

ANNIVERSARY OR OUR DEPARTED FOR THIS SUNDAY

<u>DAY</u>	<u>NAME OF THE DEPARTED</u>	<u>ANNIVERSARY</u>
24	Antoin Safadi	1
25	Peter Awad	8
25	Ramsay Saba	10
25	Abdo Aziz	63
27	John Abraham	34
28	Louis Shatilla	48
28	Michel Dorkhom	13
30	Michael Zabaneh	4
30	Salim Elias Zabana	7
30	Mary Louise Ellies	49

ETERNAL LIGHT

- **June 23:** In memory of Mitri & Violette Samaan from Nabil Samaan
- **June 30:** for the good health of Brandon George Vieira from his gandparents
George & Rose Ghneim
For the good health of Mona Bisharat from her father and brother.

- **Ushers, June 23:** Souheil El-Hajj, Ramzi Shnoudeh, Habib Tannous, Naji El-Achhab
- **Ushers, June 30:** George Boutros, George Nims, William Kakish, Nabil Samaan

- **ONE-YEAR MEMORIAL SERVICE for Farid Hamawi and Elias Issa** offered by Lily Hamawi, Randa Issa and their families. May their memory be eternal.
- **ONE-YEAR MEMORIAL SERVICE for Antoin Safadi** offered by his wife Fayzeh, his children and their families. May his memory be eternal.
- The coffee hour today is offered in memory of Farid Hamawi, Elias Issa and Antoin Safadi by their families.

- **Congratulations to Fawzi & Dora Khoury for the churching of their son Xavier Khoury.**

- **congratulations to the following elected officers:**
Chairman: George Boutros
vice-chairman: Dr. Hanna Hinnawi
Treasurer: John Dahdaly
Secretary: Venise Kousaie

- **Sunday June 23rd after Liturgy:** Meeting with the new families plus any couple who would like to join us. It will be in the library downstairs.
- **The Fast for the Apostles:** will starts on Monday June 24th until June 28th. Fish is permitted.
- **Feast of St. Peter and Paul:** will be celebrated on Friday 28th at 7 PM followed by Articulosia/ blessing of the 5 loaves.
- Please, pray for the health of the following parishioners: Attiah, Ellen, Robert, Alex, Sam, Elias, Isabelle, Nassar, Adel and Valentine. If you have any names of people who need prayers, email them to father.

- **Fr. George resumed blessing homes. Please call Father to schedule**
- **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.
- **PLEDGE FORM:** Please fill your pledge form for 2019 if you have not done so. For blank form, please see Colette El-Hajj. Thank you

- **Looking for Accommodation:** Dr. Edith Hanna from Lebanon will be doing a fellowship for one year here in Toronto. She is looking for a room to rent. If you can accommodate her, please see Father or the announcement board. Thanks
- **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.

THE 24th ANNUAL ST. GEORGE GOLF TOURNAMENT

- Our Annual St. George Golf Tournament is on Tuesday, June 25, 2019 at **Emerald Hills Golf & Country Club, 14001 Warden Avenue (14001 Concession #5)**. Registration and Lunch at 11:30 am. Tee off time 1:00 pm, Dinner 6pm. The price for golfer including dinner is \$250. Our goal for the golf tournament this year is to raise \$100,000 so we need everyone's help to achieve that! If you choose to not play golf, we also offer dinner only, tickets for \$75. We need everyone's participation. A portion of the proceeds will be going to Autism Ontario (York Region Chapter).
Mark your calendar and reserve A.S.A.P. Please Fax or Email registration forms to aftim.nassar@gmail.com Aftim Nassar 416- 895-2767, Richard Smith 647-280-0883, John Younes 647-982-7645, Fax 416-743-6155 \ www.stgeorgeto.com

FIRE ROUTE & HANDICAPPED PARKING, AND PARKING LINES

- Please make sure not to park on the side of the church or in front of the Fire hydrant, for this is a fire route, also ensure not to park in the spots designated for handicapped parking. Anyone who parks and does not show a handicap permit on the window will be tagged.

Finding Peace Despite Sinful Thoughts by [Fr. Michael Gillis](#)

It's mid May and I'm weeding my garden again. It is one of the most spiritually instructive physical activities of my year. My on-going battle with one weed in particular functions as a genuine icon of my inner life.

Generally speaking, my wife and I are *laissez-faire* gardeners. We have very few rows of anything, just areas where we plant one thing or another—often led by what volunteers in a given area. Weeds smeed, I say. We just cover them with mulch. Mulch is the saving grace of the garden: it covers a multitude of sins.

Like so many of our sins, regular participation in the sacramental life of the Church generally takes care of them. Regular confession and communion, morning and/or evening prayers, the Jesus Prayer now and then throughout the day and a good-faith effort to keep the fasts and feasts of the Church: these are the mulch of grace that covers and smothers most of our sins.

Then, however, there are the deeply entrenched sins. These are the sins that keep coming back. Not just once in a while, but sometimes these sins besiege the mind several times a day, several times an hour on a bad day. Sometimes it seems as if my whole spiritual effort

is just to keep that particular sinful thought from overwhelming me. Sometimes I am so tempted just to give up, tempted to despair.

On my last visit to the monastery, one of the fathers said that despair is the unforgivable sin. He explained that to despair is to choose death, and having chosen death, how can Life enter? Of course it's very hard not to despair, especially when you battle against the same sad or depressive or lustful or arrogant or angry or blasphemous thoughts again and again and again, day after day after day. It is the hell that St. Silouan spoke of when he said, "Keep your mind in hell but do not despair." [It should also be noted that despair is only unforgivable so long as one continues to despair. One can always turn from despair toward the smallest glimmer of faith or hope or love.]

Yet how does one do this? How do you deal with reoccurring and tormenting adulterous or murderous, or arrogant or homosexual or covetous or depressing or angry thoughts (the list could go on and on) without giving up, without falling into despair?

Elder Sophrony, a spiritual son of St. Silouan, speaks of looking into the abyss of hell and taking two steps back and having tea. This word has been very helpful for me. It is a word that has given me permission, in a sense, to look squarely at the wickedness of my thoughts, thoughts that I cannot seem to stop, and say, "Yes, that's hell; that's the torment of Gehenna playing out in my mind and I can't stop it." Then, having looked directly at my wicked or broken or twisted thoughts and named them, I can "take two steps back and have tea." What this means is that I can then calmly have a conversation with God that goes something like this: "Wow, what a terrible mess I am. You see these terrible thoughts in my mind, and amazingly, You still love me. Your love for me is overwhelming. How You can love a mess like me I will never know, but I thank You. I thank You for Your goodness and Your love for mankind despite our collective brokenness and sin, despite the pit we have dug for ourselves. You have entered our hell, so now you are here with me now." That's what a lot of my prayers sound like.

One of the other fathers at the monastery told me another story. He said it came from a Russian novel he had once read. He said that there was a scene in which a group of people had newly arrived in heaven. After the group got their bearings, the group began looking for Jesus. Eventually they meet an angel and ask him, "Where can we find Jesus?"

The angel told them, "Well, Jesus is not here."

"What! Where is He? Are we not in heaven?" The people responded.

"Yes, you are in heaven," the angel told them.

“Then where is Jesus,” they asked.

The angel said, “Jesus is in hell, saving the lost, saving the sinners. Do you not remember His words, ‘it is the sick who need the physician’ and that the Good Shepherd ‘leaves the ninety-nine’ to seek the one that is lost?”

This story is like a lightning flash of hope to my heart.

There is nothing heavenly about my personal Christian experience. The best it ever gets for me are brief lulls in the fighting, brief moments when the banging on the gates of my mind is not quite as loud as usual. But this exactly is the reason why I can say that Jesus is near. I am the lost sheep. I am the sick and perverted and broken person who needs a physician.

Convolvulus Arvensis. That’s the weed. That’s the besetting sin of my garden. It’s commonly called bindweed, and it’s almost impossible to get rid of. Many a time I have flirted with despair. Many a time I have said to myself that I can’t fight this any more. To root it out you end up rooting out all of the plants around it, but even then you can’t get it all out. It’s roots break easily and only one bit of root or only one leaf left on the ground can reroot into a new plant. It’s roots get tangled among the roots of your favourite plants, and as they grow the bindweed winds its way around the stems, growing as much as several inches a week. Like the wicked thoughts that I can’t get rid of, I often don’t even notice it until it has grown several feet wrapping itself around my beloved shrubs or flowers, and only with great care and attention can I unbind it without damaging (too much) the plant it wrapped itself around.

And it keeps coming back. And I keep pulling. What I *do* pull up will reroot wherever I throw it, so it must be burned (causing me to pause and consider the nature of hell fire, but that’s for another time). It is a never-ending struggle.

But over the last couple of years, I have gotten a bit wiser. I have not defeated the bindweed, not by a long shot. But I have accepted the struggle. I do not have some ideal garden to work with, just as I do not have an ideal life to live. I have this garden to make beautiful, despite its reoccurring weeds. And I cannot live an ideal life, I have to live my life, despite my reoccurring sinful, broken thoughts. That’s the life I have to live, that’s the life I have to offer to God: a life full of bindweed, full of thoughts that I cannot control very well. But just because my life is far from ideal, does not mean that I cannot do anything. It doesn’t mean that I should give into despair.

Whatever I do, no matter how much I do, the bindweed will come back. However, that does not mean that I have to stop cultivating the flowers. It does not mean that I stop pulling

out as much of the bindweed as I can (without damaging the plants I want to keep). I can have a fairly beautiful garden, even if I am forever (or at least for the rest of my gardening life) having to again and again pull out and burn the unwanted bindweed.

And this change of attitude has made a big difference. I have become quite familiar with my enemy. I expect it. I look for it, and from the beginning of the season when it starts to show itself until the fall when it's still popping up while other plants are going dormant, I just keep pulling it out—even though it usually breaks right at the surface of the ground, leaving the root. But I don't care. When I see it, I pull it. I've stopped being upset by it.

And this is how I have come to deal with my besetting sins, with the broken, twisted, depressing thoughts that just keep coming back. I expect them. They no longer upset me that much. I just sigh, humble myself, and do my best to push the thought aside. Sometimes it's the Jesus Prayer that works, sometimes it's a "tea-time" conversation with Jesus or Mary like I described above, sometimes it's just a matter of shifting my mental focus to think about something good or true or beautiful. But most of all, at least for me, my secret weapon is not to get upset, but rather to accept that as long as I live in this broken, sin-riddled body, I will have to be pulling out my reoccurring weedy thoughts.

And pulling weeds doesn't have to keep me from planting flowers. That is, although I struggle with unwanted thoughts, I can still do good. I can still pray. I may not be able to stop the unwanted thoughts, but I do not have to let them determine what I do or what I say. I can still attend to what is good, what is true, and what is beautiful. And the more I attend to the flowers, the more I find that the weeds are just a nuisance, just something to be pulled as I see them and not something to get upset about. Jesus and Mary are with me, helping me to plant flowers in this weed-riddled garden. And wherever They are, that's where I want to be.