



# ST. NICHOLAS ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

## WONDER WORKER

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF ST. NICHOLAS ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, PINELLAS PARK,  
FLORIDA

### Thoughts From Father Michael "Annual Ecclesiastical Cycle"



September/October 2019

With the Nativity of the Theotokos on September 8th we inaugurate a new Ecclesiastical Year that started September 1st, and we begin to observe and to celebrate the cycle of services associated with the earthly life of our Lord and God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Why do we do this each year?

Two reasons: 1)'lest we forget' 2) to prepare ourselves for our funeral.

#### **Lest We Forget**

As we live our lives obtaining an education, starting a career, getting married and having children we are so occupied with day to day activities that we tend to forget God and His love and concern for us. Indeed, we may at times of hardship wonder if God has forgotten and abandoned us. We are so preoccupied with making a living that God is shunted to the sidelines.

The events listed on our church calendar, however, are there to remind us of who God is and how we are connected to Him, *lest we forget*.

A recent book by David Brooks, the New York Times Columnist, entitled **The Second Mountain: A Quest for a Moral Life**, describes this forgetfulness from a secular perspective. He calls our desire for success, wealth, and position as the first mountain that we climb. Many times when we reach the top of this mountain we look around at our success, admire the view, but obtain a sense that there is something missing, something more to life than status, well being, and material goods.

We are so devoted to this climb that we forget what it means to be human, and why we are on this earth. We tend to forget the lessons we learned in kindergarten, church school, and at our mother's knee.

The second mountain we begin to climb is usually after we experience a crisis in our lives. We sink into a valley groping for answers, finally realizing that life is about friendship, of using our talents to assist others, and about being thankful for what we possess. Climbing this second mountain is challenging, but also rewarding. Brooks gives a number of examples of people who have climbed this second mountain; many of whom who are now volunteering at schools,

shelters, and other non-profit organizations.

In return, their sense of well being is enhanced, their health has improved, and they are more satisfied with themselves.

## **Preparation for our funeral**

One of the fundamental facts of life is that we will all die. How we will die and how we prepare for it are not part of our daily thoughts. While we are children, teenagers, young adults, and middle aged adults thoughts of death are not on our radar screen. We know that we will die, but not now. We will think of death when we grow older.

As we age and begin to see the world as it really is we begin to grow skeptical of the promises of a life of ease by gaining worldly fame or wealth. We begin to see the futility of material possessions that disintegrate or rust or rot. We begin to recognize the fleetingness of so called permanent structures. Places we knew as children are torn down and replaced with something else. Very few things are the same as we remembered them. Our old neighborhoods no longer exist. People we knew have past away. It is not unheard of to hear older people state; "do you remember when ..." The old days are gone and we now live in a new world that we do not like or refuse to enter into.

Slowly we begin to acknowledge that we have lived the better part of our lives; we are nearing the end of our earthly life.

We begin to ask ourselves 'what is permanent'? 'what stands the test of time'? This is when we recall Scripture and Sunday School lessons, and maybe even religious books that we read. Did we not read or hear from Scripture: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever"? [Matt 13:8] Yes, Christ is permanent and so is the Father and the Holy Spirit; as well as the Theotokos and all the saints.

Perhaps, we should learn more about them and what they taught through their writings or through their actions and in many cases martyrdom. That is why attending Vesper and Orthros services are helpful, because they remind us of Christ's deeds for us and to teach us about the lives of the saints and what they had to endure.

We pray each Vesper, Orthros, and Divine Liturgy for a "Christian ending to our lives, painless, blameless, and peaceful." How do we achieve this?

Many saints have written about the tension we face in trying to follow the godly way of life while living in an ungodly world. At some point we recognize that we are indeed *in* the world but not *of* the world. It is now that we may begin to climb that second mountain about which David Brooks wrote.

But, more than that we recognize that we are human beings and we need to help other people; to love our neighbor as ourselves. There is in our Orthodox understanding that we need to follow Christ, just as he asked Peter and Andrew and the other Disciples, and as He stated: "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me." [Matt 16:24]

Following Christ will not be easy; yet we have the promise that if we try, He will be there for us. All He asks of us is that we be true to ourselves. As we become aware of our sinfulness, and there is no one who is without sin [1 John 1:8]. He is there to forgive us and erase our transgressions. If We Ask! The critical thing is to Ask God for His forgiveness. Since there is no one without sin, or missing the mark, we all need God's forgiveness; a God who loves us and wants us to be reconciled to Him.

By following God we get closer to Him, He becomes a part of our lives; we are conscious of Him every minute of the day. We have a close friendship with Him. To arrive at this understanding we need to participate in the annual church services as they occur on our church calendar, because then we relive them and they become a part of us. Moreover, we need to pray, to go to confession, to give alms, and to read Scripture and other religious books every day.

In other words we need to put in as much effort climbing that second mountain as we did climbing the first one.

Then when it comes time for our departing this world we look forward with anticipation to entering the next one.

God bless you and keep you.

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## **Spiritual Sayings**

In all things that you find in the Holy Scriptures, seek out the purpose of the words, that you may enter into the depths of the thoughts of the saints and understand them with greater exactness. Do not approach the reading of the Divine Scriptures without prayer and asking the help of God. Consider prayer to be the key to the true understanding of that which is said in the Holy Scriptures

*St. Isaac the Syrian*

The Lord Jesus Christ is the vine, a grape tree; Christians are the branches and shoots. We cleave to Him through faith and bear fruit through a life according to faith. The Heavenly Father is the husbandman who watches over this tree. Any branch which does not bring forth fruit - that is, whoever believes but does not live according to faith - the Lord cuts off. But He purges those which bring forth fruit - that is, those who not only believe, but are also zealous to live according to faith. These the Lord helps in every way to become rich in good works, which are the fruits of faith. Let each person arrange his life according to this law of God's action upon us, firmly remembering that without the Lord one can do nothing.

*St Theophan the Recluse*

## **Burning the Mortgage**

With the generosity of Helen & Carole Massarelli we are very close to paying off the mortgage of our new church building.

Helen wants to have the mortgage paid off before she dies; she is now 100 years old. Accordingly, she is challenging the rest of our community to make up the difference. She and

Carole will contribute \$5,000.00 per month for eight months this calendar year. Together with our normal monthly contribution toward the mortgage the balance on the mortgage by December 31, 2019 will be about \$125,000.00.

We are launching a campaign October 1, 2019 to raise this balance. As major corporations are reducing their debt given the favorable economy, so are we. Currently, we have pledges from several generous parishioners that suggest we will succeed in this endeavor. We humbly ask each of our parishioners to consider making a pledge. Once we pay off the mortgage, we can direct our current monthly payment to our selves to begin setting aside funds to demolish the First Church and to build a new structure that will house a larger fellowship hall, Sunday School classrooms, a restaurant style kitchen, a clergy office, a library, and meeting rooms.

God and St Nicholas have blessed us to come this far, and with your prayers will continue to bless us in taking the next steps in the history of our beloved St Nicholas parish.

You will be receiving further information as to how you can complete a pledge. In the meantime you can make a secure on-line donation to St Nicholas using your credit card or through PayPal. Check it out at [www.stnicholasaoc.org](http://www.stnicholasaoc.org)

### **Father Deacon Elias Haddy**

In early September, His Grace, Bishop NICHOLAS, attached Fr. Deacon Elias Haddy to St Nicholas. Deacon Elias's company transferred him from California to the Tampa Bay area. Deacon Elias and his wife, Karoll, and two sons, Christopher and Gabriel, have already become active members of our parish. On Sunday, September 29, 2019, the Ladies Society will officially welcome them at a luncheon after Liturgy.

Please welcome them to our parish.

### **Please Pray for the Following Brothers and Sisters:**

**Departed:** Nellie Joseph, Ruth Wiggins, Malaky Shaheen, Vera Vedo, Christo Metro, Ethel Modi, Anthony Santoro, Rasheed Massouh, Kairallah Massouh, John R. Silber, Ethel Mercurio Bishop ANTOUN, Theodore Salim, Abdullah Albert, Charles Radich, Dalal Abu-Hanna, David Guild, Kamal M. Jacob, Eugene Shago, Delores K. Freije, Olga Pawlaw, Angelica Essey, Frank Samuel, Basil Albert, Richard Stead, Abp MICHAEL (Shaheen), Constandino Biris, Carl Georges, Germaine Poirier

**Shut-ins/Sick:** Metropolitan PAUL, Archbishop YOHANNA, Nicholas Hughes, Schauki Kassis, John Bennett, Rose Beede, Alice Flaherty, Theodora Ohlinger, Sally Bell, Bob Bostley, Bill Yopp, George Joseph Rolfes, Aurelia Buda, Eveyn Lonack, Richard Pippy, Diane Zorich, Lisa McCoy, Thomas Ziegler

**For the Health of:** Fr Lazarus Sucanto, Kh Loretta Karparlenia, Kh Virginia Massouh, Pf. Margot Siniari, Viola Haddad, Angela Jacob, Farhat David, Helen Massarelli, Carole Massarelli, John & Evelyn Salem, Helen Salem, Ruth & Evern Hazel, Gerorgette Abraham, Mariam Haddad, Bryan Haddad, Nasir Kassis, Geri & Mitch Kanaan, Photini Larson, Alice Faccenda, Pat Salem, David & Eva Szabo, Marion Bostley, Theodore Todorow, Alex Gimon, Diane Karns, Leo Poirier, Sophie Massouh, Bob Poirier, Steve Bové, Natalie Floreancig, Millicent Palko, Leila

Bashara, Paula Massouh, Philip Lemieux

**Service Members:** Christopher Salem (Air Force): Nephew of Helen Salem), Peter McIntire: Nephew of Viola Haddad, Curtis Brickwood (Navy): Fr. Michael's Cousin, James Sexton(Army): Grandson of Michaelina Sexton, David Butler (Navy): Son of Joanna Kassis Butler, Trenton Wesley (Army): grandson of Leila Bashara, Luka Dundua (Army): Grandson of Salome Rollins

### **Upcoming Events**

Sunday, September 29, 2019 - Ladies Society Luncheon  
to welcome Fr Deacon Elias, his wife, and sons  
Monday, October 7, 2019 - 6:30 PM, Parish Council Dinner Meeting  
Weekend of October 12, 2019 - Combat Veterans Retreat, Antiochian Village  
Tuesday, October 22, 2019 - 5:30 PM Liturgy of St James at  
St John the Baptist Orthodox Church, Tampa  
Tuesday, November 5, 2019 - 6:00 PM Ladies Society Potluck Dinner & Book Discussion  
Sunday, November 10, 2019 - Annual Parish Meeting after Liturgy  
Saturday, November 16, 2019 - 5:00 PM Vespers with Bishop NICHOLAS

### **Mortgage Update**

The good news is, thanks to your generosity, that our mortgage balance as of September 30, 2019 is less than \$165,000. With the generosity of Helen & Carole Massarelli whose significant donations this year - see accompanying article on "Burning the Mortgage - we should be able to reduce the balance to zero. One way to accelerate the reduction is to find donors for the two remaining icons not yet sponsored: the large Resurrection Icon and the Mystical Supper Icon both on the East wall in the Altar. Please see Fr Michael if interested.

### **Birthdays for September**

3 September, Theodora Massouh, Lena Ayoub Hannush; 10 September, Matthew Nassif, Jr., 11 September, Autumn Galluccio; 12 September, Rob Baynard, Edward Hamlin; 13 September, Chip Hanna, Hester Mobayed; 14 September, Sandra Baidurashvili; 15 September, Mia Baidurashvili; 16 September, Lisa Spears; 17 September, Kaitlin Kassis, Ariana Lynn Kassis; 18 September, Andrew Najjar, Langley Dunsmuir; 19 September, Viola Haddad, Alice Faccenda; 20 September, Christopher Doerner; 21 September, Charles E. Doerner; 22 September, Bonnie Guirguis; 26 September, Isabella Pagani

### **Anniversaries for September**

1 September, Nadier & Amy Yacoub, Joe & Carolyn Galluccio; 2 September, Charles & Patricia Semerard; 18 September, Joe & Hester Mobayed; 21 September, Vito & Robin Bianca; 26 September, Michael & Emily Jadoun

### **Departed this Life in September**

2 September, Nellie Joseph; 4 September, Ruth Wiggins; 7 September, Malaky Shaheen; 8 September, Vera Vedo; 12 September, Christo Metro; 14 September, Ethel Modi; 19 September, Anthony Santoro; 21 September, Rasheed Massouh; 27 September, Kairallah Massouh, John R. Silber; Ethel Mercurio

### **Birthdays for October**

1 October, Gaby Atik; October, Katherine Doerner; 9 October, Arianna Boreman, Susan Helms, Cristiano Caspian Buda; 16 October, Phillip Matar; 21 October, Luca Baidurashvili, Anna Al Khouri; 24 October, Marina Dundua; 26 October, Koly Elkhoully, Maria Pinheiro; 31 October, Ron Rossomando

### **Anniversaries in October**

7 October, Farid & Jehanne Karam; 8 October, Steven Hauser & Meagan Daher; 22 October, Harold & Diane Orloff; 25 October, Lance & Mary Jeanne Lubin

### **Departed this Life in October**

2 October, Bishop ANTOUN; 4 October, Theodore Salim; 5 October, Abdullah Albert; 7 October, Charles Radich; 9 October, Dalal Abu-Hanna, David Guild; 10 October, Kamal M. Jacob; 11 October, Eugene Shago; 12 October, Delores K. Freije; 15 October, Olga Pawlaw; 17 October, Angelica Essey, Frank Samuel; 21 October, Basil Albert; 22 October, Richard Stead; 24 October, Abp MICHAEL (Shaheen), Constandino Biris; 25 October, Carl Georges; 30 October, Germaine Poirier

### **Father Michael's Retirement**

With the blessing of His Grace, Bishop NICHOLAS, Fr Michael wrote to His Eminence, Metropolitan JOSEPH, asking his blessing to retire within the next nine months. It usually takes time for the Metropolitan to plan transfers and assignments of recently graduated seminarians, and decisions of this magnitude normally occur over the Summer. Father Michael will turn 80 this November and next January will celebrate his 20th year as an ordained member of the Antiochian Church.



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