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How to remember the dead

by the Very Rev. Fr. Elias Bitar

Memorial Day indicates the unofficial beginning of Summer. People plan trips and take long weekend vacations. But most of us miss the point of the Holiday. To make it more meaningful we should at least recall the true meaning of the weekend.

Those who lost their lives defending the freedoms we enjoy in this country. At least once a year we pause in prayer and respect filled with gratitude to their love, bravery and sacrifices. We should never forget what they did and why. Gratefulness is a beautiful thing to have in our hearts. It is good never to forget those with whose blood our freedom was parched.

At the same time when I look at our church and admire its beauty I remember the many people of our past who are now gone to be with God. Those people who worked so hard to see our church erected. Every beautiful stained glass speaks of the love of a departed uncle, aunt, father, mother, brother or sister. Our forefathers of blessed memories sacrificed a great deal so we could enjoy our church today. We owe them not only gratitude, but also emulation. If you look at our church today and see the faces not only of the saints, but those whose love made the purchase of the icons possible, we bow our heads in love and respect. "Memory eternal and thank you" we say. We should not stop here, but ask ourselves, "would our children say the same about us and our sacrifices?" Would the walls of our church speak of our love to our grand children? Would they remember us fondly on memorial day fifty years from now? Are we being imitators of our fathers and good

example for our children? Our founders were great examples, but it is our love that will carry the church into the future. The best way to maintain our beautiful church is to ever be grateful for our ancestors and entrust the church to the faithful hands of our children.

Have we prepared our children to be good stewards of God's Holy Church? Do they love God and are faithful to His church? Do they have in us good examples to follow? As long as the devil exists evil and evil doers will be in the church. We need to remain steadfast in our commitment to Christ and His teachings. Our children need a good example and teacher. Let us remember our fathers' good deeds and our children's need for good models. On Memorial Day, could we not forget that unless we keep the faith alive, we need to erect a grave stone which has our faith on it. Do we want to be remembered as having a dead faith or a living commitment to Christ? Our church needs pillars: not the ones that support the roof, but the ones that support the church's teachings and message.

This year we celebrated Pentecost on the Sunday of Memorial Day. What a coincidence. As we recall the Holy Spirit coming down on the church, we remember our past. It was filled with saints, martyrs, and evil doers. Those who build a shield between them and the Holy Spirit give the devil a chance to succeed in their life. Those who allow the Holy Spirit to be silenced by the evil spirit sell their souls to darkness. We are baptized, therefore chrismated and given a miraculous ability to stay with Christ. Let us not give that up.

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• Community News •

Baptisms

- Riyad Elias MoussaApril 21, 2007
- Marielle Grace Balonze.....April 22, 2007
- Joseph Abuissa.....April 29, 2007
- Dominic Stibryan.....May 20, 2007

Marriages

- Khaled John Klele
& Sabrina Concetta Caggia.....April 15, 2007

Funerals

- Sadie Ayoub.....May 19, 2007
- George Moussab.....May 23, 2007

Remembering (continued from page 1)

Our role in the church has many challenges which need to be met with the fervor of the spirit and determination. The church is our mother which loves her children and asks to be loved by them. If we love Christ we love His church and its sacraments. The Liturgy and the Eucharist along with confession are true expression of the church nature and love for Christ.

When the church calls upon you to help, don't give an excuse, but a helping hand. This is a good steward of the church, a good model and true follower of Christ. It is a challenge not to disappoint the evil one, but we must try very hard.

Ladies Society (continued from page 3)

In addition to the monthly activities, there are various opportunities such as representing the society at regional meetings and attending gatherings at the Antiochian Village. Members are under no pressure to participate in all activities, each does what she is able.

The St. George Ladies' Society invites all women in our church to join. Come and find lifelong friends and the wonderful feeling of contributing to our church through participating, just as the women 80 years ago did when they founded the organization.

Guess Who?

We were so pleased to hear how much everyone enjoyed our new section of the Champion..

Hope you have as much fun guessing these fellow Parishioners...



Parishioner A

This beautiful lady was born in Beirut in 1946, and arrived in the US at the age of 20.

She has been a member of Saint George since the very beginning...



Parishioner B

This gentleman was born in 1935 in Haifa, Palestine.

He has been a member of our Parish for 20 years.



Last Issue's Answers:

(A) BILL KABBASH and (B) ADIB ROUMIE

Focus on The Ladies' Society

By Diane Barsa

Editor's Note: Ladies Month is usually celebrated throughout our Archdiocese in March, but since there was no March issue of The Champion, and due to a technical glitch in the last issues, we now take the time to present this spotlight on the St. George Ladies Society. But in reality, every month is Ladies Month here at St. George, for without our hard-working Ladies, many of our St. George functions simply would not exist. For their selfless hard work and efforts, we can never say "thank you" enough!

The first "Women's Society" of St. George was started in 1926 and has been a part of our church for over 80 years. During those years, women of all ages and various ethnic origins have shared their love of the church through their commitment to the organization and its goals. In 2006, the Ladies Society goal was pledged to give \$8,000 to the church, the society gave \$9,500. Funds were also sent to Lebanon for a girl the society sponsors. In addition, as a member of the national organization, Antiochian Women of the East, one fundraiser each year is designated to benefit its annual project.

Ladies, those of you who have wondered about the organization and whether or not to join, please attend a meeting or join us on a work day. We meet on the second Sunday of each month, after liturgy, in the Conference Room. Our work days are noted in the weekly bulletin. Come and see what St. George Ladies' Society is doing. Just to give you an idea of how we spend our time, picture yourself participating in one or more of the following activities:

March is "Ladies Month" and women usher and read the Epistle during liturgy. In addition, on one Sunday in March the members take confession together. The following Sunday they have a breakfast after liturgy. Also in March, a special collection is taken during liturgy to benefit the orphanages which the society aids.

During Lent, a Spinach Pie Sale is held. This year, in one day over 1000 spinach pies were made for the sale and the Lenten Dinner. While many women from within St. George contribute to the Lenten Dinner, it is sponsored and organized by the Ladies' Society. This year, the proceeds of the Spinach Pie Sale will go to the national project, the Clergy Retirement Fund. The proceeds of the Lenten Dinner will further our St. George Ladies' Society's goals.

In April, a retreat is held at the Antiochian Village. Our society is represented by members who spend the weekend in prayer, meetings, and educational sessions with women from our region. Many days in May and early June find members of the society making pastries for the St. George Festival. Ladies, who have jobs during the day, volunteer time in the evenings to prepare nuts, dates, and apricots for the ladies who prepare



Above: The first "Women's Society"; and our current Ladies with Fr. Elias in the kitchen.

and bake the pastries in the church's kitchen during the day. Each task, from peeling pistachios to forming each delicate graybee is appreciated. During the festival, members work in the booth, selling the pastries.

September is the month of the annual String Cheese Sale. Most of the ladies that work on this project cut, melt, and stir the mixtures. A few talented women create the beautiful knots of cheese. During October, the ladies make kibbe for a fundraiser and for St. Vladimir's Seminary.

All these activities may seem like a lot of work, but the work is accompanied by laughter and conversation (both in Arabic and English) that are a result of the friendships formed and love members have for each other.

Father Elias hosts the Ladies Society during an annual visit to the priest's home in December. It is always a lovely afternoon enjoyed by all. Later in the month, the Christmas Luncheon is the wonderful way the ladies end each year. It is held at a restaurant and is several hours of good food and conversation highlighted by a fun gift exchange.

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Project Mexico

By Paul Juzdan

This past November I, along with two other people, traveled to Tijuana, Mexico to volunteer at St. Innocent Orphanage. For those of you who are not aware, St. Innocent Orphanage is an Orthodox boys' orphanage, which houses and takes care of over thirty boys. The orphanage is a beautiful place that allows these orphans to live better, healthier lives. They are sent to school everyday and they attend church service every night. Another program that is affiliated with the orphanage is something called Project Mexico. Project Mexico is another pan-Orthodox program that assists needy families by building them homes. I had the opportunity to repair a house that was hit by a car. The program has built many homes for many needy families in the Tijuana area. The homes help the families grow and have a place to stay while they find something more permanent. The Project Mexico logo is "Building hope for boys without families and families without homes." This is exactly what the program does and there are wonderful people who spend the majority of their time caring of the children and making sure they are properly fed and educated. There are people who have the opportunity to volunteer for an entire year. Although we were only there for five days we really enjoyed the experience. The hard work was very rewarding and seeing the children every night was a lot of fun.

During our trip we concentrated on improving the orphanage. We created an entire sprinkler system outside the orphanage to prevent landslides that occur during the winter. It was a lot of hard work and by the end of the day we couldn't move (but it was a lot of fun). I recommend that if anyone has the opportunity to go and experience this trip they should take advantage of it. It is a wonderful experience that will change your life. Watching happy children in such a devastated environment is almost surreal. Another way you could help is by helping others go to Project Mexico; the trip is very costly. I was blessed to receive generous contributions from many of my fellow Parishioners. Jennifer and I thank you again for your help!! Finally, if God has blessed you so that you are able to donate money, I am sure the orphans and the volunteers would very much appreciate it. You can send any donations to:

Project Mexico
P.O. Box 120028
Chula Vista, California 91912
Telephone: 619-426-4610
Website: www.projectmexico.org



Is God Just?

by Deacon Michael Ibrahim

Do we believe in God? Do we blame him for every trouble or disaster we face? Yes, most of the time we do. But if we believe in God, we ought to believe that He is Just. If he is not Just, what kind of God is He? If He is, He apportions to all their just deserts. But not everyone receives their just reward on earth. They still have to be rewarded, though, so that God's Justice may be apparent. Therefore, by the very nature of things there must be a judgment in the future where we will all be rewarded according to our works.

If we believe in God, then God is certainly better than us. It follows, then, that He arranges things better than we would; more wisely and more charitably. Surely that is the cause. So what are we moaning about? Why don't we have confidence in His judgment? In his wisdom? In his loving-kindness? Do we know why we question? Because we've turned our back on eternal life! We are looking at life the wrong way. We see it as lasting until the grave. We want to be happy for that second.

But for God, life doesn't end with the grave. It begins with the grave. It begins and never ends. And God wants us to gain eternal life. So, who is right? We, who want to live well for this second, or God, who wants us to live until the ages of ages. The Lord is Just. He gives everyone equally: their due. The share they deserve. This is borne out by the following instructive occurrence:

There was once a monk living the ascetic life near a village. One day, two of the villagers quarreled over their fields. The squabble intensified. They got angry, started swearing at each other. It wasn't long before the worst thing possible happened; one of them, who was beside himself with rage, killed his rival villager with his mattock. The monk was greatly distressed by this tragic event. He expected God to intervene "here and now" to punish the murderer at once. But in vain.

So he was dismayed. "There is no Divine Justice", the Evil One whispered to him. And he believed him! He said to himself: "What am I doing wasting away in the desert? I might as well get up and leave." And that is precisely what he did. One morning he left his cell and his spiritual labor and set out into the world for good. On the way he met a fine young man. As luck would have it, he was going to the same city, so they both went along together, chatting as they did so. As noon approached, they passed by the house of the wealthy man who had grown rich by "trampling on the backs of others". The rich man gave them hospitality and, in return, the young man gave him a golden chalice.

They continued their long and weary journey. The sun went down and night fell. They had to spend the night somewhere,

so they knocked at the door of a poor, good Christian, who welcomed them warmly. He gave them the best food he had to eat, and made up beds for them. At midnight, however, when this poor family were fast asleep, the young man got up and strangled their child! He woke the monk and they ran for it.

The sun rose. Soon they would be arriving at their destination. Before them lay a murky river. Above it swung a narrow, wooden bridge. An old man, who could hardly see, wanted to cross, and as soon as he realized that he had company took heart. "They'll help me", he said to himself. The young man ran up to him and gave him a push, sending him into the river, where he drowned.

The monk got himself into a fine mess! He quickly crossed over the little bridge, and so did the young man. They went together for a bit, then the monk, full of indignation, turned to the young man and asked him straight, "what are you, for goodness' sake? A devil or a man?"

"I am an angel."

"And you did such crazy things?"

"You don't understand, that's why you think they are crazy. Don't you go calling the wisdom of God madness!"

And the good angel explained as follows: "Do you remember thinking and saying there's no Divine Justice? And you left your desert cell? Know then, that the Merciful Lord sent me that you may see His Justice in practice. Listen to me:

a) That rich man, because of his many sins, was going to hell. At one time in his life, however, he performed a good act and had to be rewarded for it. So, at God's command I honored Him with that golden chalice.

b) The mother of that little child was God-fearing. She really cared about salvation of her child. She kept asking God with tears in her eyes: "God, if my child is going to grow up into a good Christian, and his soul's going to be saved, let him live. If not, take him now, so that he'll go to Paradise". The Merciful Lord heard the prayer.

c) That little old man had a good heart. He'd done many good deeds. He was fit for Paradise. But when he was a young man, he'd committed murder. And the Lord judged that he ought to pay for that on earth, rather than in the next life. So, by drowning in the river, he washed away his sin and saved his soul."

The monk gave thanks to our Benevolent God, who "always arranges things mercifully, in the depths of wisdom, and apportions to all what is in their interest." He returned to his cell firm in the belief that "God stands behind us."

Teaching About St. George Through Song

On the weekend of April 21-23 2007, our church was honored and blessed with the visit of Khourie Gigi Shadid. The teens met with her on Friday night for an evening of serious discussions about issues concerning our teens in our Society today. On Saturday morning, Sunday school children as well as children from Saint Nicholas Cathedral were excited to hear Gigi sing her songs. Gigi was able to get all the children involved in singing with her and she also taught us a new song about Saint George.

On Sunday morning she worked with the children again, delighting us with a small concert heard after Divine Liturgy. During our Saint George celebration, Gigi entertained us with her new Saint George song as well as three others. When the weekend concluded, everyone in the Parish realized how touched we were by her presence that weekend. We hope to have her again in the future.



Sunday School

By Brian Nafash

It is with much mixed emotions that I said goodbye to another Sunday school year. I have enjoyed my first year as director and look forward to many years of serving the children of Saint George.

This past school year has brought about many changes and enhancements to the curriculum. We established an epistle reading every month by the children to get them more involved in the everyday church activities. The Archdiocese developed a tithing program to introduce the concept of giving to the church, both monetarily and through good works. With the help of Donna Starke and Adib Roumie, this program

began this year and we look forward to updating it every year. With the children receiving communion every week, our confession program needed to be updated; we developed a weekly schedule for individual confession from grades four through eight. The children learned this past year how to behave in church and join in on the prayers.

Please make sure to keep church as a priority during the upcoming summer months. I look forward to seeing your children during the summer and in September for a very fruitful and enlightening year.

July

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Parish Life Conference Hosted by Holy Cross Church, Linthicum MD						
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
PLC						
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
			Parish Council Meeting			
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	■ <i>Light shaded dates represent days of Fasting</i>			

August

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
■ <i>Light shaded dates represent days of Fasting</i>			1	2	3	4
			<i>Dormition Fast Begins</i>			
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	<i>Holy Transfiguration</i>					
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
			<i>Dormition of Theotokos</i> Parish Council Meeting			
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	
			<i>Beheading of John the Baptist</i>			

Who Is Jesus Christ?

By Deacon Michael Ibrahim

In chemistry, He turned water to wine.

In biology, He was born without the normal conception.

In physics, He disapproved the Law of Gravity when He ascended into Heaven.

In Economics, He disproved the law of diminishing return by feeding 5,000 men with two fish and five loaves of bread.

In medicine, He cured the sick and the blind without administering a single dose of drugs.

In history, He is the beginning and the End.

In government, He said that he shall be called wonderful counselor, Prince of Peace.

In religion, He said no one comes to the Father except through Him;

So... Who is He ?

The Greatest Man who ever lived, in history or anywhere!

Jesus had no servants, yet they called Him Master.

Had no degree, yet they called Him teacher.

He had no medicines, yet they call him healer.

He had no army, yet kings feared Him.

He won no military battles, yet He conquered the World.

He committed no crime, yet they crucified Him.

He was buried in a tomb, yet He lives today.

We should feel honored to serve such a Leader who loves us!

12—1.20; 8—80



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