

The St. George CHAMPION

The Parish Newsletter of St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church, Little Falls, NJ

Fall 2012

Vr Rev. Fr. Dimitri Darwich
Pastor

Fr. Michael Ibrahim
Attached Priest

Very Rev. Fr. Elias Bitar
Retired

Christine Lynch
Choir Director

Thomas Oliver,
Yolla Nehme,
Rana Nassour-Derbaly
Paul Juzdan
Cantors

Ziad Juzdan
Parish Council

Fadia Juzdan
Ladies Society

Rima Bandeli
Sunday School

Marlene Ayoub
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The Fear of God

by the Very Reverend Father Dimitri Darwich

*“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”
(II Corinthians 6:16, 7:1)*

My brothers and sisters in Christ, we are going to examine the words of St. Paul which we quoted at the outset. These words are difficult for us, because they are not addressed to our intelligence, but, rather, to our heart. We cannot approach God with our intelligence alone; if this were the case, only the very intelligent could be saved. God wants all of us, and this is biblically symbolized by the heart:

“Create in me a clean heart,
O God, and renew a right
spirit within me” (Ps. 51:10).

In I Samuel 16:7, we learn that “The Lord looketh on the heart.” Now any cry to “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit” or to “perfect holiness in the fear of God” does not seem to appeal to the heart of modern man, and because the heart remains unmoved, the mind summons logical arguments that will appear to justify this disobedience.

Honestly now, what is it that causes modern man to rebel so against God? Why is modern man so opposed to spiritual purity, moral health, and holiness? Why does modern man insist upon harnessing and perverting every conceivable scientific argument to prove God false?

We live today in an era of moral corruption, an era of moral decline — and this under the

pretext that we are free. Is this not what St. Peter warned against, when he spoke of “not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness” (I Peter 2:16)? But we foolishly claim that, with our scientific advancements and enlightenment, we can solve all of our own problems. Thus, proponents of the “new morality” brush aside every moral law and principle, and disregard the word and the eternal will of God on the grounds that they are mechanical, irrational, unnatural, and illiberal. They cease to practice religion, cause others to leave the Church, and wander about aimlessly with but one desire — to satisfy the lusts of the flesh.

**“Fear of God and
love for God are
really one and the
same thing; both
are based upon our
faith and hope.”**

But to satisfy the flesh outside of the fear of God — outside of marriage — is not enlightened and intelligent. It is corrupt and degenerate, an abomination to the Lord. The satisfaction of each desire conceived within us is not power and freedom; it is weakness and enthrallment;

it is pollution of the flesh and of the spirit. In this the word of God is most explicit. There is no room for argument, there is not any room for empty rationalization, for making excuses in sin. And yet, there are those who, despite their filthiness, despite their sins, would still make excuses to justify themselves in the sight of God. Still others sink to even lower depths, in that they choose simply to ignore the Divine and the warnings that accompany it. It is not that they cannot come to know God and His love; they simply do not wish to do so.

(Continued on last page)

• Community News •

Sunday School News

by Rima Bandeli, Sunday School Director

We are getting ready for another blessed year in the St George Sunday School. Our teachers are gearing up, many are attending a teacher training session in August to get ready. The first day of classes is Sept 9, 2012.

We need to update the information about all the students, this includes the high school students. Please complete the form attached and send it in with your eldest child. Only one form is needed per family. We ask that you send in \$5.00 per child for the cost of our books. Any questions please call me, 973-872-1382 or email katanda2@yahoo.com

- 1) All classes K through 12 will begin during Communion and will be dismissed at exactly 12:00 pm, regardless of when the liturgy ends. This way, we can assure that our children will have at least 45 min. of religious instruction weekly.
- 2) There will be a "Back to School" event in each classroom tentatively scheduled for September 23rd from 12:00 to 12:30 pm. Please meet your children's teachers and learn about their goals and the curriculum for the year. At the end, this is also an opportunity to discuss any individual concerns about your child. Look for more information through e-mails and weekly bulletin.
- 3) Since some Sunday School classes must be held in the hall noise carries into the separate classrooms, NO ONE may enter the hall from 10:45 am until the final dismissal of Liturgy, which is after any sermons, memorial or churching services, and announcements. Please do NOT enter the hall unless part of Sunday School or serving coffee. Thank you for your anticipated full co-operation.

Reminder:

Bible Study Monday nights at 7:30pm

Vespers Saturday evenings at 6:30pm.

**Everyone can visit us at stgeorgenj.com
and "like" us on facebook.**

Ladies Society News

by Fadia Juzdan

I would like to welcome all the ladies of Saint George to another church year. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the ladies for a great job with the kitchen and pastry booth at the festival.

Our meetings will be held every second Sunday of the month. We have a year full of activities and fellowship ahead of us. Every lady is welcomed to come to the meeting, we would like as many participants as possible.

Remember: *Every Woman is an Antiochian Woman.*

Charity Committee

by Julie Abboud

The works of St. George Charity continue year round! Our food pantry serves those within and surrounding our community. We are always in need of toilet paper, cleaning products, shampoo, deodorant, canned food, cereal, etc. anything that would be on your grocery shopping list, would be needed for those we serve. Please bring in your donated items and leave them in the conference room.

Fellowship News

by Michael Kabbash

September is Fellowship Month, so you will see several Fellowship members reading the Epistle each Sunday in September.

The Fellowship is co-sponsoring a kick-off for the Sunday School on Friday, September 7th at 8:30 pm. A family-friendly movie will be shown, so please bring your own lawn chairs. If the weather does not cooperate, we will move the event into the hall.

Our first Fellowship meeting of the season with elections will be held Sunday September 16th, following Divine Liturgy.

We are looking into some small events to foster more fellowship with our parish families who normally do not congregate... so please stay tuned!

Also, looking ahead to Advent, we hope to host a guest lecturer during this Nativity Fast (which begins on November 15th).

Meet our New Pastor, Father Dimitri Darwich

Fr. Dimitri was born Samer Darwich in Damascus, Syria on August 27th, 1969. He is the seventh of eight children born to Michael and Adiba Darwich. They were all raised in Damascus where they completed Elementary and Secondary Schools. Samer, then, went on to Homs, Syria to obtain a degree in chemistry for two years before training for one year at the Archdiocese of Homs under His Eminence Metropolitan ALEXI (Abd Al Karim) of thrice-blessed memory. In 1991, he journeyed to Lebanon for an interview at the St. John of Damascus Institute of Theology at the Balamand University where he was accepted. He returned home to notify his family and met a young math teacher named Ghada Malouf, who was visiting his sister. However, he quickly returned to Lebanon and began a one year language preparatory program for his seminary studies. The program also included four years of theological studies.

During his years at the seminary, he participated in inter-Christian dialogues within the Middle East Council of Churches and traveled with his class for a pilgrimage to Mount Athos where he visited and venerated the tomb of St. Demetrius the Myrrh-Bearer located in Thessalonica, Greece. He made the decision to take the name, 'Dimitri,' upon this visit to the Saint's tomb. He returned to Lebanon and completed all his studies in July of 1996. In August of the same year, on his birthday, he became engaged to the young lady he had met years before. They were married on October 3rd, 1996 at St. Mary's Cathedral in Damascus and Samer was quickly ordained to the Holy Diaconate on the Feast of the Archangel Michael on November 8th in Safeta, Syria through the laying on of hands by His Grace Bishop BASILIOS (Nassour) who had trained the young seminarian for 5 years during the summers in many areas of Church life. He was the wise teacher who paved the way for what would be a long relationship between him and the future priest who would later serve under him for 5 years. The newly ordained Deacon Dimitri was recommended immediately by Bishop BASILIOS to be ordained to the Holy Priesthood.

On December 13th of the same year, at the hands of His Eminence Metropolitan BOULOS (Bandaly) of Akkar, Dn. Dimitri was ordained a priest and became the Reverend Father Dimitri at St. Elias Orthodox Church in Kafroun, Syria, in the same parish where he would serve the next 5 years. It was Metropolitan BOULOS who sponsored Fr. Dimitri for his

entire Seminary career and gave him his blessing to serve an additional 2 parishes in the local diocese of Tartouse and Safeta under His Grace Bishop BASILIOS. As a young priest serving 3 parishes, full-time, Fr. Dimitri became active in all areas of Church life. He started programs, activities, Bible Studies, constant house visits, and established youth organizations. His energy became evident in all he did and all 3 parishes are bearing fruit to this day! Thank God! During their time in Kafroun, Fr. Dimitri and Khourieh Ghada welcomed two beautiful children, Nicole in 1997 and Andre in 1999.



In 2001, Fr. Dimitri received the opportunity to serve in the Archdiocese of North America under His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP and was given the blessing to do so on September 23rd when he arrived in New York. On September 26th, he was assigned by His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP to the Virgin Mary Church of Yonkers which was established by His Eminence upon becoming the Metropolitan in 1966. Fr. Dimitri has been served in Yonkers for the past 11 years and during which, the parish has grown by many families, become active in regional and national programs, and has reestablished youth organizations. The first 3 years were especially difficult for

Fr. Dimitri and his family. They lived away from each other due to his family not being able to come to America until 2004. However, this situation created an opportunity where Fr. Dimitri was able to know his new parish and become close to all his families. The Virgin Mary Church quickly became his new family. Fr. Dimitri also participates in inter-Orthodox events, services, and meetings and, also inter-Christian events and services among the Arab Churches located in Yonkers and the New York area. Upon the arrival of his family on October 15th, 2004, Fr. Dimitri spent the first months acquainting his family with several new friends, scores of community members, and their new home.

On August 21st, 2006, Fr. Dimitri and Khourieh Ghada welcomed their third child, Nancy. Reverend Father Dimitri was elevated to the rank of Archpriest by His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP on October 15th, 2006. In 2012 Fr. Dimitri received the news that he would take the place of parish priest at St. George Church in Little Falls, following the retirement of Fr. Elias Bitar. On July 22, 2012 he celebrated his first Divine Liturgy with his new flock. **Axios!**

Eastern Dioceses Junior Oratorical Contestant Stephanie Batarseh

When I read the Bible, I see light in a world of darkness; I listen to God rather than to my peers; I touch eternity rather than my phone; I am craving the taste of Heaven. The Bible in its original documents is the inspired Word of God. It is the written record of His revelation, and teachings and it illuminates the obscurity of the world. Saint John of Damascus tells us, “The Bible is like 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.”

We go to Church and listen to His words in the Bible, but our Savior wants us to learn something more. He wants us to live the Bible, to learn from His actions. By living the Bible, one is experiencing life to the fullest, enjoying everything that God has given to us on Earth, and preparing us to spend eternity with God in Heaven.

We attend Liturgy to be in the presence of God, to take the Body and Blood of Christ, and to learn from the Bible God’s blueprints to follow in building His Kingdom on Earth. We, as Christians, are the construction crew. We each have different talents that the Lord gives to us to use during this ongoing construction project – of expanding His Church on Earth. “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of workings but the same God works all of them in everyone” (1Cor 12, 4–6). God is the Master Designer who gives us the plans and materials to create His Kingdom and ensure our eternal happiness with Him.

My favorite passage in the Bible is when Jesus is testing Peter and asks him who he thinks Jesus is and Peter responds that Jesus is the Son of the Living God. Jesus then acknowledges Peter’s faith, “Upon this rock I will build my Church” (Mathew 16:18). Now, it is our turn to help expand God’s Church on Earth.

When we hear the voice of God through the writings of the prophets and the Apostles we know that each day we are getting closer to our goal of following God’s blueprints by living His Words. This unique feeling is called eternal joy. It is communicating with God in a whole new language. This is a special language in which our words are replaced by actions. By following His Biblical blueprint, we experience the joy of building His Kingdom on Earth and sharing His eternal joy with others.

The Bible is like a box containing the blueprint of the Kingdom of God. Each of us helps build His Kingdom. How we interact with others will determine if our work resembles the plans God has made for us or if the Kingdom remains unfinished. As Orthodox Christian teens, we demonstrate to younger Christians the way to make the Kingdom of God complete. As active members of SOYO, we lay the brick and mortar of God’s house each time we clean the Church, visit orphanages, or distribute food to the poor.

I often think of an elderly, homeless woman who stood in line for a sandwich. Her clothes were layered, soiled, and worn, her face looked shriveled and she was stooped over. When I placed a sandwich in her thin, wrinkled hands, I saw in her thankful eyes the reality of, “Truly, I say to you as you did it to the least of my brothers, you did it to me” (Mathew 25:40). I knew she was a citizen of the Kingdom of God.

As Christians, the Bible teaches us to treat others as we would like to be treated, but this also means we have to treat each other as we would treat God.

As we practice our Orthodox Christian faith, building His kingdom, know the Christians of tomorrow are watching us, the Christians of today.

Free “Drive In” Movie

Friday, Sept. 7th • 8:00 pm

Join us for a family friendly movie to help kick off the School Year!

Bring your own lawn chair. Popcorn and juice boxes provided.

In the event of rain, the movie will be shown in the Hall.

Sponsored by The Fellowship of St. John and the St. George Sunday School

Eastern Dioceses Junior Oratorical Contestant Victoria Ayoub

I am so excited to be here today to tell you about this awesome book that I have been reading. It is action-packed from the first chapter to the last. To some this Book is regarded as fiction or a myth, but to me, it is my compass. It is unique in the sense that no other Book is filled with history, wisdom, prophesy, devotion, sacrifice, conflict, peace, and hope, with a hint of betrayal here and there, but most of all, love. In the words of Saint John of Damascus, “[It] 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.” This book is entitled the Holy Bible. Now mind you, I have been reading this book for a few years now and have not finished it yet, but I already know the ending.

My first Bible was filled with vibrant pictures depicting how God created the earth and everything and everyone in it. To me, each colorful picture was just that — a picture. But my mom explained that each picture told a story about God. I remember seeing a picture of a big boat, an old man, lots of animals, and a rainbow, but she told me of the story of Noah and God’s covenant. “...and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.” Genesis 9:15. Now, whenever I see a rainbow, I remember God’s promise to Noah.

Of all the stories she shared with me, the pictures that most amused me, but still filled me with fear, were those from the story of the Prophet Jonah. I remember seeing a picture of a man falling into the ocean and a huge fish coming out of the water with its mouth wide open. As a child this scene was a bit scary and the family trips to the beach were filled with anxiety. Was God going to throw me inside a whale the next time I misbehaved? My mom reassured me that this was nothing to be afraid of and even bought me a movie about it called Jonah — a Veggie Tales Movie (Jonah was the cucumber). This movie helped ease my fears because I learned of God’s gift of a second chance. As I have grown, I have come to understand the significance of this story and that Jesus even referred to Jonah when he was asked by the Pharisees and scribes to show them a sign. Instead Jesus

prophesied his own death and resurrection when he answered, “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Matthew 12:40. It was this and so many other faith-filled stories over the years that made the words in the Holy Scripture seem to magically float off the page and into my imagination for eternity.

The Bible is also filled with instructions on how to live a life of truth; kind of a “how-to-book”. Some of those instructions are clearly written especially in the Ten Commandments given by God to Moses. It also gives us the Psalms that contain hymns and poems that we can turn to when facing life’s dilemmas.

Recently, my grandfather was hospitalized and his condition was grave. My heart was heavy with sorrow as I saw him hooked up to tubes and tied to the bed. My mom encouraged me to explore the Book of Psalms where I found solace and was reminded of God’s mercy and love. “Read the Holy Gospel, be penetrated by its spirit, make it the rule of your life, your handbook; in every action and question of life act according to the study of the Gospel. This is the only light of our life.” (Nikon of Optina, 20th century)

I am a bookworm and I have read the typical teenage selection of books such as The Hunger Games, Harry Potter, and Percy Jackson, which are engagingly filled with fantasy and adventure, but do nothing for my salvation. Not only is The Holy Bible an engaging read, but must be handled with reverence and read unceasingly. The Holy Bible may not be on the young adult top seller list, but in the hearts of every Christian, it triumphs over every read. St. John Chrysostom wisely said, “It is not possible, I say not possible, ever to exhaust the mind of the Scriptures. It is a well which has no bottom.” The Bible and the church, hand in hand, give me the strength and the will to do what non-believers deem impossible. As I stroll through the delightful, beautiful garden God gave us, I am filled with eternal joy.

Important Reminder:

The General Parish Meeting will be held Sunday November 11th immediately following Liturgy. All members of St. George Church should attend to learn about and participate in the life of our parish.

St George Sunday School Registration Form

Student's Name

Grade

DOB

Age

Family Information

Father: _____

Mother: _____

Address: _____

Email address: _____

STARTING COLLEGE?

The Orthodox Christian Fellowship wants to identify all Orthodox students who will be beginning college this fall, in order to reach out to them and give them information regarding the OCF chapter on campus and nearby Orthodox parishes. To give your information or parents to give your son/daughter's information, please go to www.ocf.net/wikis/resources/new-student-contact-form.aspx download the New Student Contact Form and once you've filled it out, please e-mail to contacts@ocf.net

NOTE: All information remains CONFIDENTIAL.

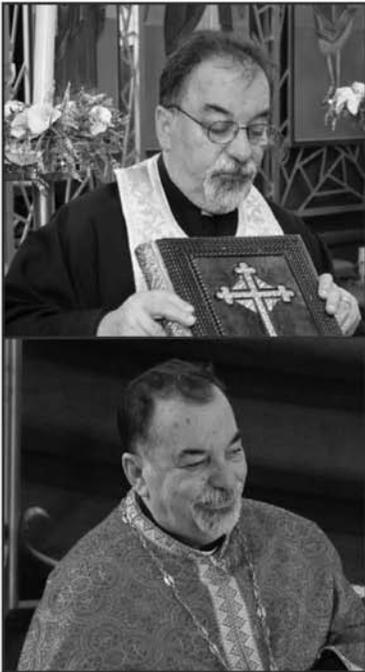
All students must have a registration form completed, even if registered previously.
 Please complete one form per family.

Send the form in with your child on Sept. 9, 2012 along with \$5.00 per child to help defray the cost of the books.

Thank you in advance for your help. Any questions please contact Rima Bandeli, Director katanda2@yahoo.com or 973-872-1382

See you September 9, 2012

A Celebration in Honor of
THE VERY REVEREND ELIAS BITAR



*Join us as we celebrate
the life and priesthood of the
Very Reverend Elias Bitar.
Known as “The Voice of the
Archdiocese”, Fr. Elias is the former
Vicar General of the Antiochian
Orthodox Archdiocese, a faithful
Priest, husband, father, teacher,
advisor and friend.*

*Help us honor and thank Fr. Elias
for his many years of service to
Christ’s Church.*



Saturday October 27, 2012 • 7:00 pm
at St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church

Ticket Price \$100

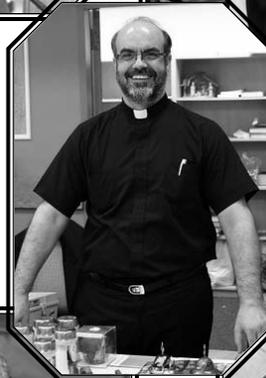
Tickets available through the Church Office: 973.256.8961 or contact
Julie Abboud at 917.834.7623 or immalbert@aol.com
Please reserve your tickets or tables early as seating is limited.

For updated information on the event, please visit www.stgeorgenj.com

Summer Memories of St. George Summer Festival 2012



Photos by none other than Michelle Handal





The Fear of God (continued from page 1)

Indeed, purity and holiness are difficult goals, even for those who wish to attain them. No one would claim that it is not difficult. If the achievement of virtue were not difficult, virtue would then have no value before God or before man. The Lord told us that the road to eternal life is narrow and that few choose that way. The road to brutalization and destruction, on the other hand, is very wide, and most people choose it. Brutalization, though it be a harsh term, is nevertheless accurate; for when man casts aside the laws of God, he sinks to the level of the animals, and sometimes surpasses them in his filthiness.

There is one thing which can keep us close to the Divine Law, and this is the fear of God. And there is one power which can cleanse us from sin, and

strengthen us so that we can attain holiness, and this power is Divine Grace.

The lives of the saints, their love, their hope, their piety, their worship, their purity, their holiness, and their wisdom, not only theoretical, but active, were built firmly upon the foundation of Divine Grace. We read in Proverbs 9:10, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”

The fear of God does not result in a feeling of confinement. St. Paul tells us that it is pure; it is free from any feeling of slavery and unworthiness. The fear of God is actually respect for God’s great love for us. It is the only means by which we may tame or bridle our unruly flesh.

Fear of God and love for God are really one and the same thing; both are based

upon our faith and hope. Faith accepts in confidence all that God has promised us. Hope awaits assurance of the fulfillment of these promises. With this thought in mind, St. Paul quotes the writings of the Prophets, in order to strengthen the faith of the Christians at Corinth in all that God has promised. He urges moral purity and holiness in order to revive the hopes of the Christians in the promises of God. Each Christian has a double responsibility in connection with his beliefs and hopes; he must purify himself, and perform holiness. Both are derived from the same source: the fear of God. Thus, according to the Divine promises, St. Paul says: “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”



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