

**ANNIVERSARY OR OUR DEPARTED FOR THIS SUNDAY**

<b><u>DAY</u></b>	<b><u>NAME OF THE DEPARTED</u></b>	<b><u>ANNIVERSARY</u></b>
12	Fadwa Halabi	7
12	Jeries Qaqish	42
13	Albert Gorab	2
13	Ady Gandour	23
13	Fred Dabous	24
14	Salameh Kakish	8
14	William Nicholas Ellies	34
14	Rifka Khalilieh	24
15	Gertrude Vera Habib	55
15	Sam Peters	50
15	Najla Haddad	47
15	Roghieh Fekri	19
16	Sami Haddad	31
17	Martha Aziz	28

**ETERNAL LIGHT**

- Mar 10 in loving memory of Yvonne Younes from her family
- Mar 17 in loving memory of Nada Farah Kakish from her parents  
For the good health of Jean Dahdaly and his family  
For the good health of Stoyanka and family  
For the good health of Mona Bisharat and family
- Mar 24 for the good health of Issa Bisharat and family  
In loving memory of Jiries & Nahil Irbib from their family
- Mar 31 for the good health of Issa Bisharat and family
- Apr 21 for the good health of John & Carla Bisharat and their daughter.  
In loving memory of Yousef & Sumayya Musallam from their family
- Apr 28 for the good health of Issa Bisharat and family
  
- **Sunday, March 17:** Epistle reading (Arabic): Rola Skaf (English): Colette El-Hajj  
**Ushers:** Joelle Cheikh, Nuha Nims, Samar Shuhaiber, Majida Haddad, Rola Skaf, Nancy Tannous
- **Adult Christian Education:** Roshan Carpenter is preparing some people for baptism every Sunday between 9:30 am to 10:15 am. If you are interested to learn more about our Faith, you can join him downstairs.
- **Blessing Homes:** Father George will continue blessing homes after Pascha.
- **Services Next Week:** Monday night Great Compline, Wednesday Pre-Sanctified, Friday Madiah
- Please, pray for the health of the following parishioners: Attiah, Ellen, Robert, Alex, Sam, Elias, Ezabel, Nassar and Adel. If you have any names of people who need prayers, email them to father.
- If you are new to our parish or a visitor, please introduce yourself to one of the ushers and speak to Fr. George. We want to welcome you to our family of St. George. If you want to join our church, please speak to Father after Liturgy.
- **3<sup>rd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> days memorial service for Bishara El-Achhab, offered by Souheil El-Achhab and family. May his memory be eternal.**
- **40 days memorial service for Yacoub Hakourah, offered by Ghada, Ghattas, Mais and Bashar Hakourah. May his memory be eternal.**
- **One-year memorial service for Hind Sahely, offered by her daughter Christine Sahely and family. May her memory be eternal.**
- **Our condolences to George Nims on the passing on to eternal life of his father Tanios Nims. May his memory be eternal.**
- **Lenten Luncheon:** Our Knights of St. George will be hosting a Lenten Luncheon every Sunday following Divine Liturgy. Please mark your calendar, **March 17 Falafel, March 31 Falafel, April 7 All Makali (Fried Vegetables), April 14 Foul Medemes.**

- **Pascha Celebration:** We will have a Pascha dinner offered at the centre on Sunday of Pascha after the Agapy Service. If you like to join us for the meal, please see Fouad Kodsi, or George Boutros.
- **Orthodoxy Sunday:** Please, bring your icon of your patron saint for our procession at the end of the Liturgy.
- **Wine and Holy Bread Donations:** if you like to donate towards the wine or holy bread, please see the office. \$350 for Holy Bread, and \$300 for wine.
- **Orthodox Christian Mission Center:** Have you ever dreamed of doing a missionary work in the Orthodox Church? Visit [https://www.ocmc.org/about/open\\_teams.aspx](https://www.ocmc.org/about/open_teams.aspx)
- **Mondays:** Father takes Mondays off unless there is an emergency of death or a dying person. Father will return your phone calls, emails, texts the next day. Thank you
- Young Adults Retreat with the topic: "Forming Authentic Relationships in a Fallen World", May 3rd-May 5th. Visit [www.stgeorgeworcester.org](http://www.stgeorgeworcester.org)
- Archdiocese Convention: This year will be at Grand Rapids. <http://www.ac2019gr.org>
- March is women month. The ladies will usher and read the epistles.
- **Annunciation Luncheon will be on March 24<sup>th</sup> after Liturgy.** See one of the officers.
- Parish Life Conference will be at our church between July 4-7 of this year. We will have a table set up soon to register and buy souvenir journal ads. For more information please see Sana Besharat, Richard Smith, or Samantha Nassar.
- Holy Land Pilgrimage for our church will be May 8 to May 17 (9 days and 8 nights). Cost \$1250 USD plus flights. For more information and reservation please see or call Ramzi Shnoudeh 647/500-2081, or Maha Khashram 647/966-7749.
- **Block your calendar:** During Lent we will have services in the evening at 7 PM on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and some Saturdays. Please, plan on joining us.
- **Bishop John Visit:** His Grace Bishop John Abdallah will be leading us in an all-day retreat on Saturday April 13<sup>th</sup>. He will be with us the whole weekend. We will have different activities for him with different organizations. More to come.
- **PRISON MINISTRY:** On Friday, April 19<sup>th</sup>, a small group from St. George will be going to Toronto South Detention Centre to hand out Easter packages to the over 1,300 inmates. This will be our 16<sup>th</sup> annual visit to this maximum-security prison. Those who are interested in participating in this blessed ministry, please contact Diane Younes at 416-464-5908. Financial donations would be greatly appreciated.

• **NEXT WEEK SERVICES**

Monday, March 18	7:00 pm.	Great Compline
Wednesday, March 20	7:00 pm.	Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts.
Friday, March 22	6:30 pm.	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lenten Supper, sponsored by the Knights of St. George (Men Society).
	7:30 pm.	2 <sup>nd</sup> Akathist Hymn (Madayeh Service).
Saturday, March 23	5:00 pm.	Vespers Service.

**Sunday, March 24** Epistle reading (Arabic): Amal Hawa (English): Samar Shuhaiber  
**Ushers:** The ladies will be preparing for the Annunciation Luncheon

**Sunday, March 31** Epistle reading (Arabic): Rola Skaf (English): Samar Shuhaiber  
**Ushers:** Majida Haddad, Joelle Cheikh, Samar Shuhaiber, Rola Skaf, Colette El-Hajj

## THE SYNODICON: THE AFFIRMATION OF THE ORTHODOX FAITH

As the Prophets beheld, as the Apostles have taught, as the Church has received, as the Teachers have dogmatized, as the universe has agreed, as Grace has shown forth, as Truth has revealed, as falsehood has been dissolved, as Wisdom has presented, as Christ has awarded: thus we declare, thus we assert, thus we preach Christ our true God, and honor His Saints in words, in writings, in thoughts, in sacrifices, in churches, in Holy Icons; on the one hand worshiping and reverencing Christ as God and Lord; and on the other hand honoring as true servants of the same Lord of all, and accordingly offering them veneration. **This is the Faith of the Apostles; this is the Faith of the Fathers; this is the Faith of the Orthodox; this is the Faith which has established the universe!**

### **Mystery of Repentance: How Often Should One Confess? Taken from**

[stgeorgerossford.org](http://stgeorgerossford.org)

This month, I would like to address how often one should go to Confession. This is not an easy issue to discuss because depending on which Orthodox Church you go to, and who your parish priest is, there are a wide variety of expectations on Confession. As I said in the introductory note to you last March, some bishops and priests equate going to Communion with going to Confession. So, if you want to receive Eucharist every week, you must go to Confession every week. Some will say Confession is important but leave it up to the person to choose. Thus you end up with scenarios where some will receive Communion throughout their life having never received the sacrament of Confession. Another practice that people observe is to only go to Communion and Confession once a year. Here in America, since the early 1960's, there has been an attempt to encourage more frequent participation in Holy Communion. This has been well received by the churches here. The only problem is that it doesn't address the question of whether there is a relationship between going to Communion and receiving Confession.

Why is there such a diversity of understandings on the issue of frequency of Confession? I am not sure what the answer is here. I do know that when the Balkan Countries and many in the Middle East were under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, ongoing church education or evangelization was forbidden. This was also the case in Russia and its neighboring countries that fell under Communist oppression during most of the 20th century. Priests in many of the above areas were forbidden to hear Confessions. Many of the clergy were only educated in the rubric of doing the services and not in their understanding of them. Centers of education were closed. Some of these oppressive practices are still going on. In short people were not being properly prepared to be bishops priests and deacons. All of this could have affected the way Confession was understood and practiced among Orthodox Christians during that time. Those understandings and practices were then brought to the Americas in the early 20th century through immigration.

So what do I think? What are the guidelines I would ask the parishioners of St. George in Rossford to observe regarding frequency of Confession? First of all, I do not believe in extremes. The idea that one must go to Confession every week prior to receiving Communion every week is not something I am expecting this parish to do. On the other hand I also don't think it is appropriate for people to receive Communion on a regular basis without any participation in the sacrament of Confession. Confession is something we should do periodically as a means to prepare for our Eucharistic life in the Church. As Christians we pray at every liturgy that we "complete the remaining time of our life in peace and repentance." When I hear a Confession I tell the person confessing that we stand before the icon of Christ and that "I am only a witness bearing testimony before Him of all things which you say to me." As a priest I need to be able to bear witness before Christ and His Church that I know the person who is coming to Communion to be someone who is repenting and striving to live the life of an Orthodox Christian. How can I bear witness to that if I don't hear a person coming forward to confess their faith, and their sins in order to be reconciled with Christ and His Holy Church? Our faith and life in Christ is a dynamic reality and not a static obligatory one. "Growth in faith, life, and spiritual understanding" is a process of change. So as a priest I need to be able know the spiritual lives of the flock I have been entrusted with, so that when they receive Communion I can bear witness to the fact that those who come to Communion are repenting Christians who desire to grow in Christ. If someone is in the habit of coming to Communion on a weekly basis, I think it is important that they come to Confession more often. I think that they should come to Confession at least four times a year. Why the number four? Well we have four seasons of the year, and four church fasts during the year (Pascha, Advent, Dormition, Peter & Paul). If someone is unable to do that, then I would suggest trying twice a year (especially those who have not been in the habit of going to Confession at all). The Advent and Pascha fasts offer the opportunity to do that. Finally my intent here is to not present these guidelines to you in legalistic manner. I will always welcome anyone to the sacrament who needs to repent and seeks to return home as the Prodigal Son does in the parable. If people need to come to Confession more than four times a year please do so. Confession is something that is always available on an as needed basis!

I would like to now address those people in the parish who may not be in the habit of coming to Confession at all or very rarely. I really want to encourage you to rethink this habit you may have developed and to change it. Some may have the mindset that I will go to Confession only when I need to go. One may equate the need for Confession with having to do so if one commits a "major" sin such as murder, adultery or commits a felony. The thought is, "Since I haven't done any of those things why bother with going to Confession?" My only answer to this is, we address our physical health needs, and maintain our cars and homes, better than we take care of our spiritual life! We make a point of getting our teeth cleaned twice a year and getting them X-rayed even if we don't experience any problems. We see our family doctor once or twice a year for health check ups. We make a point of taking our cars in three or four times a year for oil changes, tire rotations, and brake

inspections, even if there is nothing seriously wrong with the car. We fertilize and maintain our gardens and lawns several times a year. Why do we do these above things? (Among others I haven't mentioned.): To prevent worse things from happening later. If we don't get our teeth cleaned regularly, bigger problems happen later on. If we don't get our oil changed in the car regularly, bigger problems happen later on. Keeping a regular rule of going to Confession is like coming in for a spiritual health check up. We take a spiritual inventory of our lives to see where we are falling short and to come forward to publicly state that we still want to "get with the program." The program being that I want to follow Christ and live by His rules and not by my rules! If we prepare for Confession properly (see last month's newsletter), I find it hard to believe that people will not have anything to confess.

When we refuse to regularly partake of the sacrament of Confession, we run the risk of disconnecting our inner spiritual life from our public behavior. We end up compartmentalizing our lives living in two separate worlds. We adopt a form of "church behavior" that has little impact on our daily lives. The things that do impact on how we live have less to do with church and more to do with other things that have become more important. In fact we begin to develop our own thinking about who God is and what a church should be like based on influences and experiences not rooted in the Orthodox Christian Tradition. I think this is especially a challenge for us who have grown up in the Orthodox Faith and sometimes have taken it for granted. It is like maintaining a form of religious behavior but never fully understanding and appreciating the substance of it. It is like admiring an expensive ornately decorated jar that has preserved fruit in it. We learn to admire the appearance of the jar and its decoration, but we have never tasted of the fruit that is in it. As Orthodox Christians we are always encouraged in the communion hymn to "Taste and see that the Lord is good."

Confession offers the opportunity to break through the wall of pretentious Church behavior and bring us back to the reality of what it means to be "baptized into Christ." The sacrament of Confession is necessary for our ongoing growth and maturity in Christ. The sacrament of Confession offers us the opportunity to discover the relevancy of the Orthodox Christian Faith and how it can help us encounter the world we are living in today. But like any medicine, we won't be able to see the benefits of it if we don't regularly take our medicine! Repentance is a habit, a way of life. Confession is the needed medicine to help us enter into that way of life. In the upcoming newsletters I will talk more about the moral lives we lead and how that impacts on preparing for and receiving Communion in the Church. Have a blessed Advent Fast as you await and prepare for the celebration of our Lord's Nativity.