion, there are so many different "brands" of Christianity being circulated in the marketplace of ideas that would-be Christian adherents often do not understand the basic tenets of their faith. This lack of understanding, combined with the American commoditization of religion, means that most Americans

*(Continued on page 2)*

change their brand of Christianity at least once in their lifetimes. It means that others simply leave the faith altogether. And it means that most American Christians do not believe that traditional Christian teachings are true.

Theological competition in the marketplace has led American Christians to increasingly become what sociologist Christian Smith calls "Moralistic Therapeutic Deists." These "Christians" do not adhere to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, which has always been the fundamental, doctrinal statement of Christian belief. Instead, the core of their catechism, as Smith explains, is:

1. A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when he is needed to resolve a problem.
5. Good people go to heaven when they die.

As one commentator aptly stated, "Theologically speaking, this watered-down, anemic, insipid form of Judeo-

Christianity is pretty repulsive. But, politically speaking, it's perfect: thoroughly anodyne, inoffensive, tolerant. And that makes it well-suited to serve as the civil religion of the highly differentiated 21st century United States."

So, yes, "Christianity" continues to dominate the shelf-space of the American religious mindset, and for that, I suppose I should be thankful. After all, it's not Satanism, at least not overtly. But I sense that the Christ who is typically being packaged, marketed and purveyed to our children is hardly the Christ we have received from our Fathers.

#### **The Orthodox Church: No Shelf-Space**

As an Orthodox Christian, I look to the Church to proclaim the True Faith in the face of heterodoxy, as it has always done. But I also looked to Rheingold to show Anheuser-Busch what real beer was. Rheingold failed, and what is worse, Orthodox Christianity in America is not Rheingold in New York. We do not have a 35% market share to start with. The Pew Forum's 2008 U.S. Religious Landscape Survey pegged Orthodox Christians in America at just 0.6% of the American population. But at least the Pew Forum gave us our own line. In the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) published March 2009, Orthodox Christianity is dismissively

registered at less than 1% and is relegated to the appendix where we are grouped together with Moravians, Quakers and other marginal faiths of recent vintage.

While Orthodox Christianity is not -- and as our history shows, has never been -- engaged in a popularity contest, the voice and presence of Orthodoxy in America hard to find. The ARIS survey question - "Are you Protestant, Catholic, Mormon, Orthodox -- such as Greek or Russian Orthodox, or something else?" -- demonstrates that Orthodox Christianity, after more than a century in the continental United States, is still not recognizable to most Americans unless it is co-branded with an ethnicity. The sad conclusion from this is that Orthodoxy, at least in America, is not viewed as a world religion. We are, after a century of American presence, still largely perceived by our neighbors as "tribal" -- geographically circumscribed, ethnically parochial, culturally limited.

The problem boils down to this: if one were able to go to a supermarket and look for "Genuine Christianity - Jesus Christ's Original Formula," Orthodoxy would not even be on the shelf. As long as this remains the case, we will remain unable to effectively speak out against heterodoxy or enlighten the masses with Truth.

**Orthodox Christianity: Are We**

### Losing Our Way?

We can, of course, be somewhat selfish with our faith. After all, "we have seen the True Light," and if others refuse to hear, then we can shake the dust from our feet. Cf. Matthew 10:14-15. American culture, however, loudly encourages independence, individualism and moral relativism. This culture permeates American religion, which explains in part the staggering number of Protestant denominations. But the American culture of Egoism is also permeating American Orthodoxy, and it is undermining the faithful.

When asked "Do you believe in God or a universal spirit?", only 71% of Orthodox Christians were "absolutely certain." Twenty-five percent responded with various forms of "maybe" or "I don't know." And amazingly, four percent of self-proclaimed Orthodox responded that they did not believe in God at all.

When Orthodox Christians were asked whether the Holy Bible was (1) the literally true Word of God, (2) the Word of God but not necessarily true, or (3) was written by men and was not the word of God, the responses were nearly evenly split, indicating a deep misunderstanding of the nature of Scripture.

And as for our self-proclaimed transmission of the one, true, Holy and Apostolic

Faith, only 28% of Orthodox Christians agreed that "There is only ONE true way to interpret the teachings of my religion," while 68% agreed that "there is MORE than one true way to interpret the teachings of my religion."

"John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, move over. Paul the Apostle, step aside. You too, Jesus, this is America, not Palestine. I've got my own version of Orthodoxy and it is equally true and equally valid." This is the message that is subtly -- and often not subtly -- transmitted to Orthodox in America. That message is loud. It is unabating. It is accompanied by the promises of the world. And the faithful are listening.

### The Church and Evangelism

Smooth, inoffensive, politically-correct religious alternatives. The ease and acceptance of changing Christian "brands." The lack of Orthodox "shelf space" in the Christian marketplace. The less-than-firm convictions of many Orthodox faithful. All of this makes it easy for the members of the flock to go astray in ways that were never possible in the Mother countries of Orthodoxy.

I've been told that the Orthodox Church "does not do evangelism" -- but few things could be further from the truth. The Apostles constantly evangelized, spreading the

Gospel even unto their deaths in distant lands. Orthodoxy evangelized regions, nations and empires. But for those raised in an Orthodox country, then neither you nor anyone you've ever known have had to evangelize, chiefly because everyone was already Orthodox. After a few centuries of that, it is becomes easy to conclude that Orthodoxy is not evangelical.

But America is not the Old Country. Rheingold Beer, sitting on it's 35% market share, could scarcely imagine it would be out of business within a decade. Likewise, we cannot take the Faith of our Fathers for granted. We need to speak up as they did. We need to make sure that our voice is heard as they did. We need to make sure that we do not hide our faith under a bushel, but that we light our faith with a lamp as they did. Cf. Matthew 5:15. But most of all, we must conduct ourselves as Christians -- eating, breathing, living, sleeping and dying in Christ Jesus -- and setting a shining example to others in an apostate world -- just as they did. Do not look only to our God-fearing clergy to do this: the best witness to the resurrected Christ is to be found in your own flesh; the best evangelism you can make is to yourself.

May there never be a day when we find ourselves nostalgically humming "Christ is Risen" and drawing the uncertain stares of our children.

*Bibliography*

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## St. John the Divine

**Andre House News...**Our volunteer group is down to 5 members each time we serve the homeless and poor of our city. Our schedule is the first Tuesday and the third Monday, and we meet at the church to carpool at 2:30 PM, work from 3 to 7:00 PM at the soup kitchen, and we're back at the church parking lot by 7:30 PM. If you would like to join us, please contact me at (602) 989-5262.

During the summer months, Andre House is really short handed, and we are asked to bring **10 people instead of 5** since so many volunteers are on vacation or were snowbirds who have left for the summer. The need is Great! Please help us.

We have also received a request from Andre House for this Spring. They need donations of the following items: Bottled water (cases of individual bottles), Sunscreen (especially travel sizes), Phone cards (for long distance phone calls), Men's jeans (especially sizes 30 - 38), Men's & Women's Underwear (average sizes), Deodorant, Men's tennis shoes (sizes 8 - 13), Cough drops, ibuprofen, vitamins, etc. Please bring your donations to the church office labeled for Andre House. Thank you.

**We simply need to say "yes" to His call.**

Jim Bogue



***Bishop JOSEPH'S Visitations***



**May 1-11, 2009**

Holy Myrrh-Bearers Church, Bonners Ferry, ID;

St. John the Baptist Church, Post Falls, ID;

Christ the Savior Church, Spokane Valley, WA;

St. Nicholas Church, Spokane, WA  
*Patronal Feast Day and Episcopal Visits*

**May 15-17, 2009**

St. George Church, Portland, OR  
*Episcopal Visit*

**May 19-24, 2009**

St. Stephen Church, Campbell, CA  
*Annual Diocesan Parish Life Conference*

**May 28-31, 2009**

Antiochian Village, Ligonier, PA  
*Spring Meetings of the Bishops and Board of Trustees*

*A Very Blessed*

*&*

*Happy Mother's Day*



***Church Records***

**Baptisms:**

Robert Shirar ~ April 18, 2009

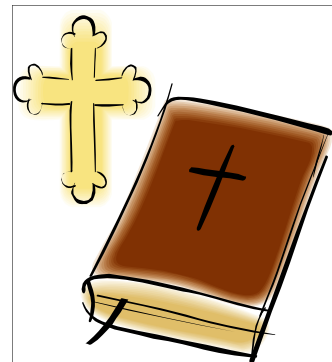
**Chrismations:**

Humberto Sirvent ~ April 18, 2009

**Funerals:**

Louise Lorenzo ~ March 21, 2009

Albert Haddy ~ April 16, 2009



## May 2009 Servers

### Sunday                      May 3

Epistle Reader	Michael Sayegh
Greeters	Richard & Marion Saba
Ushers	George Odeh, Sarah Foster, Marion Saba, Aziz Haddad, Majed Sayegh, John Doumani
Altar Servers	Chris Doumani, Andrew Stokich, Chase McBride, Chris Stokich, Mark Markor, Sayeed Sweis
Hall Lock-up	Michael Haddad
Coffee Hour	Open

### Sunday                      May 10

Epistle Reader	Krystal Saigh, Nawal Salman
Greeters	Ray & Rose Marie Toronto
Ushers	Marina Sayegh, Enaam Hweimel, Margaret A. Raymond, David Ziton, Bob Foster, Jay Banna
Altar Servers	Jared & Caleb Blackwell, Jay & Ray Banna, Layne Larsen, Gergey Mousa, Brandon Horan
Hall Lock-up	Pete Doku
Coffee Hour	Open

### Sunday                      May 17

Epistle Reader	Yvonne Vranes
Greeters	Connie Abdoulah & Jenna Saliba
Ushers	Freddy Dahdal, Kathy Nasser, Abeer Sayegh, Dino Sayegh, Khalil Saigh, James DeRienzo
Altar Servers	Chris Doumani, Andrew Stokich, Cahse McBride, Chris Stokich, Mark Markor, Sayeed Sweis
Hall Lock-up	Issa Sweilem
Coffee Hour	Open

### Sunday                      May 24

Epistle Reader	Larry Haddy
Greeters	Megan & Chris Doumani
Ushers	Anthony Sahawneh, Natascha Karadsheh, Mary Karadsheh, Suleiman Saigh, Shaker Yacoub, Elias Mousa
Altar Servers	Jared & Caleb Blackwell, Jay & Ray Banna, Layne Larsen, Gergey Mousa, Brandon Horan
Hall Lock-up	Eva Quomsieh
Coffee Hour	Open

### Sunday                      May 31

Epistle Reader	Michael Hopper
Greeters	Tony & Bonnie Karraz
Ushers	Melissa Sayegh, Nikki Doumani, Nesrine Ziton, James Saliba Jr., Pete Doku, Tony Karraz
Altar Servers	Chris Doumani, Andrew Stokich, Cahse McBride, Chris Stokich, Mark Markor, Sayeed Sweis
Hall Lock-up	Husam Zuraikat
Coffee Hour	Open

## May 2009 Calendar

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2 <b>Great Vespers 5pm</b>
3 Orthros 8:50am Divine Liturgy 10am Sunday School 11am	4	5 Andre House 2:30pm Chanting 5:30pm PATHWAYS 6:30pm Bible Study 6:30pm	6 Teen Bible Study 6:30pm	7 Ladies Mtg 11:30am  Parish Council 6:30pm	8	9 6:30am Club Christina  <b>Great Vespers 5pm</b>
10 Orthros 8:50am Div Lit 10am Sunday School 11am	11	12 Chanting 5:30pm PATHWAYS 6:30pm Bible Study 6:30pm	13 Teen Bible Study 6:30pm	14	15	16 <b>Great Vespers 5pm</b>
17 Orthros 8:50am Divine Lit. 10am Sunday School 11am <b>Sunday Schl Graduation</b>	18 Andre House 2:30pm	19 PATHWAYS 6:30pm <small>NO</small> Chant or Bible Study	20 Teen Bible Study 6:30pm	21	22	23 <b>NO Great Vespers</b>
24 Orthros 8:50am Divine Liturgy 10:00am	25	26 <b>NO PATHWAYS OR BIBLE STUDY</b>	27 Evening Divine Liturgy 6:30pm Ascension of Jesus Christ	28	29	30 <b>NO Great Vespers</b>
31 Orthros 8:50am Divine Liturgy 10:00am						

## ***What is the bottom line?***

By Elias Mousa

What is the deal from doing the festival? We all know the festival in our church is the biggest event that generates good money that will be added to our church revenues and that will help to pay our church expenses. Besides financial concerns, we also seek to welcome visitors who are seeking Christ and his church. For that reason the name of our church is larger than any food sales. We should not a closed and foreign group, even though as Orthodox we are the best kept secret, but we must make known that we expect and welcome visitors.

Because the greeter is the first person that the visitor encounters, and because the first impressions are lasting, we need to pay great attention to our greeters. They seat guests with friendly parishioners who can answer questions and make them feel appreciated. Their seat should be always available. We should never ever tell a guest that a seat is reserved and not available to them. We are well known for our hospitality, we are well known for the hospitality extended to guests in our home. And that extended hospitality should transfer to God's home during our festival.

And this is the exact meaning of our festival.

And here my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ help me to keep working to present the vision of our festival and that is to welcome our guests into our heritage, our culture, our home, and most importantly our Faith.

I am not personally looking to challenge anyone. However, I believe strongly in our festival mission and that our goal can only be achieved by working together. I also believe vigorously that our festival can be distinguished from others by the quality of our food, organization, atmosphere and hospitality.

We will always build our reputation based on our quality. That quality is something we need to be mindful of so it doesn't survive with us for a short period of time, but for generations to come. And that is one of our goals, not to just survive but to thrive. What can we do not just to survive but to turn this into a defining point in our history?

So the bottom line is our Lord Jesus Christ, period. The bottom line is to be together working toward our faith, our church and to be ready to be with him in the heavenly kingdom. The results are our responsibility, regardless. And that is the end of story, at least for now....

*(Continued on page 9)*

(Continued from page 8) *What is the bottom line?* By Elias Mousa

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

On behalf of the festival committee I would like to extend our thanks to all of you for helping and sharing your time with us during our festival in February!

And as I am aware that many of us are curious as to the financial success of the festival, I am going to put in your hand the summary of that result:

Starting capital                      \$4900.00

Our net profit will be as follow:

- Cash sales                              28111.00
- Credit card                              3192.92

The mixer                              2891.60

What is the bottom line?

The bottom line is to be together working for our faith, our church and to be ready to be with him in the heavenly kingdom. The bottom line is our lord Jesus Christ, regardless of any financial result.

God bless you all,

At your service,

In Christ

Elias Mousa

Visit our website: [www.stgeorgeaz.org](http://www.stgeorgeaz.org)

St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church

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## THE SPIRIT OF ST. GEORGE

<b>Church Services</b>	
Saturday Great Vespers	5:00 pm
<b>Sun. Matins</b>	<b>8:50 am</b>
Sun. Divine Liturgy	10:00 am
<b>Sunday School</b>	<b>After Communion</b>
Evening Feast Days	6:30 pm

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Office Hours 9:00 am – 5:00 pm Tuesday – Friday

The Rev. Fr. Christopher Salmay (602) 765-6069

Just a reminder ... Confessions are heard on Saturday evenings before Great Vespers, or anytime, by making an appointment with Fr. Christopher.

Parishioners are encouraged to submit articles for consideration.

Please note the deadline for submitting articles for approval is the 10th of the month before the actual issue date.