

THE APOSTLE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2014

HAPPY NEW YEAR

SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH

OF IRVINE **Pastor's Column**

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Sub-deacon: Athanasius Fakhouri
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Church Office Administrator: Lydia Wakileh

2011-2012 PARISH COUNCIL

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Kyra Pelachik {16} (714) 906-9231
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[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: Maurice Karkar (949) 586-2560
Ladies Guild Co-Presidents: Vera Bahbah (714) 277-5709 & Afifa Artoul (949) 215-2305
Teen SOYO President: Leilah Rodriguez (949) 470-9876

In this month we celebrate the Lord's Baptism (the Feast of Epiphany or Theophany). In the gospels we read that Jesus came to the River Jordan to be baptized by His cousin, the Prophet and Baptizer John. Fr. Thomas Hopko, in his book on the Advent/Nativity/Theophany season, "The Winter Pascha" offers us an important Biblical reflection of the place of the Jordan in the history of salvation:

The river Jordan plays a very important role in the Bible. Before it becomes the river in which Jesus the Messiah baptized, it is revealed as the river, which bounds the "Promised Land." To cross the Jordan, for the people of Israel, was to enter into the fulfillment of the Lord's promises. It was to enter the "land flowing with milk and honey," the place where God would dwell with His people providing them with the endless blessings of His presence.

In the New Testament, with its spiritual and mystical fulfillment of the Old, to cross the Jordan was to enter into the Kingdom of God, to experience the fullness of the life of the age to come. The fact that Moses was not blessed to cross the Jordan thus became a symbol of the fact that the Law by itself could not save Israel or the world. It had to be Joshua, which literally means *Savior*, and is the Hebrew form of the Greek word *Jesus*, who leads the people across the Jordan and into the promised land, thus symbolizing the saving action of the new Joshua, Jesus the messianic Savior, in the covenant of grace (see Joshua 1:12).

When Joshua came to the Jordan the streams parted at the presence of God's people, with the priests bearing in their hands the Ark of the Covenant. As the waters of the sea parted to allow God's people to pass through as if on dry land at their exodus from Egypt, so also at the entry into the land of promise, the river of Jordan made way for God's

people to pass through into the place of their final destination (Joshua 3:11-13).

The Lord also commanded Joshua to take twelve stones out of the river Jordan and to place them together in one place in a pile where the people had passed through, to remain "to the people of Israel as a memorial forever" of what the Lord had done for them (Joshua 4:8-10).

After the people passed through the Jordan River, "the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks, as before." (Joshua 4:18) This miraculous wonder became part of the living memory of Israel, and the event was celebrated in the worship of God's people ever since. The psalms, which recall the divine action, are sung at the Church's festival of the Epiphany as prefigurations of God's final act of the salvation of all people in the death and resurrection of His Anointed, the Beloved Son who was baptized in the same Jordan streams.

"What ails you, O Sea that you flee O Jordan, that you turn back?... Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob" (Psalm 114:5,7)

The river Jordan was also parted by the passage of Elijah and Elisha, an event also recalled at the liturgy of Epiphany. (2 Kings 2) And it was from the Jordan that Elijah was taken up into heaven in order to return again, as the tradition developed, to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah. (See Mt 17:9-13) It was also in the Jordan that Naaman the Syrian was cleansed from his leprosy, a sign referred to by Jesus as a prefiguration of the salvation of all people, not only those of Israel. (Lk. 4:27) In the account of Naaman's cure the special significance of the Jordan is stressed once again.

"He [Naaman] went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." (2 Kings 5:13,14)

Can we not be washed in just any river and be clean? God answers, No. Only in the Jordan, in the baptism of Christ, are we cleansed from all of our sins. Only through the Jordan do we enter into the land of the living, the Promised Land of God's

kingdom. Only by the sanctified waters of the Jordan does God sanctify us forever.

*The River Jordan turned back of old,
Before Elisha's mantle when Elijah ascended.
The water were made to part in two,
So the wet surface became a dry path.
This was in truth a symbol of baptism
By which we pass through mortal life.
Christ has come to the Jordan to sanctify the
waters.*

(Troparion of the prefeast of Epiphany)

*In His love,
Fr. Michael*

Feasts, Special Services and Events for January 2014

January 1, Feast of our Lord's Circumcision and St. Basil's Day (services held on the evening of December 31: 5:30 Orthros, 6:30 p.m. Liturgy)

Sunday, January 5 – Paramon (Eve) of Theophany and Great Blessing of Waters (regular service schedule)

Monday, January 6 – Feast of Theophany, Orthros 9:00 a.m, Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

January 10, 21 Parish Education

Wednesday evening January 29 – 6:30 p.m.: Feast of the Three Holy Hierarchs (Orthros at 5:30 p.m.)

Advance Calendar for February 2014

February 2, Feast of Meeting of the Lord in the Temple

February 6, Morning Bible Study

February 8, Valentine's Day Dinner

February 9, Sunday of Publican & Pharisee – Start of the Triodion

February 21, 28, Parish Education

February 24, 1st & 2nd Discovery of the Head of St. John the Baptist

February 23, Sunday of Judgment

Archbishop Schedule for January

January 10-14, 2013

St. George Church, Allentown, PA
Ordination of Deacon Joseph Landino to the Holy Priesthood
January 23-26, 2013
Holy Resurrection Church, Tucson, AZ
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

Parish & Organizations News

January 6th

**THE HOLY PROPHET MICAIAH [MICAH]
THE FIRST**

Micaiah [Micah] was a contemporary of the Prophet Elijah. He foretold the death of the pernicious King Ahab in battle against the Assyrians (I Kings, Chapter 22, II Chronicles, Chapter 18). Micaiah [Micah] prophesied everything orally and did not put anything down in writing. However the other Prophet Micah was the one who prophesied the birth of the Lord in Bethlehem. "But you, Bethlehem-Ephrathah too small to be among the clans of Judah; From you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel; Whose origin is from of old, from ancient times" (Micah 5:1). He also authored one of the prophetic books.

January 7th

SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST

Because John's main role in his life was played out on the day of the Epiphany (Theophany), the Church from earliest times dedicated the day following Epiphany to his memory. To this feast is also linked the incident with the hand of the Forerunner. The Evangelist Luke desired to remove the body of John from Sebaste, where the great prophet was beheaded by Herod, to Antioch his place of birth. He succeeded though, in acquiring and translating only one hand which was preserved in Antioch until the tenth century after which it was transferred to Constantinople from where it disappeared during the time of the Turks.

Feasts of St. John are celebrated several times throughout the year, but this day, January 7, has the most Svecara. [That is, those Orthodox Serbs who honor St. John the Baptist as their Krsna Slava - Patron Saint. The Krsna Slava is the day that the Orthodox Serbs commemorate the baptism of their ancestors into Christianity]. Among the Gospel personalities who surround the Savior, John the Baptist occupies a totally unique place by the manner of his entry into the world as well as by the manner of his life in this world, by his role in baptizing people for repentance and for his baptizing the Messiah and, finally, by his tragic departure from this life. He was of such moral purity that, in truth, he could be called an angel [messenger] as Holy Scripture calls him rather than a mortal man. St. John differs from all other prophets especially in that he had that privilege of being able, with his hand, to show the world Him about Whom he prophesied.

It is said that every year on the feast of the saint, the bishop brought the hand of St. John before the people. Sometimes the hand appeared open and other times the hand appeared clenched. In the first case it signified a fruitful and bountiful year and, in the second case, it meant a year of unfruitfulness and famine.

January 20th

SAINT EUTHYMIUS THE GREAT

Of noble and distinguished parents, Euthymius was born in the Armenian town of Melitene near the Euphrates river about the year 377 A.D. He was the only child, a son, born in answer to the prayer of his mother Dionisiya, who had a heavenly vision regarding the birth of Euthymius. From his youth, he lived a life of asceticism, at first in the proximity of his town [Melitene] but then, after he visited Jerusalem at age twenty-nine, in the desert between Jerusalem and Jericho called Pharan. He filled his days and nights with prayer, internal thoughts about God, contemplation and physical exertion. Around him many disciples gathered some of whom are glorious saints, such as Cyriac the Hermit, St. Sabas the Sanctified, Theotictus and others. By God's gift, Euthymius was a great miracle worker; he expelled demons, healed the gravely ill, brought water to the desert, multiplied bread and prophesied. He taught monks the love of labor saying, "If you eat bread, not of your own labor, know that you are eating of someone else's labor." When some of the younger monks wanted to fast more than others, he forbade them to do so and commanded them to come to the communal table so that they would not become prideful as a result of their excessive fasting. He also said that it was not good for a monk to move from place to place, for he said, " A tree frequently transplanted does not bear fruit. Whoever desires to do good, can do it from the place where he is."

About love, he said, "What salt is to bread, love is to other virtues." During the first week of the Honorable Fast [Lenten Season], he retreated to the desert and remained there in solitary silence and godly-thoughts until just before the Feast of the Resurrection. During his life time, a large monastery [Lavra] was established in the proximity of his cave which later, throughout the centuries, was completely filled with monks as a beehive is filled with bees. His final command was that the monastery always adhere to hospitality and that the gates of the monastery never be closed. He died at the age of ninety-seven. The Patriarch of Jerusalem was in attendance at his funeral. The patriarch waited all day long until the great masses of people revered the body of the saint and only in the evening were they able to complete the Office for Burial for the Dead. On the seventh day following his death, Euthymius appeared radiant and rejoicing to Domentian, his disciple. The Venerable

Euthymius, in truth, was a true "son of Light". He died in the year 473 A.D.

January 31st

THE VENERABLE NICETAS OF THE MONASTERY OF THE CAVES IN KIEV

As a monk Nicetas was disobedient to his superior, left the monastery and closed himself in a cell. Because of his disobedience, God permitted great temptations to befall him. Once, when Nicetas was at prayer, the devil appeared to him under the guise of a radiant angel and said to him: "Do not pray anymore; rather read books and I will pray for you!" Nicetas obeyed and ceased to pray and began to read books. He only read the Old Testament. He was unable even to open the Book of the New Testament, for the power of the devil prevented him from doing so. With the help of the devil, Nicetas prophesied only crimes, thefts, arson and other evil deeds which are known to the devil and in which he [the devil] participates. Finally, the holy fathers of the Caves realized that Nicetas had succumbed to the temptation of the devil, and they began to pray to God for him. Nicetas returned to the monastery, realized the destruction which plagued him, and directed himself on the right path. After prolonged repentance and many tears, God forgave him and bestowed upon him the gift of miracle-working. He died in the year 1108 A.D.

Ladies Guild

Our Second Annual pre Thanksgiving luncheon in November went well. Our profit was \$1,298. Many thanks to all of the ladies who roasted Turkey, Ham, prepared Green beans, and sweet Potatoes. Also many thanks to all who donated the Pecan, pumpkins, water and Buns. We pray the Lord to keep us in His Grace and give us strength to keep serving His house.

The Christmas Bake sale on December 22, 2013 was a big success. Thanks for the big support of the ladies and the Committee. The ladies gathered in the church kitchen on December 20 to bake most of the Spinach Pies, and most of the ladies also donated their special home made goodies to sell.

We also held a boutique sale on December 8, 15 & 22 which was sponsored by some of the talented ladies in the church.

The ladies will honor the parishioners with a Lenten Luncheon topped with the Traditional dessert, Zalabiyeh for Epiphany on January 5, 2014

The ladies are planning to gather for their Christmas party on Sunday January 12, 2014 at the Wyndham Hotel. Great food will be served and fun games are planned. A white elephant gift exchange is planned and every lady is welcomed to join them!

Vera Bahbah, President

Men's Club

Men's Club had a very nice Christmas Dinner at the home of Sam & Adele Munayyer on December 28th. Thanks for the host Sam & Adele for their hospitality and opening their home for the men to celebrate the Christmas Dinner.

On December 31st the Men's Club hosted the New Year's Eve Dinner Dance at the Pacific Hill Banquet in Laguna Hills. Over 250 people attended this beautiful evening and they enjoyed the dinner and the music.

Respectfully submitted by

Don Skaff/Men's Club Secretary

Teen SOYO

Teen SOYO met on December 22 where they worked on mailing the Christmas Cards out to all the church members. Thanks for all who helped on Sunday.

George Bahbah

Teen's Secretary

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Hadel Artoul 1/19
Samira Attalla 1/1
Samir Azzam 1/13
Issa Bahbah 1/3
Andrew Bahbah 1/4
Vicky Billeh 1/30
Sonia Daher 1/4
Alice De Abdo 1/3
Michael Debbas 1/22
Matthew Dabbah 1/5
Goldie Daruty 1/10
Adam Erdkamp 1/23
Elsa Frech 1/28
Sierra Gordon 1/10
Michael Hanna 1/29

Louisa Kashou 1/22
Lana Kashou 1/7
Lilian Kassicieh 1/29
Helen Kassir 1/6
Isa Khamis 1/11
Andrew Khamis 1/8
Anton Kishek 1/15
Dimitri Kort 1/9
Olga Manneh 1/28

Protodeacon George Moubayed 1/7

Sam Munayyer 1/10
Susan Qaundah 1/7
Jordan Qutami 1/24
Emad Riskallah 1/25
Ryan Rodriguez 1/17
Andrew Rodriguez 1/24
Farah Saba 1/15
Hanan Saba 1/15
Michael Sakhel 1/30
Georgette Salameh 1/31
Steve Scholl 1/6
Leila Sliheet 1/2
Anton Turk 1/24
Keitie Turk 1/9
Ibrahim Wakileh 1/6
Susan Wilde 1/19

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Ken & Adele Habeeb 1/2
Wael & Louisa Kashou 1/6
Anton & Itab Kishek 1/18
Matthew & Sophia Whitacre 1/11

BUY SCRIP! Our Ladies Guild buys scrip from many and various stores and restaurants (see list included in this bulletin) at a 3 to 10% discount. When you buy the scrip, which is accepted just like cash at the issuing store, the parish benefits. You pay no more for these goods and services and are making a **donation** to our parish. **You can purchase this scrip from Saeda Turk at the coffee hour.**

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)

St. Mark 2014 Stewardship Pledge Drive Progress Report

Thank you to all of you who have made their 2014 Pledge Commitment to St. Mark. As of December 19th, we have a total of \$146,000 pledged which is 73% of our total goal of \$200,000. We have also successfully collected 101 pledge commitments!

If you haven't made your pledge commitment yet then please take a few minutes today during Coffee Hour to fill out a pledge card (extra cards are next to our pledge box in the Hall).

In Christ,
St. Mark Stewardship Committee

**St. Mark 2014 Stewardship Pledge
Total Pledges 101
Total pledges amount \$146,320**

SLEIMAN & SEHAM ALDADA
PAUL & JUNE ANTER
SAMIR & AFIFA ARTOUL
MICHAEL & MAY ASALY
GHASSAN & GISELLE AWAYJAN
ANAHD AZZOUNI
JACOB & VERA BAHBAH
JOE & SALWA BAHBAH
PHILLIP & TARIZE BAHBAH
GHASSAN & GENY BAHOU
SAMIR & LUCY BILLEH
YOUSEF & RITA BILLEH
LEO & IRMA CHADE
VLADIMIR & JOANNA CHENDLER
RUTH CONN
RANDY & MAY DABBAH
SUE DABBAH
NOHA DAHER
JOE & GOLDIE DARUTY
SCOTT & DIANE DARUTY
ALICE DE ABDO
EDNA DEEB
MARY DIBS
JERALD DONOVAN

SAMIRA EISSA
CHARLOTTE EL-HINN
MARK EL-HINN
MARK & EILEEN ELLIS
OMAR & FATIN FAKHOURI
MAJED & BNNIA FASHEH
KEVIN & SARA FORTUNA
ELSA FRECH
JAMES J. & CAROLE JO GOSON
SANDELLA GOSON
KAREEM (KEN) & ADELE HABEEB
ANTON & NADIA HADDOUB
ESPERENCE HADSHITI
MELAD & Wafa HANNA
TOM & SHANNON HILMAR
RICHARD & VERA JIRJIS
SHAWKI & DOHA JIRJIS
MICHEL & THERESA JOUBRAN
MAURICE & NADIA KARKAR
LILIAN KASSICIEH
BACHIR & HELENE KASSIR
ELIAS & HILDA KHAMIS
IBRAHIM & DIANA KHAMIS
ISA & BARBARA KHAMIS
MARY-ANN KHAMIS
MITRI KHAMIS
ANTOUNE & MAYSSOUN KHOURY
MICHAEL & CHARLOTTE KHOURY
DIANA KHURY
ELENA KHURY
ELYAS & NAJAT KHURY
OSAMA & RULA KISHEK
SIMON & LOURICE KISHEK
DIMITRI & KANDY KORT
EMILIE LAFFOON
JHONNY & SONIA LIQUETE
LEWIS MALOUF
GLORIA MAMEY
NELSON & JERRI MAMEY
MARY MANSOUR
ROBERT & LINDA MOKBEL
SAM & ADEL MUNAYYER

ELIAS & JEAN NASRAWI
ELIZABEH NASSAR
JAMIL NASSAR
DON & DENISE NASSIF
SAMMY & LANA NINO
KYRA PELACHIK
PAUL & SUSAN QAQUNDAH
NADER & SUHAIR QOBORSI
NUHA QUSHAIR
JAMAL & TAMMY QUTAMI
ROBERT & KIMLA RANNEY
EMAD & MUNA RIZKALLAH
CARLOS & RHONDA RODRIGUEZ
NAJIB & HEBA SAADEH
FARAH & SYLVIA SABA
SIHAM SABA
YACOUB & GENEVIEVE SABA
MANUEL & GEORGETTE SALAMEH
MUFID & SALAM SAMARA
STEVEN & BARBARA SCHOLL
DON JR & PENNY SKAFF
ROBERT & SARAH SMATHERS
DAVID & JULIANA TANNOUS
FOUAD & RIMA TARAZI
DAVE & BRENDA TAX
ROGER & CAROL TIERNEY
ANTON & KEITIE TURK
AUSTIN & SAEDA TURK
IBRAHIM & LYDIA WAKILEH
MATTHEW & SOPHIA WHITACRE
ROBERT & THEODORA WHITEHEAD
COURTNEY WILDE
PATRICK & SUSAN WILDE
KARIM & MARIZE YOUSEFF
ADIB & NABILA ZABANEH

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