

THE APOSTLE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2012

SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF IRVINE Pastor's Column

17840 Sky Park Circle
Irvine, CA 92614-6407

Tel: (949) 851-8933

Fax: (949) 851-0010

Email: frmlaffoon@yahoo.com

Website: www.st-mark-church.org

Very Rev. Father Michael Laffoon, Pastor

Residence phone: (949) 559-6133

Rev Fr. Patrick Irish, Attached

Rev. Protodeacon George Moubayed

Sub-deacon: Athanasius Fakhouri

Choir Director: Barbara Scholl

Chanters: Elia Qushair, Theresa Joubran, Dionysius

Ingraham, Mark Ellis, and Jacob Bahbah.

Church Office Administrator: Lydia Wakileh

Youth Director: Juliana Turk

2011-2012 PARISH COUNCIL

Theodore Skaff {12} Chairman (949) 305-9565

Najib Saadeh {13} Vice Chairman (949) 280-4903

**Kendall Schorr {12} Secretary, Stewardship Drive
(714) 602-7936**

Issa Bahbah {14} Treasurer (714) 685-8841

**Michael Khoury {14} Treasurer Assistant (714) 373-
1225**

Roger Tierney {14} Humanitarian (949) 699-2413

**Paula Rodriguez {12} Special Events & Stewardship
Drive (949) 470-9876**

**Gisele Awayjan {13} Building Maintenance (951)
372-0567**

**Malvina Chala {13} Stewardship Drive, Membership
(949) 212-7732**

**Patrick Wilde {14} Stewardship, Membership
(949) 330-9819**

[Number in brackets is the member's last year of his or
her current term]

Church School Director: Eileen Ellis (949) 458-1604

Men's Club President: Michael Asaly (949) 497-5757

**Ladies Guild Co-Presidents: Vera Bahbah (714) 277-
5709 & Afifa Artoul (949) 215-2305**

**Teen SOYO President: Leilah Rodriguez (949) 470-
9876**

Implications of Holy Communion By Fr. Vladimir Berzonsky

"The precious and most holy Body of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ is given unto me, the unworthy priest (N) for the remission of my sins, and unto life everlasting." (Prayer during Divine Liturgy)

Note the passive voice [is given to N] deacon, laity, and to himself, because all comes from the Lord Jesus Christ, as in some of the back walls of churches where it is Christ Himself communing the apostles. This format is expressed in all sacraments. For example, in the prayers of forgiveness and absolution of holy Confession, it is not the priest but Christ through the hands and voice of the priest who forgives sins.

"Of Your Mystical Supper..." Mystical, meaning the mystery of how transcending time and space we are transported not so much to the original Last Supper (many western Christians feel it to be only in memory of the Meal) but forward and into the Kingdom of heaven. Christ spent so much of His effort on earth announcing the Kingdom, expressing what it is and the requirements for entry, the conditions and obligations incumbent upon all who are called, so that they might be elected. From the Cherubic hymn where we "lay aside all earthly care" to the command to "Lift up your hearts," to the fellowship of love for one another the way the Three Persons of Trinity love – all that is understood by Holy Communion. Yes, indeed with Christ in His Body and Blood – but in Him and through Him all who share His Being, those in heaven and those on earth. Far from a one-on-one relationship. *Sobornost*

[unity in faith and mind] is the common expression that explains and defines what the meaning of Eucharist is.

For I will not speak of Your mystery to Your enemies, neither will I give You a kiss like Judas.

It means first of all that there are enemies of Christ, and we dare not be naïve, like so many who seem to feel that we only have to love the world and the world will respond with love. Read John: *“If the world hates you, know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know Him Who sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me hates My Father also.... [John 15:18-28]*

But like the thief will I confess You.

Compare the chosen apostle Judas Iscariot with the Good Thief. One was selected among the seventy disciples of 5,000 who heard Jesus on the Mount, so there had to be something positive about his nature. The other is the thief who had spent his entire life stealing, robbing, cheating and perhaps much worse. On the cross he did not plead for sympathy, beg to be excused because of a bad home life, missing or uncaring parents, a society that did not provide for his welfare; but called out to the third man on a cross, “We are getting what we deserve, but not this man.”

We understand how precious is fellowship with Christ in the Church and how easy it is to sin, each sin being against the Lord Jesus, just as wicked as the kiss of Judas because it takes liberties with the compassion of Christ and ignores the high cost of membership in the Church.

Feasts, Special Services and Events for February 2012

Wednesday, February 1 – 6:30 p.m. Evening Divine Liturgy, Presentation of our Lord in the Temple (Orthros at 5:30 p.m.)

Fridays: February 3, 10, 17, 7:00 p.m. Parish Education Nights

Saturday February 11, 6:30 p.m. Valentine’s Dinner Dance in the Church Hall

Saturday February 18, 10:00 a.m., Liturgy for Saturday of Souls

Monday February 27, Beginning of Great Lent

Advance Calendar for March 2012

March 4, Sunday of Orthodoxy

March 25 – Feast of the Annunciation

Archbishop JOSEPH's Schedule

February 18-19, 2012
St. George Church, San Diego, CA
Episcopal Visit

WEEKLY SERVICES

Wednesday Vespers 6:30 p.m.

Saturday Vespers 4:00 p.m. Confessions heard after service.

Sunday Orthros 8:45 a.m. Confessions heard from 9:00 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.

Sunday Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Selected Saints of the Month

February 3rd

St. Simeon the Host of God.

This Simeon was chosen, in the time of the Egyptian Pharaoh Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-246 B.C.), as one of the famous Seventy to whom was committed the task of translating the Bible from the Hebrew into Greek. Simeon worked conscientiously, but when, translating the Prophet Isaiah, he came to the prophecy: 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son', he was puzzled and took a knife to scratch out the word 'virgin' and substitute 'young woman' and thus translate it into Greek. But at that moment an angel of God appeared to him and held him back from his intention, explaining to him that the prophecy was true and rightly expressed. And to confirm its veracity, the messenger from God said that he, Simeon, by the will of God, would not die until he had seen the Messiah born of a virgin. The righteous Simeon rejoiced at these heavenly tidings, left the prophecy unchanged and thanked God that He had found him worthy to live to see the Promised One. When the Christ Child was brought to the Temple in Jerusalem by the Virgin Mary, the Spirit of God revealed this to Simeon, who was now a very old man with snow-white hair. He went quickly to the Temple and found there both the Virgin and the Child, bathed in a light that shone round their heads like a halo. The joyful elder took Christ in his arms and prayed God to let him leave this world; 'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart ...according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.' Thither came also Anna the prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, who recognized the Messiah and made Him known to the people. Anna was then 84 years old. Soon after that, St Simeon departed this life. This righteous elder is venerated as the protector of young children.

February 6th

The Holy Martyr Dorothea

Dorothea was an eminent and beautiful maiden from Caesarea in Cappadocia. The administrator of the district, Sapricius, gave Dorothea into the care of two pagan sisters, Christina and Kallista, to turn her from Christ. But it happened the other way about: Dorothea succeeded in bringing both sisters to the Christian faith. Sapricius in fury ordered that

the sisters be tied together back to back, cast into a vat of pitch and then set alight. He then condemned Dorothea to death. She listened to the sentence with joy and cried out: 'I thank Thee, O Christ, Thou Lover of souls, that Thou callest me to Thy paradise and leadest me to Thy most holy court!' A nobleman, Theophilus, who was present, laughed at these words and called out to Dorothea: 'Here, you bride of Christ; send me apples and wild roses from your bridegroom's paradise!' 'Yes; I'll do that!' the martyr replied. When Dorothea was at the place of execution, a handsome youth suddenly appeared with three marvelous apples and three red wild roses. This was an angel from God, and it was winter-time. At Dorothea's bidding, the angel took them to Theophilus and said: 'Here is what you asked for.' When Theophilus received the message and saw the gift, he was very much afraid. Everything within him turned topsy-turvy, and he rejected paganism and became a Christian. He was tortured and killed for Christ, and his soul quickly followed Dorothea's to the Lord's Paradise.

February 24th

Our Holy Father Erasmus

A monk of the Caves in Kiev, he inherited great wealth from his parents and spent it all on the beautifying of churches, especially on gold and silver covers for icons. When he had impoverished himself and left himself with nothing, he was despised by everyone. The devil suggested to him that he had squandered his goods in vain in using them for the beautifying of churches instead of giving them to the poor. Erasmus surrendered to this temptation and believed it, as a result of which he came to despise himself, fell into despair and began to live aimlessly and lawlessly. When the time of his death approached, the brothers gathered round him and began to speak of his sins, for he would not consider them for himself. But he suddenly sat up in bed and said: 'My fathers and brethren, you have spoken thus and so, that I am a sinner and unrepentant, but lo, St Anthony and St Theodosius have appeared to me, and the most holy Mother of God, and have told me that the Lord has given me further time for repentance.' The Mother of God also said these encouraging words to him: 'The poor you have with you in every place, but my churches you have not.' And he lived three days longer and repented and fell asleep in the Lord. This teaches us that zeal for the Church and for her

beautification is a work pleasing to God. St Erasmus entered into rest in 1160.

February 27th

Our Holy Father Procopius of Decapolis

This saint came from Decapolis by the Sea of Galilee; hence his name. In youth, he gave himself to the monastic life and passed through all those prescribed labors that purify the heart and uplift the soul to God. When a persecution on the part of the wicked Emperor Leo the Isaurian broke out over icons, Procopius stood up and defended icons, showing that their veneration is not idolatry, for Christians know that to prostrate themselves before icons is not to prostrate before dead matter but before the living saints depicted on the icons. Procopius was bestially tortured, imprisoned, beaten and flogged with iron flails. When the wicked Emperor was murdered, being already a lost soul, the icons were returned to the churches and Procopius returned to his monastery, where he spent his remaining days in peace. In old age, he entered into God's Kingdom, where he beheld with joy the living angels and saints whose images were on the honored icons on earth. He departed this life peacefully in the 9th century.

Parish & Organizations News

Ladies Guild

December meeting was successful meeting; over 20 ladies attended and discussed important matters.

During December the Ladies worked hard and baked Spinach Pies and cookies, all items were sold on Dec 18, 2011 and a Boutique Sale was displayed, the net profit was \$1600.

The ladies made a commitment to the church and paid a total \$5000 to the Church Account.

A Joint Christmas Dinner with the Men's Club took place on Jan 7, 2012, a large number of members attended.

Ladies Guild served Zalabieh Dessert on January 15, 2012 during the Coffee Hour.

The ladies will be meeting again on Feb 5, 2012 after Liturgy

Please plan to join us and be part of active women of St. Mark

Vera Bahbah, President

Teen SOYO

The teens have started this year by participating in the St. Nicholas Winter Retreat in Frazier Park. It was an amazing experience for the teens. Many friendships were made there that will last a lifetime. The teens learned how to "bloom where God plants you."

Coming up is our Teen SOYO officer meeting and the FOCUS feeding. Also, coming up is our annual ice skating outing. Please look out for our Teen SOYO activities.

God Bless,

Justine Bahbah, Teen SOYO Secretary

Men's Club

Men's Club had their Christmas Dinner joint with the Ladies Guild on January 7th 2011, at the Church hall.

Their next meeting is on February 16th, 2012.

Michael Khoury

Men's Club Secretary

Baptized into Christ

On January 28 2012, James Dale Whitacre, son of Matthew & Sophia Whitcare, and the grandson of Fr. Michael & Kh. Donna Laffoon. His godfather is Jon-Michael Sweeny and his godmother is Madeleine Lengyel-Leahu.

On January 21 2012, Kandy Monica Kort, wife of Dimitri Kort. Her godparents were Roger & Carol Tierney.

St. Mark Church Cook Book

Our St. Mark Cook Book has arrived. We would like to thank the cook book committee; Samira Atallah, Samar Elsayegh, May & Randy Dabbah and all the people that contributed their recipes.

The cook book is available for sale during coffee hour for \$20.

St. Mark 2012 Stewardship Pledge Drive

Progress Report

Thank you to those who have made their 2012 Pledge Commitment to St. Mark.

Total cards: 132

Total pledges: \$167.060

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Samir Artoul 2/2
May Asaly 2/15
Ivana Awayjan 2/27
Joseph Azzam 2/15
Irma Chade 2/5
Sarah Chade 2/17
George Chala 2/6
Vladimir Chendler 2/3
Randy Dabbah 2/18
Zahieh Debbas 2/4
Amanda Eadeh 2/24
Kevin Fortuna 2/22
Nicholas Haddad 2/10
George Hanna 2/13
Ben Hanna 2/29
Georgie Hanna 2/14
Gellan Kashou 2/20
Sammy Khamis 2/17
Diana Khamis 2/19
Charlotte Khoury 2/15
Amanda Khury 2/12
Simon Kishek 2/2
Mario Kishek 2/22
Ashley Moubayed 2/6
Adel Munayyer 2/13
Danice Najjar 2/22
Tanya Nino 2/2
Paul Qaqundah 2/26
Mae Sakhel-Qushair 2/12
Elia Qushair 2/10
Nuha Qushair 2/10
Tammy Qutami 2/25
Robert Ranney 2/14
Kimla Ranney 2/24
Paula Rodriguez 2/6
Najib Saadeh 2/18
George Saba 2/2
Yacoub Saba 2/17
Nabeel Salameh 2/16
Daniel Scholl 2/10
Madona Shaheen 2/23
Sebastian Skaff 2/6
Michael Souri 2/25
Brenda Tax 2/13
Melanie Tierney 2/22

Tina Tomeo 2/19

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Fr. Patrick & Nina Irish 2/6
Antoune & Maysoun Khoury 2/10
Ramzi & Randa Salameh 2/14
Yuri & Vera Sidorenko 2/5
Don Jr. & Penny Skaff 2/14

The Apostle is a monthly newsletter of St. Mark Antiochian Orthodox Church. Parish Organizations are to submit articles by the 15th of the month to the Church office (949-851-8933)