

January/February 2019

Volume 17 Issue 3



The
CATHEDRAL
MESSENGER

SAINT GEORGE ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

Rev. Fr. Joshua Makoul, Dean

3400 Dawson Street * Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Office: 412. 681.2988 • Fr. Joshua: 412.721.5828 • Fx: 412.681.3254

The Departed: A Mere Memory or a Presence in the Present?

By Father Joshua Makoul



It is said that all emotion is preceded by perception. How we choose to view or interpret events and interactions has huge ramifications for our emotional state. For many life events, how we choose to remember those events and what meanings we assign to them, affects how we feel about them and our ability to heal or move past them. However, there are some events where there is really only one interpretation to make or meaning to assign to them. For example, certain tragedies are just sad and it is very difficult or even inappropriate to find some positive meaning to assign to the event. However, for many events in our life, there are indeed multiple meanings or interpretations we can make. Someone once said, “I can work to make myself joyful, or I can work to make myself miserable, the amount of work is the same”.

How we choose to remember our departed has huge implications for how we grieve and our ability to have hope. For many, though we acknowledge the existence of the kingdom of heaven and the existence of an afterlife, we inevitably perceive that our loved one who died was somehow left behind at the point in time of their departure from this world. We perceive and feel that time somehow puts more distance between us and the departed. That they are somehow stuck or frozen at the point of their departure and we have gone on without them. This leads to us remembering the departed in the past and we then become riddled with guilt at having continued our life without them. Cognitively, with our thoughts, we acknowledge (but don't embrace) all of the things that the church teaches us about the departed, but emotionally we stay stuck in the past. We look for the departed in the past, rather than in the present or even the future. Their presence is somehow relegated to the grave. For many of us, this is our default mindset that we fall into sometime after our loved one passed away. It is a mindset that many gradually and subtly fall into as the years pass.

Indeed, our loved one becomes reduced to a mere memory. As that becomes our perception of our departed loved one, we then feel depressed and stuck in grief. Our minds and hearts linger in the past and travel back to the past to find some connection with the departed. Many of us can relate to having a moment, where we suddenly remember that loved one, and say to ourselves, “Has it been 10 years? Have I lived that many years without them? Who was that person that played such a huge role in my everyday life but has now been reduced to a memory? Was it real or was it just a dream?”. These moments can stop us in our tracks. We are struck with the reality of how someone can go from playing such a daily role in our life to suddenly

seemingly disappear from it. Time commands that we continue and we do, but many of us may feel guilt when we become aware of how our life has continued without them.

However, must it be this way? There is a reality that exists, a perception and truth that exists, that if we grab hold of that truth and embrace that perception, our departed will be no mere memory but rather an active presence in our daily life. They will not be relegated to the past, but related to in the present, and ever present in the future. Do they not deserve this? Do we not owe it to them to acknowledge their continued existence in the present? Is it fair to the departed to ignore them in the present and look for them in the past, in a place where they aren't even to be found? Perhaps we are guilty of ignoring our departed in the present. It is time we practice the truth that the church teaches and let go of the past where our departed have quite moved on from (but perhaps we have not). Indeed, the departed are alive and are still part of the church. They are part of the church triumphant, while we who are still fighting the good fight in this world are part of the church militant. A continued relationship is there to be had but it requires the muscles of faith, hope, and prayer to maintain the relationship. When someone close to us passes away, we feel the ground pulled out from under us, we feel dark inside, and we feel helpless and powerless as our tether to them seems lost and broken. However, in time, using the eyes of faith and the light of Christ, we begin to see that tether reappear. We see that connection, that bond, and that relationship still exists. Death was not able to cut it, for Christ's own death and resurrection ensured that it could not be broken. We then re-engage the relationship. We learn a new way. Yes the relationship is different, yes we grieve their physical absence in this transient world, and yes it means the loss of certain daily rituals with that departed person and for this we rightly grieve. However, we are to establish and practice new daily rituals and practices in which we communicate with the departed. If we feel our departed are in the past then it is because we have left them there. It is up to us to acknowledge their presence in the present. How ironic! In our attempt to keep their memory alive we stay stuck in the past where they are not, and ignore their presence in the present!

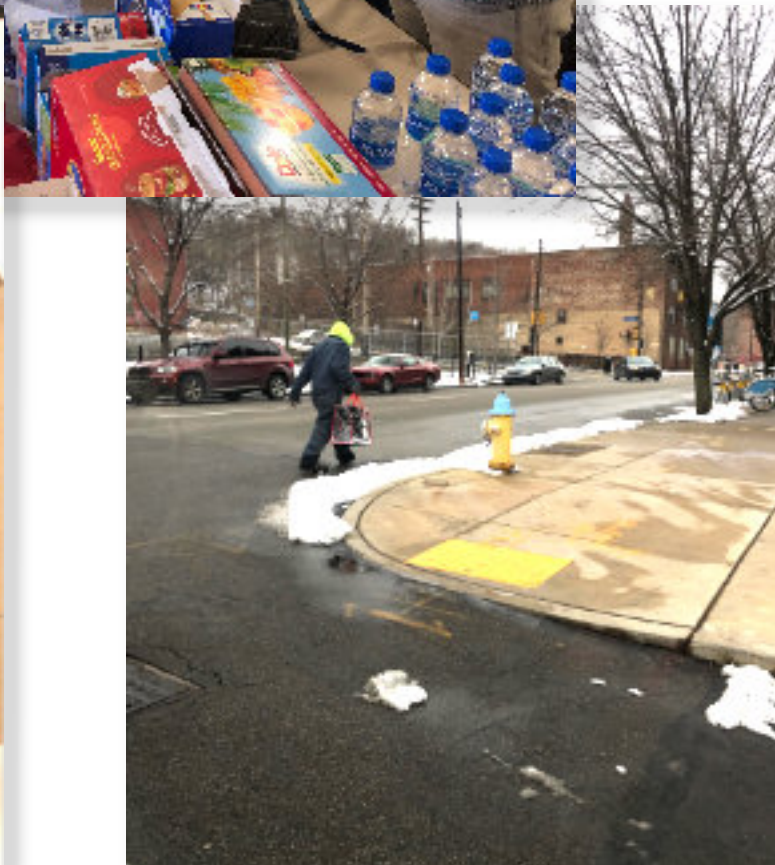
Bishop Kallistos Ware writes, “Death is a separation that is no separation”. We maintain continued communion with the departed through prayer, through both communal prayer (in church as a community) and also through our private, individual prayers. Anything we do, think, or say out of love for the departed, the departed will know of it at that moment. We pray the Trisagion prayers not only at church or at the cemetery but indeed in our own homes. We keep a photo of the departed in our icon corner in our house which we visit daily and we ask God to let our departed know what is on our mind and in our heart. Any unfinished business between us and the departed can still be settled, healed, and forgiven. We extend forgiveness for any imperfections in the relationship after they departed and we indeed can ask God to relay requests of forgiveness from us to them for any transgressions we committed against them but never had the chance to apologize for before they departed.

In essence we learn a new way. A part of us dies in this process, however it is a dying that is blessed and a dying that helps wean us off of this world and directs our gaze to the next world, the Kingdom of Heaven. It is precisely our attachment to this world, our gripping onto this world for dear life, that causes us to continue to see the departed in the past. The grip on this world has to be loosened and our focus shifted to the next life. When our beloved departed die so does a part of us. We die to this world and become aware of the next, just as they have done. We are faced with either continuing to hold onto this world for dear life and perceiving the departed as being in the past or loosening our grip on this world and continuing our relationship with them in the present. Their spiritual journey from this world to the next becomes ours as we make the transition with them. Their physical dying to this world becomes our spiritual dying to this world, i.e. our easing our grip on this world. Likewise, their entrance into the new life becomes our opportunity to awaken to the next life.

Homeless Ministry Outing January 13th, 2019

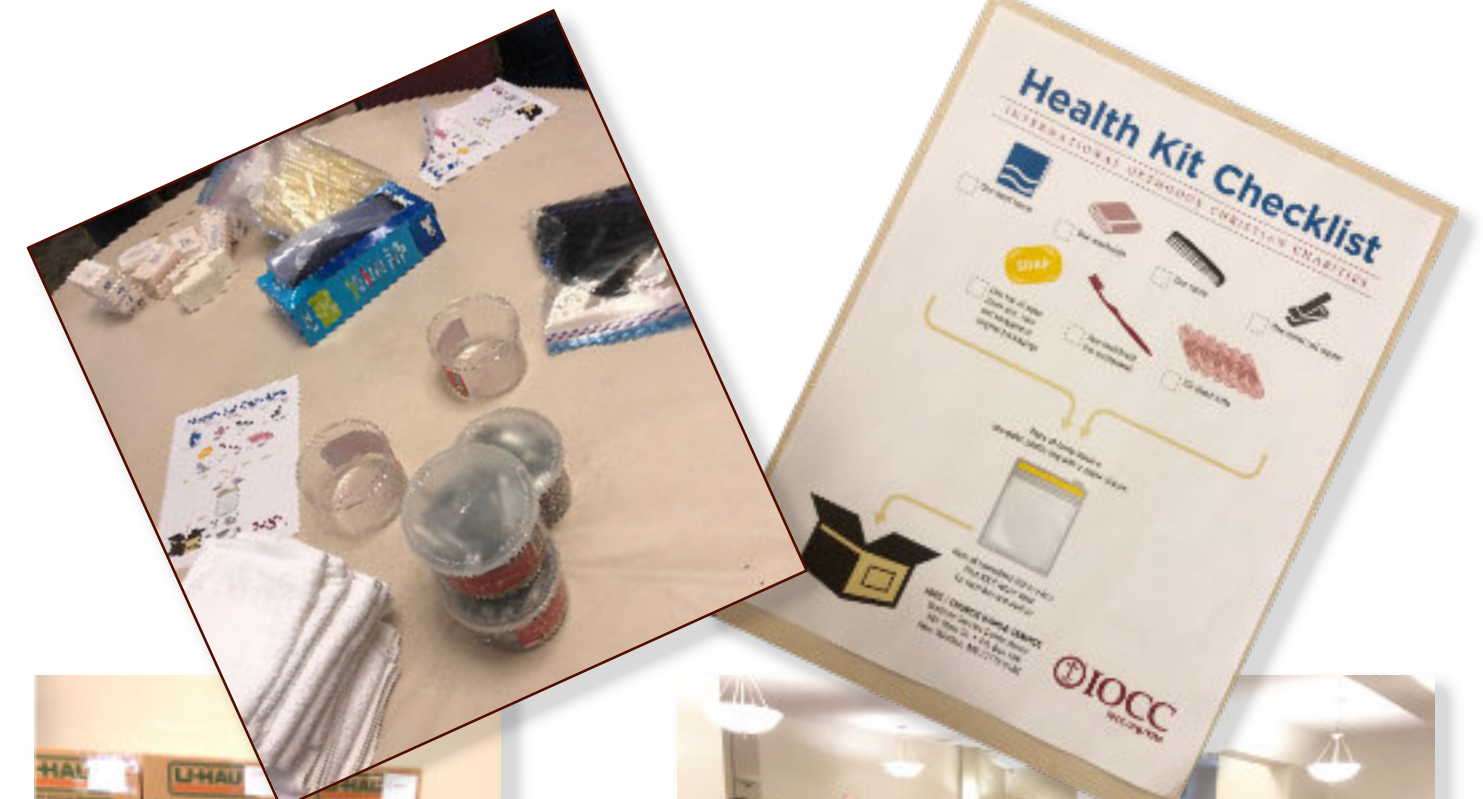
The St. George Homeless Ministry did a field outing and delivered care packages to the homeless throughout the city. The care packages were quite heavy and full of helpful items. They were full of such items as hand warmers, blankets, beef jerky, tuna packets, and many other miscellaneous items.

The St. George Homeless Ministry visited the Salvation Army Family Shelter on Sunday January 27. Our parishioners prepared and served dinner and ate with the residents of the shelter.



Saint George Children's Ministry Humanitarian Event

On Saturday, December 15, the Teen Soyo and Children's Ministry assembled hygiene kits to be used by the IOCC for people in need of aid and relief.



Chrismation of Philip, Abbigail, Regina, and Anna Kreckel on Christmas Eve

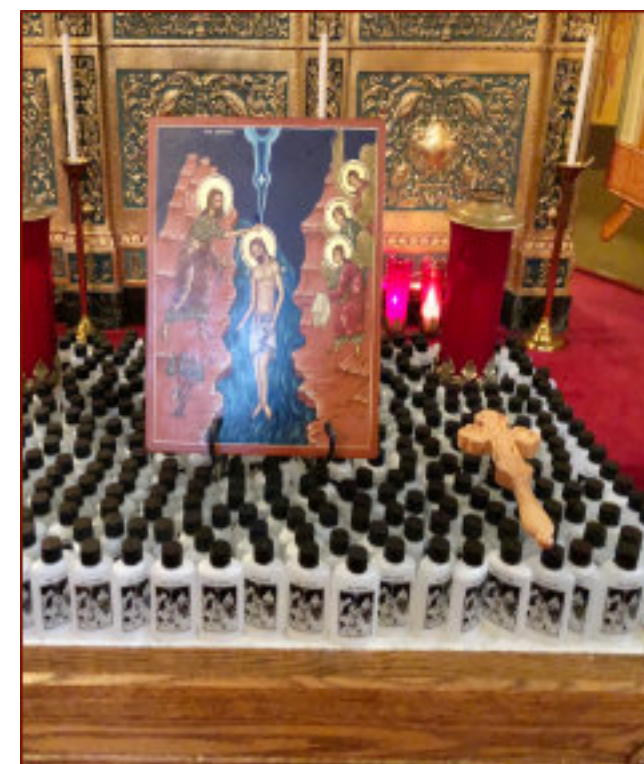


Noah Papas ordained to Sub-Diaconate

On Sunday, January 6, Noah Papas was ordained as a Sub-Deacon. May God grant him and his family many years. Axios! He is worthy!



Theophany



Men's Ministry Retreat Jan 25-26. Speaker Paul Finley

The Men's Ministry held a retreat on Friday, January 25 and Saturday, January 26. The speaker was Paul Finley from FOCUS Cleveland. The topic was "The Highway to Heaven is a Staircase: A study of the sermon on the mount".



Mom's Ministry lunch. Childcare in action

On Friday, January 25, the Mom's Ministry had their monthly lunch after Orthros while the church provided childcare. This gives the moms of our parish a well deserved break and allows for more support from fellow moms.



News and Announcements

The February General Parish Meeting will take place on Sunday, February 24. The focus of the February meeting is on financials and provides financial reports for 2018. 2018 was a very healthy year for our community. This is a reflection of the love and faith of us all. Thank you to all who contributed!

The Teen Soyo completed their hoagie sale. Hoagies will be delivered on Superbowl Sunday.

Wednesday Evenings

Applied Orthodox Spirituality Class

Beginning January 16, 2019

St. George Cathedral ~7:30PM

Returning to Paradise: Rediscovering the Life God had Intended us to Live.



The series will focus on what we are capable of achieving spiritually despite the fallen world that is all around us. Though we strive to renew ourselves, we inevitably encounter our own fallen nature and that of the world. Navigating these dichotomies and the experiences that comes with this, will be the focus of this series.

Stewardship

The St. George Stewardship Ministry thanks everyone who has sent in their 2019 commitment cards and who gave faith offerings in 2018. May God bless you all!

Our 2019 Stewardship Theme. In the hall is a large board bearing a mosaic of Christ. As each commitment card is returned, a block or piece of the mosaic is added. It is through our faith, piety, and generosity, that the image of Christ will be revealed. We are all members of the one body of Christ.



Departed Anniversary List

The following Parish members will be remembered at the Divine Liturgy closest to the anniversary of their death.

January 6, 2019: Tekla Davis-1970, Selwa Sarraf-1977, Dr. Nicholas Bitar-1987, Ghattas Thomas-1992, Tony Elias-1962, Rose J. Corey-1966, Samuel Davis-1987, Samuel J. Albert-1990, Mary Murray-1995, Mary Mucy-1998, Adnan Ibrahim-2017, Bernard Roy-1985, Alma Kajak Hakim-1996, Laurice Simaan-2017, Joseph Cunningham-1962, Elizabeth Salim-1997, Mary Najeeb Khalil-1970, Jennie Tonti-1986, and Naman Thomas-1961.

January 13, 2019: Samuel Albert, Jr.-1971, Edward Roy-1984, Isaac Saba-1969, Stella DelGreco-2004, Mary Alberts-1959, Michael Shogry-1967, George N. Farah-2015, Daniel J. Solomon-2005, George Ward-1966, Nevin Shogry-1976, Martha Bruno-1987, Mary K. Monsour-1976 Sadie Aber-1980, and Subdeacon Thomas Aber-1988.

January 20, 2019: Virginia Haddad, 2013, Wodia K. Lewis-1984, Susan Hanna-1969, Katie M. Lowen-1976, Joseph Khalil (Brookline)-2001, Joseph U. Esper-2003, Genevieve F. Dawahare-1976, Cherie Ann Nemy McIlree-2000, Mary Kelly-1957, Nicholas H. Mellick-1975, and Tillie A. Rafalski-1987.

January 27, 2019: Albert Thomas-1960, Jack David-1961, William E. Essay-1993, David Corey-1954, Charles Karas Solomon-1953, John Elias Salloum-2009, Isaac Ristom-1963, Shahood (Shuf) Tony-2018, Michael Albert-1966, Mary Sabeh-1974, Saadeh Nassif-1984, Ernest George Nassar-1969, Albert Thomas-1960, Norma Tony-2000, George Khalil-2012, Philip Thomas-2000, Zariff M. Salim-2002, Samuel Demayo-1960, Azizi Kojak-1961, and Sadie Thomas-2007.

February 3, 2019: Mary Deeb Thomas-1961, Suffae S. Saloom-1966, Beatrice Monsour Davis-2014, James Abraham-2002, Catherine Roy-1994, Julia Jacob-2010, Charles J. Thomas-1983, Jebra Murray-1986, Sam Fayad-1960, Katherine Albert-1960, Joseph Farah-1966, Fannie Hazeem-1986, Elizabeth Kelly-1972, Rachel Mitchell-1979, Simon Thomas-1959, and Daniel Solomon-1992.

February 10, 2019: Kattour Saad-1998, Ann V. Salem-2006, Ralph Koury-1989, Michael R. Aber-1998, John Zacker-1994, Anna Anthony-2011, Michael Abraham-1974, Lorraine S. Shogry-2000, Maria Michael-1959, Mary Essad-1999, Sue David-2005, Samuel S. Nakles-1989, Azzizee Albert-1992, Robert Abe David-2000, Alice M. Benko-2000, Florence Wall-2009, Harry M. Hadad-1969, Joseph Khalil-1999, Anna Barakat-1957, Anna M. Jacobs-1975, and Emily A. Heider-2002.

February 17, 2019: Anthony George-1991, Joyce George Beachy-1981, Jean Liebert-2017, Shaheen J. Shaheen-1978, Leo Namen-1982, George Neumah-2014, Richard Bazy-1982, Josephine Nassar-1971, Dolores Gilchrist-2015, Ora Ann George-1991, and John J. Hakim-1991.

February 24, 2019: George Jacobs-2000, George Neumah-2014, Charles N. Khoury-1959, Michael S. Bazari-1990, Catherine George-1989, Naif Salem-1968, and Adib Simaan-1988.

ST. GEORGE ANTIOCHIAN
ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL
3400 DAWSON STREET
PITTSBURGH, PA 15213-4314

Return Service Requested

Non-profit. Org
US Postage
PAID
Pittsburgh, PA
Permit No. 822

Dates to Remember

For an up to date list of events and dates to remember, please visit the cathedral website at www.sgcoakland.org and click on the Cathedral Calendar link under News & Events.

Every Wednesday, Beginning January 16, 7:30 PM, Applied Orthodox Spirituality Class.

Every Friday, 10am Orthros, 11am - Noon: Mom's Ministry Potluck Lunch & Fellowship.

Monday, February 04 Society of St. George Meeting @ Noon.

Sunday, February 17 Antiochian Women Meeting.

Sunday, February 24 Homeless Ministry @ 1:00 PM.

Saturday, March 2 Teen Soyo Fellowship & Meeting @ 6:00 PM

Sunday, March 31 Homeless Ministry @ 1:00 PM.