

The Bible...

...fills us

with eternal joy.

The Bible is a scented garden, delightful, beautiful, it enchants our ears with birdsong in a sweet, divine, and spiritual harmony, it touches our heart, comforts us in sorrow, soothes us in a moment of anger, and fills us with eternal joy.

- Saint John of Damascus



St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church

915-584-9100 www.stgeorge-elpaso.org Fax. 915-760-5547

REVEREND FATHER GEORGE M. AL-DEHNEH, PASTOR

Very Reverend Father Jehad T. Michael, Pastor Emeritus

Very Reverend Father Bob Bethoney, Attached

A warm welcome to our visitors and guests

St. George is an Eastern Orthodox Church of the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America.

We are glad to have you worshipping with us today. We minister to Orthodox Christians of all backgrounds. Holy Communion is a sign of our full unity of faith. Therefore, only Baptized and Confirmed Orthodox Christians who have prepared themselves through prayer and Sacramental Confession may partake of this Sacrament. However, all are welcome to partake of the Blessed Bread of Fellowship and receive a Priest blessing at the end of Divine Liturgy. We also invite you to join us for light refreshments and coffee following the Service, where we will be happy to meet with you and answer any questions you may have about the Orthodox Faith.

FEBRUARY 05, 2012

**SUNDAY OF THE PHARISEE AND PUBLICAN
AFTER-FEAST OF PRESENTATION (MEETING) OF CHRIST**

Tone 1

Eothinon 1

Sunday Service

Orthros **9:20 A.M.**

Sunday School 9:15 A. M.

Followed by Divine Liturgy

Confessions by Appointment Only

On this day, we Commemorate: Martyr Agatha of Sicily; Polyuktos, Patriarch of Constantinople; New-Martyr Anthony of Athens; Venerable Theodosios of Scopelos; repose of Theodosios, Archbishop of Chernigov.

Epistle: Christopher Ferris.

Ushers: Upon Availability.

Altar Boys: All Altar boys are encouraged and welcome to serve faithfully.

RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION (TONE 1)

While the stone was sealed by the Jews, and the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body, Thou didst arise on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world. For which cause the heavenly powers cried aloud unto Thee, O giver of life. Glory to Thy Resurrection O Christ, glory to Thy kingdom, glory to Thy providence, O Thou Who alone art the lover of mankind.

APOLYTIKION OF THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST (TONE 1)

Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, full of grace, for from thee arose the Sun of Justice, Christ our God, lighting those who are in darkness. Rejoice and be glad, O righteous old man, carrying in thine arms the Deliverer of our souls, Who granteth us Resurrection.

TROPARION OF ST. GEORGE (TONE 4)

As the deliverer of captives and defender of the poor, healer of the infirm and champion of kings, victorious great martyr George intercede with Christ our God for our souls salvation.

KONTAKION OF THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST (TONE 1)

Thou, O Christ God, Who by Thy Birth, didst sanctify the Virgin's womb, and, as is meet, didst bless Simeon's arms, and didst also come to save us; preserve Thy fold in wars, and confirm them whom Thou didst love, for Thou alone art the Lover of mankind.



THE EPISTLE

(For Sunday of the Pharisee and Publican)

Make vows to the Lord thy God, and perform them.

In Judah God is known; His Name is great in Israel.

**The Reading from the Second Epistle of St. Paul to St. Timothy.
(3:10-15)**

Timothy my son, you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions, and my sufferings; and what befell me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra. What persecutions I endured; yet from them all, the Lord rescued me. Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.



THE GOSPEL

(For Sunday of the Pharisee and Publican)

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to
St. Luke. (18:10-14)

The Lord spoke this parable: “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank Thee that I am not like other men, extortionists, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to Heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

The Publican and the Pharisee

On the first Sunday of the Tridion during the Liturgy, we hear the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee. Put your imagination to work and suppose that the Parable took the following course:

A respected member of our Church Community, who made many contributions to the Church and was a very successful businessman, came to Church one Sunday morning and said the following: *"I thank you dear Lord for my pious parents who had the wisdom and strength to sacrifice for my education. I thank You for the opportunities that came along in my life. I have not squandered my talents, like so many others, but used them to great advantage for myself and for the society in which I reside. I am quite satisfied with my place in the community and thankful for my personal success."*

On that same Sunday morning a less than scrupulous car salesman also came to Church and he prayed as follows: *"Lord, I am ashamed to come to St. George. How can I even talk to You. You know that I have used every tricky sales technique in the book. I have taken advantage of many people. If there is any hope for me, it is because of Your mercy, not because of anything I can do. Forgive me and help me make a new beginning."* "I tell you," said Jesus, "this man (the salesman) was in the right with God when he went home, rather than the other!"

Jesus' words often shocked pious people, especially those who regarded God's Kingdom as their exclusive possession and thought of themselves as God's elite. Even today Christ may appear to many of us as disturbingly unfamiliar if we seek to understand Him in human terms, or to place him within our own disposition, that is, to deal with Him through our own categories and pattern of thought and action. Isn't it strange to have such a Lord who was born in a manger; who befriended the poor, the sick and the outcast; who came to serve and not to be served; who loved sinners, and who said He came to save the lost and not the righteous.

It is naïve to think that all tax collectors were praised by Jesus, and that all the Pharisees were condemned by Him. We must understand that not all tax collectors confessed their sins humbly before God, nor did all Pharisees pray in a self-righteous way. If Jesus used two stereotypes from His society, the respected Pharisee and the despised Publican, He did so to show that God cares nothing for stereotypes. God looks into our hearts. A proud, self-satisfied and self-glorifying heart is an abomination to Him, no matter how respected a person may be by social or religious standards. A humble and contrite heart, one which makes no claims before God, but recognizes its total dependence on Him is a fragrant sacrifice to Him, even if it belongs to a person regarded by others to be a sinner.

Jesus, then and now, praises the humble repentance of the Publican and condemns the self-righteous pride of the Pharisee. This parable is very challenging to all Christians who assume a superior status simply because they are Christians. Helmut Thielicke has put it this way: "Pharisaic pride is one of the most dreadful and also one of the most infectious diseases of Christianity. In the figure of the Pharisee we are confronted with a shocking exposure of the sin of Christianity, your sin and my sin, the sin of us who have subtly made of our Christianity a sign of virtue and given it the unpleasant smack of privilege."

In Christ's service,
Father Bob

DONATIONS

Raed & Sylvana Aldouri: For our health & the health of our children, Mityas, Meena & Sarah Aldouri.

Salma Isaac: For good health of Dr. Sandra Edwards, Jimmy Isaac Jr., Malik Thomas (1 year old) , Michelle Elias.

Bryan & Annette Haddad: Good health of all the Aziz family, and in Memory of Reem Aziz.

Selma Haddad: For her good health and the health of her family and all St. George parishioners.

Selma Haddad: For the health of Jamie Isaac.

Gloria Armistead: For the health of Harry Farah.

Roger & Nouhad Schami: In Memory of Paulette Schami (Sister)- passed away 18 years-age 48– may God rest her soul in peace.

Roger & Nouhad Schami: In Memory of Reem Aziz. May God rest her soul in peace.

Bishop BASIL Endowment Fund

Selma Haddad

Sada Vaughan

Archdioceses Dues

Mary Nebhan

Christopher Todd

Robert Todd

Georgette Malooly

Norman Todd

Icon Fund

Lon Silagi



Holy Bread will be offered by:



The Ferris Family: For the health of Skee Rizk and family, Eli Ferris and family, the Nasser, Martin, Hernandez, and Higgs families, as well as in memory of Peter Rizk, Terri Ferris, Tom and Regina Jacobs, Riscalla and Wedad Rizk.

Sami & Antoinette Esper: In loving Memory of Antoinette's mother Hessen Tannous (1 year). Memory Eternal.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Church Upcoming Events:

Thursday, February 2, 2012

May Dinner Meeting @ 6:00 P.M.

Friday, February 3, 2012

Family Night @ 7:00 P. M.

Wednesday, February 8, 2012

Parish Council Meeting @ 7:00 P. M.

HOME BLESSING

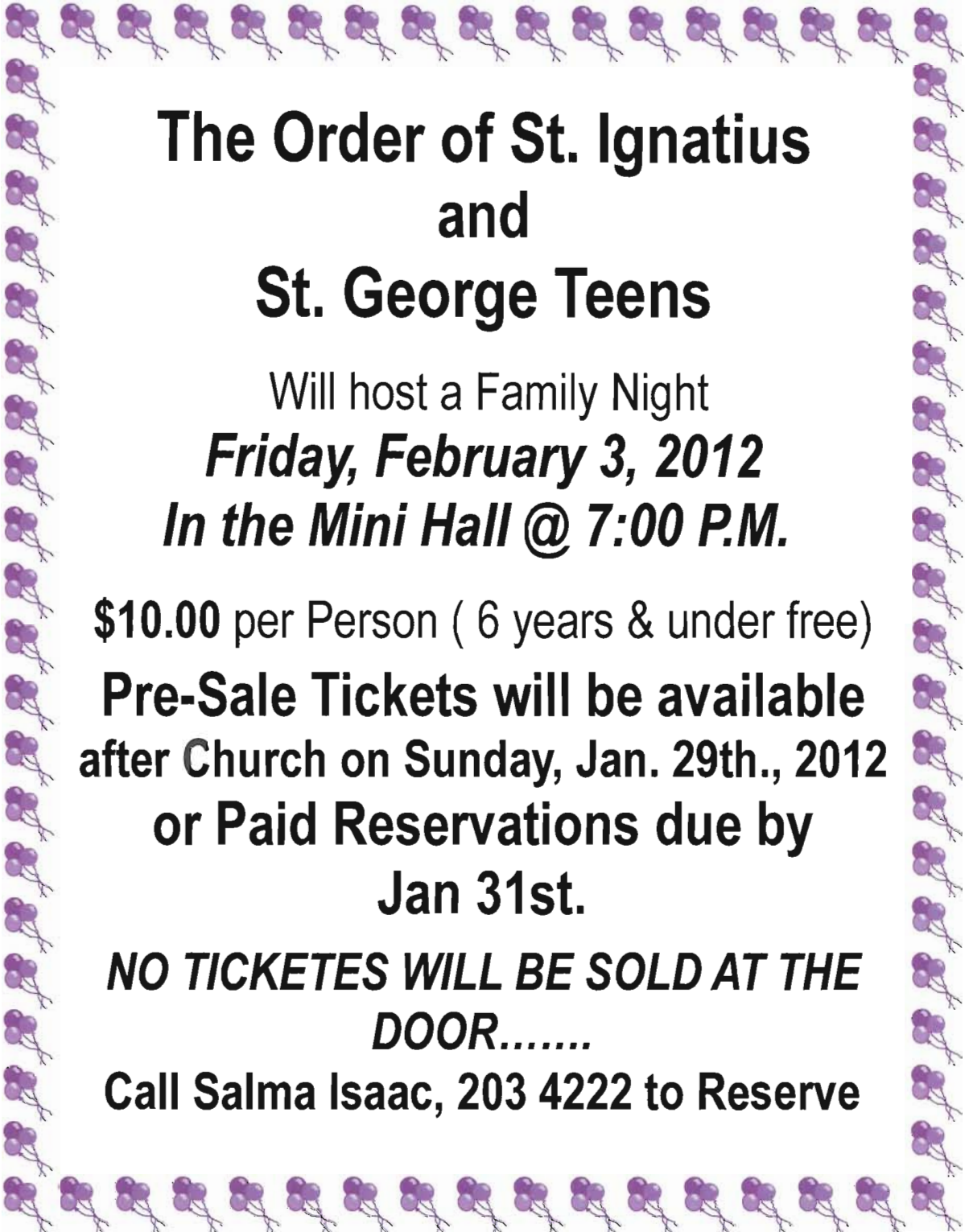
Started January 06, 2012 and will end February 05, 2012. Please call the office or Fr. George to arrange for your home to be blessed.

Thank You and God Bless you all



Sunday's Refreshments

To offer refreshments for any Sunday please call Fr. George or the office @ 584-9100. 2 (families) could do it together. Its simple.....Cookies & Coffee !!!



**The Order of St. Ignatius
and
St. George Teens**

Will host a Family Night
Friday, February 3, 2012
In the Mini Hall @ 7:00 P.M.

\$10.00 per Person (6 years & under free)

**Pre-Sale Tickets will be available
after Church on Sunday, Jan. 29th., 2012
or Paid Reservations due by
Jan 31st.**

***NO TICKETES WILL BE SOLD AT THE
DOOR.....***

Call Salma Isaac, 203 4222 to Reserve



Evening Divine Liturgy

Will be celebrated at 6:00 P. M. on Wednesday, February 01, 2012 in celebration of the Presentation of the Lord into the Temple. Please make plans to celebrate with us this Blessed and Holy event in the life of our One and Holy Orthodox Church.



FACEBOOK WEBSITE:

stgeorgelpaso@gmail.com

All St. George parishioners are invited to view photos of our St. George's activities.

Many thanks to Dr. Raed Aldouri for establishing the Web-Page and to Sylvana Aldouri for taking & working on the photos.

VERY IMPORTANT

Good News! We're Going Green!

To help save money for the Church to cover incoming expenses, the Parish Council voted on Wednesday, January 11, 2012 meeting to go "Green" and **NO longer mail the Weekly Church Bulletin into homes.** All other parishes in the Antiochian Archdiocese have also gone "Green" with their Church bulletin.

Effective March 1, 2012, the Church bulletin will be **e-mailed** to parishioners. If you have an e-mail account, please provide it in the 2012 Parishioner Information Form. Don't forget to turn your information form by February 29th. Only 100 Church bulletins will be printed each Sunday and placed in the Church vestibule so the faithful pick it up when they enter the Church. **The Church Bulletin will also be available on the Church Web Site at:**
<http://www.stgeorge-elpaso.org>

The Parish Council thanks you for your support.

HOLY BREAD

Please see the New Holy Bread Calendar for the year 2012. If 2 families offered every Sunday (For the health of the living and/or in Memory of the departed members). We should be OKAY for the whole year. 52 Sundays in the Year. We have



All St. George Parishioners

Please let Fr. George know **AT LEAST ONE WEEK** prior to the Sunday you are offering with the names of the living and departed beloved ones and if it is a **MEMORIAL SERVICE or REMEMBRANCE ONLY** so it can be in the Bulletin on time. It is your responsibility to call to order the Holy Bread and make sure it is at Church by 8:00 A. M. that Sunday.

Thank You

House Blessings

It is the custom among many Orthodox Christians to have their homes blessed with the Holy Water sanctified on Theophany (the feast which commemorates the Baptism of the Lord in the Jordan River). If you would like your home blessed, please call the Church office or talk to Fr. George.



MAY DINNER MEETING

Will be held on *Thursday, February 02, 2012 @ 6:00 P. M.* in the Conference Room for all the Oversight Committee Members and all Chairpersons for the booths to discuss (Tickets, ordering.....). All Chairs for Full Meal, Gyro, Kabab, Mediterranean, Advertisements, Bake Table, Sweets, Kibbee, please make plan to attend.

Thank you

Camp St. Raphael

Forms are available. Any of the TEENS who is interested in going, please let Jeanette or/ Nassim Salloum know. Deadline to send all names for St. George Church to receive the \$ 700.00 scholarship from the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch is **February 13, 2012** to be distributed equally among the **7 people who are certain and sure of their plans to go**. Priority will be given to First Timers.

Thank You.

Orthodox Scout Sunday is February 5

On Sunday, February 5, 2012, Scouts all over the United States will celebrate Scout Sunday, and as such, the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops has simultaneously designated the day as Orthodox Scout Sunday. Scouts will wear their uniforms to their local parishes, as a visible sign of their membership both to the Scouting program and to the Orthodox Church.

Through the Eastern Orthodox Committee on Scouting, the Assembly and its predecessor, SCOBA, have actively supported Boy and Girl Scouts of the USA since the 1960's.

Orthodox Scouts can earn one of three age-appropriate awards: St. George for the youngest children, Chi-Rho for the middle years, and Alpha Omega for the oldest Scouts. The rewards require progressively more challenging work culminating in service projects. Scouting programs have traditionally considered reverence and belief in God to be cornerstones for developing young men and women as civil, military and religious leaders.

Sponsoring a scouting troop is a way for a parish to offer adventures and leadership opportunities to young people. The Boy Scout pledge includes the promise to be reverent, which finds its fulfillment for Orthodox youth in the Church, where they learn to know and obey God's commandments. Parishes are encouraged to either support existing scouting programs or consider launching a troop.

THE FEAST OF THE THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD

The celebration of the Baptism of our Lord in the Jordan River reveals wondrous salvific events:

The Mystery of the Holy Trinity was revealed.

The waters were blessed by Christ and ceased to be waters of the fall and became waters of renewal (Holy Water).

Any demonic influence over water was ended.

A model of Baptism was established for the followers of Jesus Christ.

The sin of the old Adam was washed away and buried in the waters.

The Forerunner John the Baptist was blessed by Christ.

The word **Theophany** (*meaning manifestation of God*) comes from the apostolic passage, "God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory" (1 Timothy 3:16). Another name for the Feast is **Epiphany** (*meaning manifestation from above*), "the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). A third name is **the "Feast of Lights"**, as Christ reveals Himself as the "Light of the World" (John 8:12).

House Blessing: The Purpose

The Annual Blessing of homes is a custom of special beauty and significance. We again ask Christ to bless and enter into our homes and our lives. We ask Him to be with us, as we desire to be with Him. We ask that by the sprinkling of blessed water, the Holy Spirit renew us, our families and our lives in our homes. As Christ brought salvation to the house of Zacchaeus; we ask for the same for all dwelling in our homes.

House Blessing: The Order

The house being cleaned and ready, we dress in an honorable manner (as we would for Church). When the Priest arrives, we greet him at the door, having turned off any radio, TV, or other noise based element. Animals that may cause disruption should be placed out of the way. On a small table before icons, a small but wide-mouthed bowl full of newly blessed water is placed. Together with a list of names of those who reside in the home, a lighted candle and censor (if you have one) are also placed on the table. These items are arranged prior to the arrival of the Priest. At the beginning of the service for the blessing of the home, a family member leads the Priest throughout the home, carrying the lighted candle. The rest of the household follows and then returns to the table for the final prayer and blessing with water upon those present.

From The Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church

Every day you provide your bodies with good to keep them from failing. In the same way your good works should be the daily nourishment of your hearts. Your bodies are fed with food and your spirits with good works. You aren't to deny your soul, which is going to live forever, what you grant to your body, which is going to die.

St. Gregory the Great

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

| | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Faye Assi | Fr. Bob Bethoney | Alexis Gerena |
| Jamell Bettor | Matthew Dayoub | Norman Ekery |
| Edmund Esper | Edward Elias | Annette Haddad |
| George Haddad | Rowayda Haddad | Salma Isaac |
| Seamone Haddad | Gilbert Malooly Sr. | Lisa Martin |
| Alexandra McComas | Gabriela McComas | Timothy McComas |
| Eddie Mowad Sr. | Yousuf Odeh | Skee Rizk |
| Richard Salem | James Shaheen | Michael Slaman |
| Fotios Tsoukalas | Sada Vaughan | |



2012
PARISHIONERS INFORMATION CARD

St. George Antiochian Church Directory is being updated to correct changes in addresses, phone numbers etc. We are asking for your help by completing the following form.

Parents Name

Date of Birth

Address

Phone

(H) _____

(B) _____

(C) _____

Children's Name

Date of Birth

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

This form can be cut and mailed to the Church Office,
 or dropped in the donation basket.
 Thank you for your cooperation.

***This information is Confidential, to be
 used by the Priest only!***

St. George Church Sunday School

WE ARE VERY PROUD OF THE FOLLOWING STUDENTS WHO WERE PRESENT AT SUNDAY SCHOOL THIS PAST SUNDAY:



Kindergarten/1

Sammy Odeh
James Isaac

Pre-School

Grades 2/3

Teresa Salloum
Rylee Isaac
Anthony Jarjour
Jad Yacoub
Michael Pacheco

Grades 4/5

Joseph Odeh
Angela Al-Hanna
Madelyn Assi

Grades 6/7

Johnny Odeh
James Shaheen
Sarah Daioub
Emily Hogenson
Blake Assi
Rose Barakat

Grades 8-12+

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Christopher Al-Dehneh | Sarah Aldouri | Christian Khouri |
| Colette Khouri | Sam Salloum | Michelle Shaheen |
| George Haddad | William Shaghoury | Cole Assi |
| Ashly Daioub | Jonathan Jarjour | David Dayoub |
| | | Kristen Madsen |

Please remember that our Church School students need to be present @ 9:15 A.M. in order to have opening Prayer with Fr. George.

FEBRUARY 3 - SAINTS SYMEON AND ANNA

All people have expectations. We have them in childhood, in adult life, even in old age; expectations about mastering a certain profession, or a certain business, or some other field be it artistic, literary, political, or military. Expectations about marrying the man or woman of our dreams and then creating a happy family are realistic. Yes, we all nurture such expectations about the future. It is an innate feeling, and the stronger it is, the more stimulating it becomes — goading us toward achieving our goal.

Saint Symeon had an expectation, too. And what a unique expectation that was. Before his death, he would be blessed to see the Saviour of the world.

The little that is known about this man is recorded in the Gospel of Saint Luke in just a few sentences. We learn there that he was just and pious, and, that at some time in his life, the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the long expected Messiah.



What an inestimable honor for such a humble and obscure man. Next to the humble shepherds who had the honor to see the Savior shortly after his birth, this Jerusalemite would be the second to be given such honor, what more to even hold him in his frail arms. This took place forty days after Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, and as the holy family had come to Jerusalem. They had come to present Jesus, the first born of Mary, to offer a small sacrifice as mandated by the law of Moses and to have the purification prayers recited for the benefit of the mother as the same law prescribed.

When old Symeon caught sight of the holy family, divining that the babe carried in the mother's arms was the long expected deliverer, he proceeded toward the mother and humbly asked to be given the infant so that he could hold it in his arms. Unhesitatingly, the holy mother granted his request, whereupon the old man uttered

this prayer or praise: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen the salvation which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for the revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory of thy people Israel."

With what joy this humble man must have uttered these words. What unearthly feelings must have filled his inner being knowing that in that babe the yearnings of the Jewish and Gentile world had begun to be fulfilled.

Then, fore sensing the ultimate end of this child's life and the sorrows that would fill the heart of his holy

mother, he said to the most blessed Virgin Mary: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is spoken against arid a sword will pierce through your own soul that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed." He was predicting that although this was the future Savior, not all would accept him as such. Moreover, the manner of his death



would be such that it would be painful for his holy mother to sustain, a pain similar to that of a sword through her heart.

Besides Symeon, a prophetess by the name of Anna was present at this encounter. She was eighty-four years old, and after the death of her husband, she spent every day of her long life in the precincts of the temple praying and fasting. We can only imagine what joy must have filled the heart of this pious woman upon hearing the prayer of Symeon. She learned that the future Savior was already in his arms.

What an indescribable experience this was, reserved only for Symeon. His great expectation had been fulfilled. He had the singular honor to see and hold, before dying, God clothed in human flesh, the divine infinite in human finiteness. What higher blessing or honor could he have asked for? None.

From *The Champions of the Church*.
Dennis Michelis. Holy Cross Orthodox

Press. Brookline, MA 02146

FEBRUARY 2012 (GREAT LENT STARTS)

Sunday Service Times (9:20 A.M. Orthros, 10:30 A.M. Divine Liturgy)

| SUN | MON | TUES | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|--|---|---|--|--|---|-------------------------------|
| | | | <u>1</u> EVENING DIVINE LITURGY FOR THE PRESEN- TATION OF THE LORD IN THE TEM- PLE 6:00 P. M. | <u>2</u> THE PRESENTA- TION OF OUR LORD AND SAV- IOR IN THE TEMPLE MAY DINNER MEETING 6:00 P. M. | <u>3</u> FAMILY NIGHT 7:00 P. M. | <u>4</u> |
| <u>5</u> SUNDAY OF THE PUBLI- CAN AND PHARI- SEE (TRIODION BE- GINS TODAY) | <u>6</u> <u>FAST FREE</u> | <u>7</u> <u>FAST FREE</u> CHANTING PRACTICE 6:00-7:00 P. M. CHOIR PRACTICE 7:00-8:00 P. M. | <u>8</u> <u>FAST FREE</u> PARISH COUN- CIL MEETING 7:00 P. M. | <u>9</u> <u>FAST FREE</u> | <u>10</u> <u>FAST FREE</u> | <u>11</u> <u>FAST FREE</u> |
| <u>12</u> SUNDAY OF THE PRODI- GAL SON | <u>13</u> | <u>14</u> CHANTING PRACTICE 6:00-7:00 P. M. CHOIR PRACTICE 7:00-8:00 P. M. | <u>15</u> | <u>16</u> | <u>17</u> | <u>18</u> |
| <u>19</u> SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT (MEATFARE SUNDAY) | <u>20</u> | <u>21</u> CHANTING PRACTICE 6:00-7:00 P. M. CHOIR PRACTICE 7:00-8:00 P. M. | <u>22</u> | <u>23</u> | <u>24</u> | <u>25</u> |
| <u>26</u> FORGIVNESS SUNDAY | <u>27</u> <u>FAST</u> FIRST DAY OF GREAT LENT | <u>28</u> <u>FAST</u> CHANTING PRACTICE 6:00-7:00 P. M. CHOIR PRACTICE 7:00-8:00 P. M. | <u>29</u> <u>FAST</u> | | | |

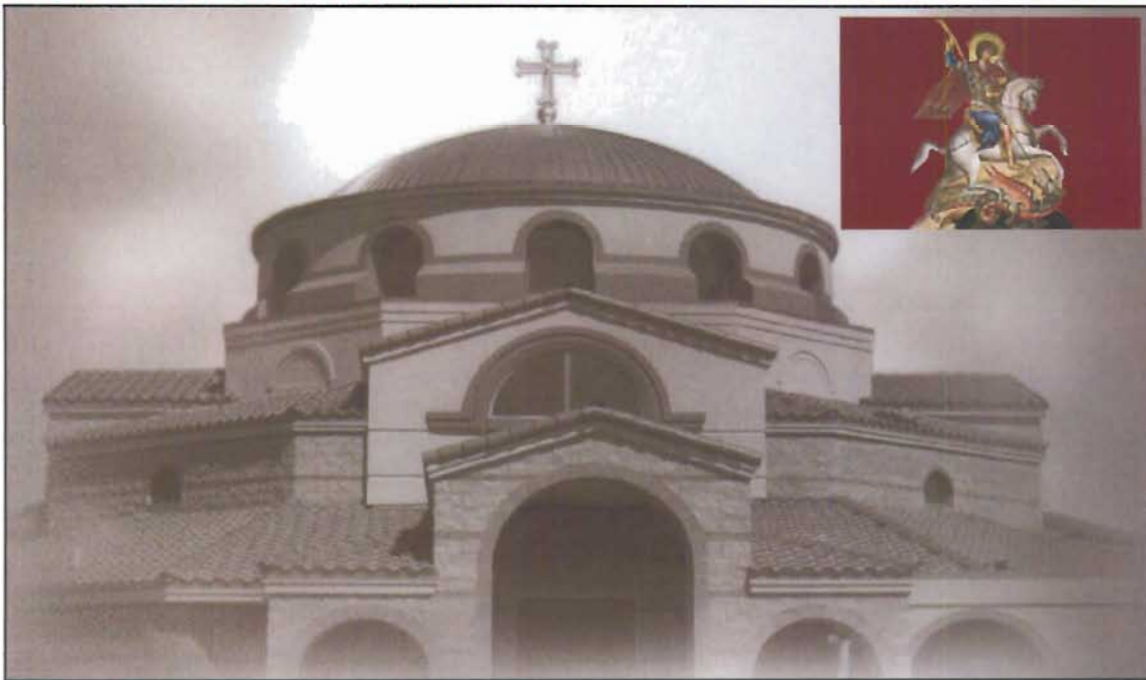
For Pastoral Emergencies, or to notify the Clergy of ill or hospitalized parishioners, please call the Church office at: (915) 584-9100, during Office hours.

To reach one of our clergy after hours, you may call their home or cell phones as noted below:

Fr. George Al-Dehneh: 581-8021 (H)
345-9800 (M)

Fr. Bob Bethoney: 584-8306 (H)
892-8200 (M)

Fr. Jehad Michael: 544-4001 (H)
203-2831 (M)

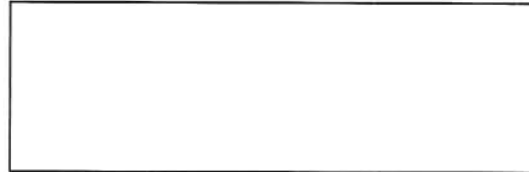


To request a Dome lighting, please contact
Bill or Nada Aziz at 497-0190 or 533-0287.
The donation is \$50 per lighting.

ST. GEORGE ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
120 N. FESTIVAL DRIVE
EL PASO, TX 79912

NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
EL PASO, TX
PERMIT NO. 2439

CURRENT RESIDENTS OR



The Pharisees were an ancient and outstanding sect among the Jews known for their diligent observance of the outward matters of the Law. Although, according to the word of our Lord, they "did all their works to be seen of men" (Matt. 23:5), and were hypocrites (ibid. 23: 13, 14, 15, etc.), because of the apparent holiness of their lives they were thought by all to be righteous, and separate from others, which is what the name Pharisee means. On the other hand, Publicans, collectors of the royal taxes, committed many injustices and extortions for filthy lucre's sake, and all held them to be sinners and unjust. It was therefore according to common opinion that the Lord Jesus in His parable signified a virtuous person by a Pharisee, and a sinner by a Publican, to teach His disciples the harm of pride and the profit of humble-mindedness.

Since the chief weapon for virtue is humility, and the greatest hindrance to it is pride, the divine Fathers have set these three weeks before the Forty-day Fast as a preparation for the spiritual struggles of virtue. This present week they have called Harbinger, since it declares that the Fast is approaching; and they set humility as the foundation for all our spiritual labors by appointing that the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee be read today, even before the Fast begins, to teach, through the vaunting of the Pharisee, that the foul smoke of self-esteem and the stench of boasting drives away the grace of the Spirit, strips man of all his virtue, and casts him into the pits of Hades; and, through the repentance and contrite prayer of the Publican, that humility confers upon the sinner forgiveness of all his wicked deeds and raises him up to the greatest heights.