

**SAINT GEORGE GREEK
ORTHODOX CHURCH**

CHURCH STAFF

•Parish Priest: Fr. Michael
Constantinides

•Chanter: Steve Morgan

•Caretaker: Jason Leon

•GOYA Advisors: Dr.
Vicky Pyevich/Anne Kir-
patrick

•HOPE/JOY Advisors:
Pres. Maria Constanti-
nides/Candice Elias

•Outreach and Evangelism
Chair: Angela Spurgetis

•Parish Council President:
Mary Rankin

•Philoptochos President:
Susan Coin

•Prayer Ministry: Gus
Pappas

•Sunday School Director:
Deacon Paul Speed

•Senior Ministry Chairper-
son: Kay Coin

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VOLUME 5 ISSUE 11

DECEMBER 2016

The Trophybearer

PASTORAL MESSAGE

Now that we have finished our election process, all we can think about is what will happen to the unity of the country. Can the president unite all the factions that now exist and form once again one country again? This is the question that we ask of those who wish to rule over us. The Church asks the same question to us. Can we have unity? Can we unite our world, other Christians and our own Parish? My brothers and sisters in the Lord, let us take a few moments to discuss this cosmic question of unity and see how we as Christians can bring it about.

Let us first look at the unity of the world. God created the world and set man over it as a steward to preserve it and to bring it closer to God. Man was to bring it into a relationship with God by presenting it to Him in our persons since man is microcosm, both physical and spiritual. Man is the link of unity between God and creation. When man separated himself from God all creation was separated from God. Sin separates while repentance unites. Man was further separated from himself. Men separated from women, Christian separated from non-Christian and the faithful separated from faithless. Our job is to unite the whole world under Christ.

Next let us look at unity among Christians. There are many denominations, many faiths, many creeds and many mistakes. Yet there is only one God, one Body (Church) and one Spirit. All need to learn the correct faith and be incorporated into the Church. Our job is to teach truth, having first learned it ourselves. We must be humble and gentle. The Church contains fullness of truth, yet we should not be triumphalists, since we must recognize a certain responsibility for the truth. We must lead all Christians to the truth through living a life worthy of our calling. A life filled with prayer, fasting, confession of sins, Communion and alms giving. We must lead them through patience, recognizing that people are at different levels and thus not force but persuade. We must lead them through love since God converts us through love we must also convert others through love. We are not conquering barbarians, but finding lost brothers.

Finally let us look at unity in the Parish. We are one body. We come to the one cup. So, we must live as one family. Our job is to have no divisions. No divisions between rich and poor, between suburban and urban and between Greek and non-Greek. We must help those who need help. Those who are weak in faith, we are to strengthen. We must give to the poor. We must even give to the Church who works in ways that we both know and do not know. We must be true stewards giving our time, talents and treasures to the Church. Finally, we must love unconditionally, since we are called in love and reborn in this love, we must act with this unconditional love.

How can we do it? By living the life we are called to. We should not be hypocrites and let what we say be what we do. We should not use God and his laws as an excuse not to do good. We should not ignore others because their faith is different. In other words we should be everything to everyone so that in all ways a few may be saved. This means that we should not be traditionalists but traditional and not pietistic but pious. Will we always succeed? No! A Christian is not one who always succeeds but one who tries again when he fails.

So, we can see that unity is an important issue even in the life of the Church. We are called to unite all of creation in our own persons and present it to its Creator. We are also called to unite all those who believe in other gods under the banner of Christ through repentance and love. God also calls us to heal the schisms that plague the Church not only through faith, love and conversion but also by living true Christian lives ourselves, by setting examples. This can be done only if we have unity in our own parish. Unity in the parish can only happen if we act as one body, one family. A family takes care of itself and does not rely on others to help it. The question that comes up is can we do it? Can we unite ourselves and then all of Christianity and the whole world? I think we can if and only if we are not discouraged by our failings but rise from them and try again. Let us then go out into the world and show our unity. Let us go forth and set the tone for unity among Christians. Let us go forth and bring all creation to God so that all may praise the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

December 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 Fish, Oil and wine allowed 6:00 p.m. Orthodox Study Forum	2 Fast Day	3 Fish, Oil and wine allowed 8:00 a.m. Blood Drive +Sacrament
4 10th Sunday of Luke Parish Council Elections Fish, Oil and wine allowed 8:30a.m. Orthros 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy Sunday School Class following Holy Communion GOYA Meeting	5 Fish, Oil and wine allowed	6 Saint Nicholas of Myra Fish, Oil and wine allowed 8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by the Divine Liturgy at Saint George	7 Fast Day 10:00 a.m. Orthodox Study Forum	8 Fish, Oil and wine allowed 6:00 p.m. Orthodox Study Forum	9 Fast Day	10 Fish, Oil and wine allowed
11 11th Sunday of Luke 8:30a.m. Orthros 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy Sunday School Class following Holy Communion HOPE/JOY Event	12 Feastday of Saint Spyridon the Wonderworker Fish, Oil and Wine Allowed 9:00 a.m. Orthros followed by the Divine Liturgy at Assumption Church	13 Fast Day 7:00 p.m. Parish Council Meeting	14 Fast Day 10:00 a.m. Orthodox Study Forum	15 Feast Day of Saint Eleutherios Fast Day 9:00 a.m. Orthros followed by the Divine Liturgy at Assumption Church 6:00 p.m. Orthodox Study Forum	16 Fast Day	17 Feastday of Saint Dionysios the Areopagite Oil and Wine Allowed 8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by the Divine Liturgy at Saint George
18 Sunday before the Nativity Oil and Wine Allowed 8:30a.m. Orthros 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy Sunday School Class following Holy Communion GOYA Christmas Caroling	19 Fast Day	20 Fast Day	21 Fast Day 10:00 a.m. Orthodox Study Forum	22 Fast Day 6:00 p.m. Orthodox Study Forum	23 Fast Day	24 Saturday before the Nativity Oil and Wine Allowed 8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by the Divine Liturgy at Saint George
25 The Nativity of the Lord Fast Free 8:30a.m. Orthros 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy Sunday School Christmas Pageant	26 Fast Free	27 Feastday of Saint Stephen the First Martyr Fast Free 8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by the Divine Liturgy at Saint George	28 Fast Free Evening Meal 6:00 p.m. Orthodox Study Forum Pot-Luck Christmas Party	29 Fast Free	30 Fast Free	31 Fast Free

The Council Connection

Wine Tasting Event Postponed

At the Fall General Assembly held on November 6, the wine tasting event proposed by Dimitri Papageorgiou and Stan Coin at the October Parish Council meeting was discussed. The general consensus at the assembly was that the proposal to change the wine tasting event at the festival to a stand-alone fundraising event for the parish is a good idea, but the timeline to make the event successful was too short. The event will be scheduled for December of 2017 and a committee and chairperson(s) are being sought. If you are interested in helping with this endeavor, please contact Mary Rankin (cell: 563-263-2341; email: mbar-ton83@aol.com) or

any council member. The Philoptochos Society had planned to bake and sell a limited amount of baklava at the event. If the group still wishes to proceed with the baking, those present at the assembly informally offered to support the sale through purchases.

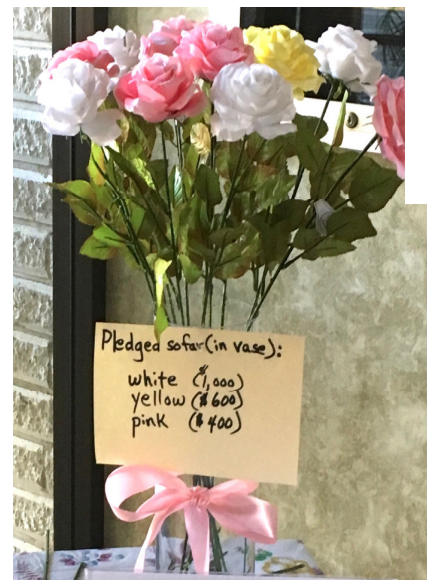
Parish Council Election Scheduled for December 4

Please offer your support to those who have volunteered to be on the ballot for the Parish Council by voting in the library following Divine Liturgy on Sunday, December 4!

“Stewardship Bouquet” as of November 21:

Wow! Only eight days into the 2017 Stewardship Campaign and 22 pledge cards have been returned, totaling \$37,905 (an average of

\$1,722.95 per pledge). Of these, 4 homes have increased their pledge by \$400, 2 homes have increased by \$600, and 4 homes by \$1,000! Here is how the bouquet looks as of 21 November. The objective is to have three-dozen flowers by the start of 2017!



Serving on the Council is an honor! If anyone is interested in serving please see Mary Rankin or Father Michael

Yours in Christ,
Mary Rankin
 Mary Rankin
 Parish Council
 President

Epistle Readers

December 4, 2016
10th Sunday of Luke
 Alexa Florence

Sunday,
December 11, 2016
11th Sunday of Luke
 Michael Pyevich

Sunday,
December 18, 2016
Sunday before the
Nativity
 Isabella Elias

Sunday,
December 25, 2016
The Nativity of our Lord
 Loukia Constantinides



“O Lord, open my lips and my mouth shall show forth your praise!”

Anyone interested in being an epistle reader should contact the church office!

PRAYERS FOR OUR SHUT-INS

- Emily Caras
- Helen Corelis
- Stella Cudworth
- Elaine Froumis
- Pat Grevas
- Judy Pappas
- Jim Patton
- Xenia Patton
- Effie Skafidas
- Janice Smirles
- Gordon Smith
- Helen Smith
- Jim Tsagaris

Monthly Pastoral Visits

Shut-in: 12

Hospital Calls: 8

Please keep the sick and the shut-ins in your prayers!

The Church is a palace...

For the King of Kings. This explains the extensive use of royal colors: gold, blue and white. The fact that the Church is the palace of God's presence gives expression to our faith that even now earth is changed into heaven whenever the Eucharist is celebrated and divine grace is received.



Fellowship and fun!

Parish Council Sunday Duty

Sunday,
December 4, 2016
 Dale Allison
 Brad Crosson,
 Mariellen Crosson
 Mike Patramanis

Sunday,
December 18, 2016
 Joe Burmeister,
 Mary Kay Eckert
 Mary Rankin
 Ken Stiegel

Sunday,
December 11, 2016
 John Mekus,
 Dennis Spurgetis,
 Diane Spurgetis
 Mary Rankin

Sunday,
December 25, 2016
 Dale Allison
 Brad Crosson,
 Mariellen Crosson
 Mike Patramanis

Coffee Hour Hosts for December 2016

Sunday, December 4, 2016
hosted by:
 Mary and Kim Winters/
 George and Diane Karoules in
 memory of Katherine
 Karoules

Sunday, December 11, 2016
hosted by:
 Marina Reese

Sunday, December 18, 2016
hosted by:
 The Jannes and Stiegel
 Families

Sunday, December 25, 2016
hosted by:
 The Speeds

Community News

HOPE/JOY NEWS

Our HOPE/JOY has placed a hat, scarf and mitten tree in the foyer of the , please help the help-less!

PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Parish Council elections will be held on Sunday, December 4. Please remember to cast your vote.

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Will be on Tuesday, December 13, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. in the Green room.

METROPOLIS OPEN HOUSE:

Will be held this year on Sunday, December 18th at the Metropolis of Chicago. Everyone is invited to attend.

Prosphora Baking Schedule

Sunday, December 4th. 2016:
Presbyteria Maria

Sunday, December 11th,
2016: Diakonissa Romilie

Sunday, December 18th,
2016: Georgjean Pitsoulakis

Sunday, December 25th,
2016: John Stratton

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

•On Sunday, December 18th following the Divine Liturgy our Sunday School will be having practice for their Christmas Pageant Program, all students should be present.

•On Sunday, December 25th our Sunday School will be having their Christmas Program following the Divine Liturgy.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

On behalf of Fr. Michael, Fr. Christos, Deacon Paul and the Parish Council we want to wish everyone a Very Merry Christmas and may the blessings of our Lord be with you all!

TROPHYBEARER NEWS

Any one of you who is in trouble should pray; anyone in good spirits should sing a psalm. (James 5:13)

We are adding a new section in the Trophybearer. This section is dedicated to news about our Parish Family. Do you have a budding actor in your family? Tell us when and where they are acting! Do

you or yours play an instrument? Tell us! Is anyone sick in your families? Tell us who to pray for! All submissions should be either emailed to Father Michael at frmike99@gmail.com or handwritten and given to Father Michael by the 15th of the month.

OUTREACH AND EVANGELISM

On Saturday, December 3rd, St. George will host a blood drive in the Gold Room from 8 to 11 a.m. This is a great opportunity to help others, just ask anyone who has needed blood due to trauma or illness. More information will be given in the near future but we would like participation from our members and also the outside community. More details to come!

DONATION OPPORTUNITY

Have you remembered to help the needy and hungry? Please bring in a contribution of food to the church. They are still running dangerously short.



Our Saint George Parish Community

EVENING MEAL VOLUNTEERS

**December 28-
Jim and Elizabeth Teros**

Anyone interested in participating in this worthwhile ministry should contact Dena Manta at 332-1684.

The Church

is a palace...

For the King of Kings. This explains the extensive use of royal colors: gold, blue and white. The fact that the Church is the palace of God's presence gives expression to our faith that even now earth is changed into heaven whenever the Eucharist is celebrated and divine grace is received.

Sunday School News

Sunday School is in full swing. Christmas and New Year's Day are Sundays this year, so there will be no Sunday School those days. This year we will have a Sunday School Christmas Program on Christmas Day; all of our students will participate, and we hope to see them

all there, and you all to enjoy the program.

It is rumored Santa will be in attendance as well. Just a reminder; your children, grandchildren, Godchildren and any other children are more than welcome every Sunday. We

have good hard-working teachers and they appreciate the students they get very much. As well, if you have not, please register your students so that we may do a more efficient job of contacting them when special events come along.

HOPE/JOY NEWS

We hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving with their families.

In November we had our Hope/Joy Christmas store. The kids were able to buy and wrap gifts that were donated to SafePath shelter in Moline, IL. The kids all did great and felt wonderful giving to kids that may not have much this Christmas. Thank you to all who helped to make this event a success. To the people who donated gifts and money for

the store, and the people who helped wrap the gifts, thank you! We raised \$100 and donated the money to the church.

On December 11th, we will be having a gathering after the Divine Liturgy. We will have donuts and hot chocolate for the kids and collect hats, gloves and scarves for the donation tree at the church. Please try and bring your children to this event. It is so important for them to learn to help others in

need! Keep a look out for the flyer with the details for this event.

Remember, all kids between the ages of 3-12 are encouraged to join in the fun.

Please feel free to contact Presvytera Maria at pres-mariazoe@aol.com or Candace Elias at elias4130@yahoo.com with any questions.



GOYA NEWS

Here's what's coming up for GOYA!

December

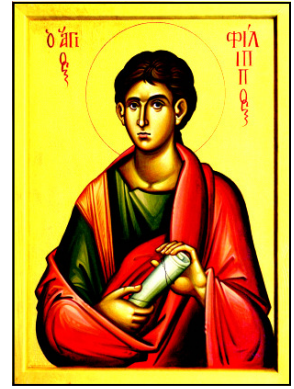
Our GOYA kids will enjoy Caroling and Christmas

cheer with our Senior parishioners who are unable to attend services. The date we picked is December 18, 2016 following the

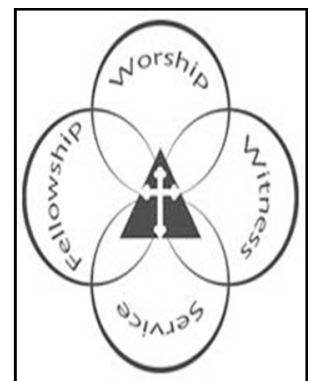
pageant practice. We will also e-mail/text GOYAns with more information.

January

Snowstar! We will be tak-



St. Philip the Deacon is the patron saint of Religious Education. He was an inspired evangelist and teacher whose missionary work brought a multitude of new believers to Christ in Samaria and other cities. along the coast of Palestine



The Four Circles of Youth Ministry:

- Worship
- Witness
- Fellowship
- Service

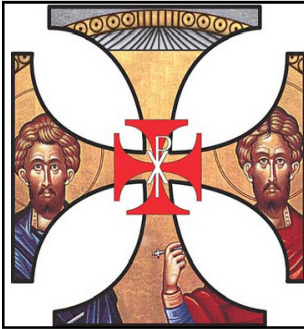
ing our Goya group to Snowstar for a fun day of tubing after services. Date and more info to come!

February

Evening meal. Our kids

enjoyed providing a meal to the homeless last year, and we would like to do more outreach along these lines. We will be confirming a date very soon.

Watch for details.



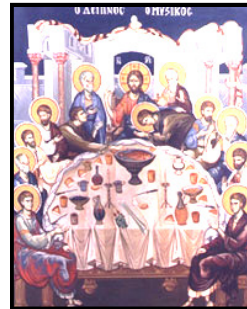
Saints Cosmas and Damianos the Patron Saints of Philoptochos

Focus on Philoptochos

Help us to Help Others

Philoptochos Corner

The Philoptochos will be doing a small baklava and phyllo sale in early December for the holidays. The baking day will be Thursday December 1 starting at 9 am with prep on Wednesday 11/30 starting at 11:30. Please contact Susan Coin at (563)650-7405 if you can help.



The Sacraments of the Church

Parish Registry

Chrismation

The Servant of God, Christina Beck, was Confirmed into the Orthodox Church on November 13, 2016. Her new name is Irene. The Sponsor is Mary Rankin.

Christian Stewardship is...

...learning how to be a responsible and concerned caretaker of Christ's Church; it is learning how to enjoy Church life and be happy in Church work., for in Her dwells the fullness of the Spirit of God.

...our active commitment to use all our time, talent and treasure for the benefit of humankind in grateful acknowledgment of Christ's redeeming love.

...caring for the needs of others.

...offering one's self to God as He offered Himself to us.

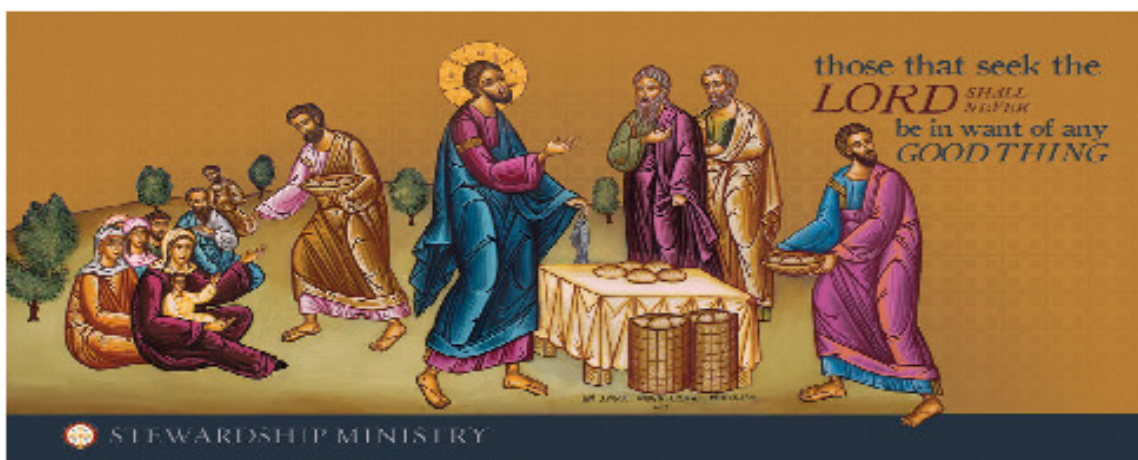
...what a person does after saying "I believe...", as proof of that belief.

...devotion and service to God and His Church as persons, as families, as diocese/metropolis, as national Church and as Church universal.

Stewardship News

St. George Stewardship Notes

"Those that Seek the Lord Shall Never be in Want of Any Good Thing"



STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY

2016 QUICK FACTS (as of November 21, 2016)

\$121,025.00 =
Amount pledged for 2016
by 124 households

\$112,480.07 =
Amount given to 2016
stewardship since Jan. 1

\$976.00 =
Average pledge per
household at this date

\$274,893.00 =
Amount needed for the
ministries of
St. George Parish for
2016

Reserve Your Rose Today!

Only eight days have passed since the 2017 stewardship campaign has begun, and already 22 households have pledged their support of the bouquet feature added to this year's drive.

In order to sustain the ministries of the parish, an additional \$20,000.00 per year is needed. If thirty-six families pledge to increase their annual giving in increments of \$1000, \$600, or \$400, a rose for each family will be added to the bouquet located in the foyer of the church. (See Council Connection page.)

Additional information about this endeavor and 2017 pledge cards were included in the stewardship mailing in November. If you have lost your pledge card or have questions, please contact stewardship chair Mary Rankin (563-263-2341).

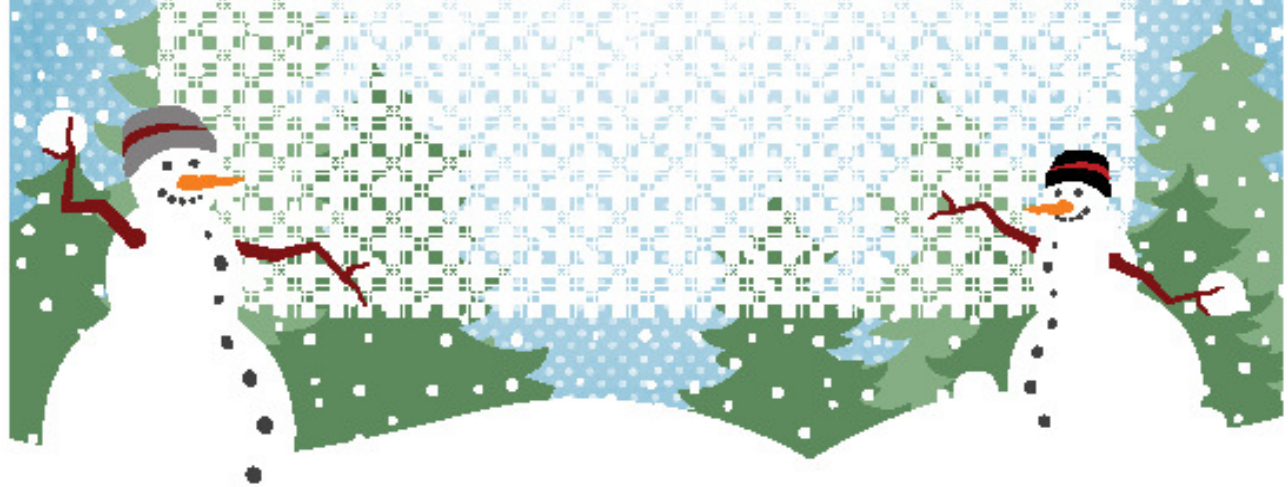
Parish Happenings

Saint George HOPE/JOY

HAT, SCARF, GLOVE TREE

We are collecting hats, gloves and scarves
for the less fortunate...

If you would like to donate, please place on
the Christmas tree outside the Narthex



Parish Happenings

Family Ministry

Offered By Assumption, Saint George and Saint Nicholas Orthodox Churches

Your Life Meets Your Faith



January 16, 2017
6:00 p.m. through 8:00 p.m.

At Assumption Orthodox Church:
4900 Kennedy Drive, East Moline, Illinois 61244

Adult book discussion
"Saint John Chrysostom on Marriage and Family"

Separate Program for children
Dinner offered
Free-will donation appreciated!



Parish Happenings

BLOOD DRIVE

St. George Greek Orthodox Church

Saturday, December 3rd

8:00 am to 11:00 am

Held in the Gold Room

**Please contact Angela Soergetis at 319-631-8154
to sign up to donate today.**

*Please eat before donating and bring Photo ID.
Last Date to Donate Elsewhere: 10/8/16
Group Sponsor Code: 3226*

www.bloodcenter.org

WILL YOU
GIVE?



**MISSISSIPPI VALLEY
REGIONAL BLOOD CENTER**

The Prophet Nahum (December 1)

The Holy Prophet Nahum, whose name means “God consoles,” was from the village of Elkosh (Galilee). He lived during the seventh century B.C. The Prophet Nahum prophesies the ruin of the Assyrian city of Nineveh because of its iniquity, the destruction of the Israelite kingdom, and the blasphemy of King Sennacherib against God. The

Assyrian king Ashurbanipal died in 632 B.C., and over the next two decades, his empire began to crumble. Nineveh fell in 612 B.C.

Nahum differs from most of the prophets in as much as he does not issue any call to repentance, nor does he denounce Israel for infidelity to God.

Details of the prophet’s life are unknown. He died at the age of forty-five, and was buried in his native region. He is the seventh of the Twelve Minor Prophets

The Prophet Nahum and St Nahum of Ochrid (December 23) are invoked for people with mental disorders.



The Prophet Nahum

Saint Ambrose of Milan (December 7)

Saint Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, was born in the year 340 into the family of the Roman prefect of Gaul (now France). Even in the saint’s childhood there appeared presentiments of his great future. Once, bees covered the face of the sleeping infant. They flew in and out of his mouth, leaving honey on his tongue. Soon they flew away so high that they could no longer be seen. Ambrose’s father said that the child would become something great when he reached manhood.

After the death of the father of the family, Ambrose journeyed to Rome, where the future saint and his brother Satyrus received an excellent education. About the year 370, upon completion of his course of study, Ambrose was appointed to the position of governor (consular prefect) of the districts of Liguria and Aemilia, though he continued to live at Mediolanum (now Milan).

In the year 374 Auxentius, the Arian Bishop of Mediolanum, died. This led to complications between the Orthodox and the Arians, since each side wanted to have its own bishop. Ambrose, as the chief city official, went to the church to resolve the dispute.

While he was speaking to the

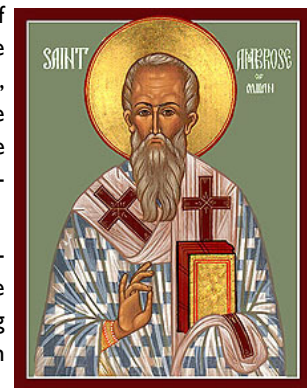
crowd, suddenly a child cried out, “Ambrose for bishop!” The people took up this chant. Ambrose, who at this time was still a catechumen, considered himself unworthy, and tried to refuse. He disparaged himself, and even tried to flee from Mediolanum. The matter went ultimately before the emperor Valentinian the Elder (364-375), whose orders Ambrose dared not disobey. He accepted holy Baptism from an Orthodox priest and, passing through all the ranks of the Church clergy in just seven days, on December 7, 374 he was consecrated Bishop of Mediolanum. He dispersed all his possessions, money and property for the adornment of churches, the upkeep of orphans and the poor, and he devoted himself to a strict ascetic life.

Ambrose combined strict temperance, intense vigilance and work within the fulfilling of his duties as archpastor. St Ambrose, defending the unity of the Church, energetically opposed the spread of heresy. Thus, in the year 379 he traveled off to establish an Orthodox bishop at Sirmium, and in 385-386 he refused to hand over the basilica of Mediolanum to the Arians.

The preaching of St Ambrose in defense of Orthodoxy was deeply influential. Another noted Father of the Western Church, St Augustine (June 15), bore witness to this, having accepted holy Baptism in the year 387 by the grace of the preaching of the bishop of Mediolanum.

St Ambrose also actively participated in civil matters. Thus, the emperor Gracian (375-383), having received from him the “Exposition of the Orthodox Faith” (De Fide), removed, by decree of the saint, the altar of Victory from the halls of the Senate at Rome, on which oaths were wont to be taken. Displaying a pastoral boldness, St Ambrose placed a severe penance on the emperor Theodosius I (379-395) for the massacre of innocent inhabitants of Thessalonica. For him there was no difference between emperor and commoner. Though he released Theodosius from the penance, the saint would not permit the emperor to commune at the altar, but compelled him to do public penance.

The fame of Bishop Ambrose and his actions attracted to him many followers from other lands. From faraway Persia learned men came to him to ask him questions and



Saint Ambrose of Milan

Saint Ambrose of Milan (Continued)

absorb his wisdom. Fritigelda (Frigitil), queen of the military Germanic tribe of the Markomanni, which often had attacked Mediolanum, asked the saint to instruct her in the Christian Faith. The saint in his letter to her persuasively stated the dogmas of the Church. And having become a believer, the queen converted her own husband to Christianity and persuaded him to conclude a treaty of peace with the Roman Empire.

The saint combined strictness with an uncommon kindness. Granted a gift of wonderworking, he healed many from sickness. One time at Florence, while staying at the house of Decentus, he resurrected a dead boy.

The repose of St Ambrose, who departed to the Lord on the night of Holy Pascha, was accompanied by many miracles. He even ap-

peared in a vision to the children being baptized that night. The saint was buried in the Ambrosian basilica in Mediolanum, beneath the altar, between the Martyrs Protasius and Gervasius (October 14).

A zealous preacher and valiant defender of the Christian Faith, St Ambrose received particular renown as a Church writer. In dogmatic compositions he set forth the Orthodox teaching about the Holy Trinity, the Sacraments, and Repentance: "Five Books on the Faith" (De Fide); "Explication of the Symbol of the Faith" (Explanatio Symboli); "On the Incarnation" (De Incarnationis); "Three Books on the Holy Spirit" (De Spiritu Sancto); "On the Sacraments" (De Sacramento); "Two Books on Repentance" (De Paenitentia). In writings about Christian morality, he explained the excellence of Christian moral teaching compared to pagan moral

teaching.

A well-known work of St Ambrose, "On the Duties of the Clergy" (De Officiis Ministrorum) evidences his deep awareness of pastoral duty. He stresses that those who serve in the Church should have not only the proper knowledge of Church services, but also the proper knowledge of moral precepts.

St Ambrose was also a reformer of Church singing. He introduced antiphonal singing (along the Eastern or Syrian form) into the Western Church, which became known as "Ambrosian Chant." He also composed twelve hymns which were used during his lifetime. The hymn, "Thee, O God, we praise" (Te Deum), attributed to St Ambrose, entered into the divine services of the Orthodox Church (Molieben).

Almsgiving heals the soul's incisive power; fasting withers sensual desire; prayer purifies the intellect and prepares it for contemplation of created beings. For the Lord has given us commandments which correspond to the powers of the soul.
St. Maximos the Confessor

The Conception by Righteous Anna of the Most Holy Mother of God (December 9)



The Conception of Anna

St Anna, the mother of the Virgin Mary, was the youngest daughter of the priest Nathan from Bethlehem, descended from the tribe of Levi. She

married St Joachim (September 9), who was a native of Galilee.

For a long time St Anna was childless, but after twenty years, through the fervent prayer of both spouses, an angel of the Lord announced to them that they would be the parents of a daughter, Who would bring blessings to the whole human race.

The Orthodox Church does not accept the teaching that the Mother of God was exempted from the consequences of ancestral sin (death, corruption, sin, etc.) at the moment of her concep-

tion by virtue of the future merits of Her Son. Only Christ was born perfectly holy and sinless, as St Ambrose of Milan teaches in Chapter Two of his Commentary on Luke. The Holy Virgin was like everyone else in Her mortality, and in being subject to temptation, although She committed no personal sins. She was not a deified creature removed from the rest of humanity. If this were the case, She would not have been truly human, and the nature that Christ took from Her would not have been truly human either. If Christ

The Conception by Righteous Anna of the Most Holy Mother of God (Continued)

does not truly share our human nature, then the possibility of our salvation is in doubt.

The Conception of the Virgin Mary by St Anna took place at Jerusalem. The many icons depicting the Conception by St Anna show the Most Holy Theotokos trampling the serpent underfoot.

“In the icon Sts Joachim and

Anna are usually depicted with hands folded in prayer; their eyes are also directed upward and they contemplate the Mother of God, Who stands in the air with outstretched hands; under Her feet is an orb encircled by a serpent (symbolizing the devil), which strives to conquer all the universe by its power.”

There are also icons in which St Anna holds the Most Holy Virgin on her left arm as an infant. On St Anna’s face is a look of reverence. A large ancient icon, painted on canvas, is located in the village of Minkovetsa in the Dubensk district of Volhynia diocese. From ancient times this Feast was especially venerated by pregnant women in Russia.

10 Holy Martyrs of Crete (December 23)

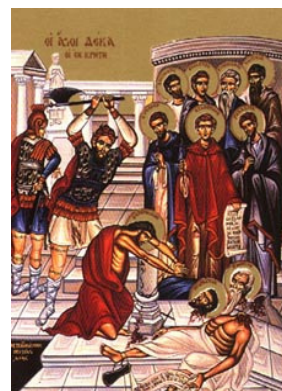
The Ten Holy Martyrs of Crete: Theodulus, Saturninus, Euporus, Gelasius, Eunician, Zoticus, Pompus, Agathopus, Basilides and Evaristus suffered for Christ during the third century under the emperor Decius (249-251). The governor of Crete, also named Decius, fiercely persecuted the Church, and arrested anyone who believed in Christ. Once, ten Chris-

tians were brought before him from various cities of Crete, who at the trial steadfastly confessed their faith in Christ and refused to worship idols.

For thirty days they were subjected to cruel tortures, and with the help of God they all persevered, glorifying God. Before their death they prayed that the Lord would enlighten their torturers with

the light of the true Faith. Since pain did not influence them, the saints were beheaded.

St Paul of Constantinople (November 6) visited Crete about a hundred years later. He took the relics of the holy martyrs to Constantinople to serve as a protection for the city, and a source of blessings for the faithful.



10 Holy Martyrs of Crete

Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen (December 27)

The Holy Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen was the eldest of the seven deacons, appointed by the Apostles themselves, and therefore he is called “archdeacon.” He was the first Christian martyr, and he suffered for Christ when he was about thirty.

In the words of Asterias, he was “the starting point of the martyrs, the instructor of suffering for Christ, the foundation of righteous confession, since Stephen was the first to shed his blood for the Gospel.”

Filled with the Holy Spirit, St Stephen preached Chris-

tianity and defeated Jewish teachers of the Law in debate. The Jews maligned St Stephen, saying that he had uttered blasphemy against God and against Moses. St Stephen came before the Sanhedrin and the High Priest to answer these charges. He gave a

Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen (Continued)

fiery speech, in which he recounted the history of the Jewish nation, and denounced the Jews for persecuting the prophets, and also for executing the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ (Acts ch. 7).

During his speech, St Stephen suddenly saw the heavens opened and Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of God. The Jews shouted and covered their ears, and rushed at him. They dragged him out of

the city and stoned him, but the holy martyr prayed for his murderers. Far off on the heights stood the Mother of God with the holy Apostle John the Theologian, and She prayed fervently for the martyr. Before his death St Stephen said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. O Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Then he joyfully gave up his pure soul to Christ.

The body of the holy Pro-

tomartyr Stephen, left to be eaten by beasts, was secretly taken up by the Jewish teacher Gamaliel and his son Habib, who buried Stephen on his estate. They both believed in Christ, and later received holy Baptism.

St Stephen is also commemorated on August 2 (Translation of his relics) and on September 15 (Uncovering of his relics in the year 415).



The Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen

Answers To Last Month's Test Your Faith...

Lent and Easter

Across

1. The Sunday before Easter is called _____ Sunday.
3. An angel rolled away the _____ that covered the tomb.
6. The week following Holy Week is called _____ Week.
8. The resurrected Christ was found first by _____ Magdalene.
11. Gethsemane was a _____ where Jesus prayed.
12. Commemoration of the Dead, a service held during Lent. Saturday of the _____.
13. Jesus rode a _____ into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

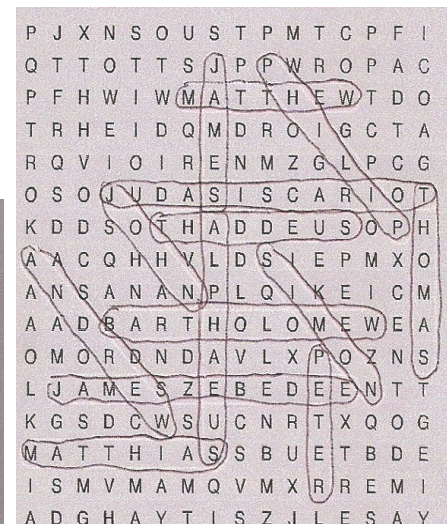
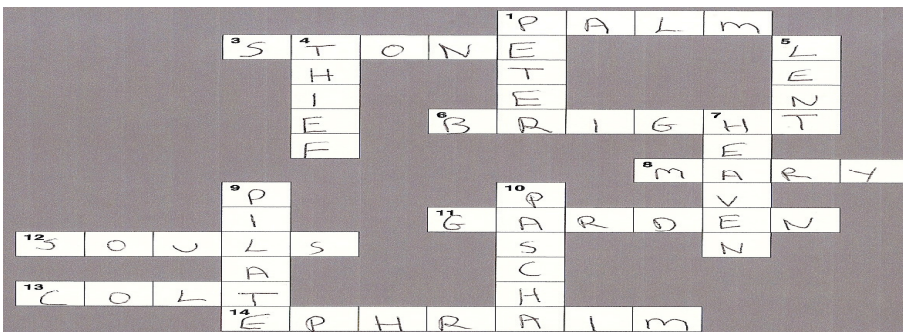
14. A prayer with prostrations during Lent: St. _____.

Down

1. Disciple who denied knowing Jesus.
4. The _____ said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom."
5. Before we celebrate Easter, we observe 40 days of _____.
7. 40 days after His resurrection Jesus ascended to _____.
9. Jesus was sentenced to die by Pontius _____.
10. Orthodox word for Easter.

The Twelve Apostles

- | | |
|----------------|----------|
| Judas Iscariot | Peter |
| James Alphaeus | John |
| James Zebedee | Thaddeus |
| Bartholomew | Matthias |
| Matthew | Andrew |
| Philip | Thomas |
| Simon | |



Test Your Faith...

The Sacraments

Across

3. The sacred union of a man and a woman.
5. The sacrament of re-birth.
7. Anointing with oil for receiving the Holy Spirit.
9. To apply oil to as a sacred rite.
10. The sacrament of orders: priest, deacon, bishop.

Down

1. An act of self-abasement, mortification, or devotion performed to show sorrow or repentance for sin.
2. Holy Communion.
4. To turn from sin, feel regret for one's wrongdoings, and change one's actions away from sinfulness.
6. We tell the priest our sins at _____.
8. To anoint with oil for healing; a service from Holy Week.

Daily Cycle of Services

- Divine Liturgy
- Apodeipnon
- Ninth Hour
- Sixth Hour
- Third Hour
- First Hour
- Midnight
- Compline
- Orthros
- Vespers
- Hours

