

# THE APOSTLE

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER MARCH 2014 SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF IRVINE

### Pastor's Column

Beloved in Christ,

*Lent begins on March 3<sup>RD</sup> and we are even now, in the Church calendar preparing for this. With this in mind, please read and ponder the article reprinted below!*

#### THE RIGHT ATTITUDE FOR LENT

Father Vladimir Berzonsky

Before the Great Lent begins the Orthodox Church reserves three weeks in order to encourage in its members a proper mental preparedness towards the season of intense prayer, meditation and fasting. We must learn not merely to accept lent as a spiritual obligation, an intrusion into a life of fun and diversion, but rather we must learn to welcome its discipline if we are to benefit by it spiritually.

Let us first mention certain misconceptions regarding this period: the great danger of keeping a strict Lent is that one tends to become self-righteous. Wisely the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee is put at the very start of the Triodion Cycle [which includes Lent, the three week period beforehand and Holy Week] to impress upon our minds the distastefulness of self-righteousness. It would be far better not to observe the lent than to have it result in arrogance, a "holier-than-you" attitude.

Neither is Lent intended for scoring points in heaven. The hairs on our head may be numbered, as the Lord tells us; but it is highly unlikely the angels keep track of whether we had a cheese sandwich or bologna for lunch. We sometimes tend to keep the letter of the lent and fail to develop an over-view, a general framework for understanding why we deprive ourselves of certain foods and pleasures.

What we are about is to know ourselves. To know ourselves we must withdraw from the world, to go

17840 Sky Park Circle  
Irvine, CA 92614-6407  
Tel: (949) 851-8933  
Fax: (949) 851-0010  
Email: [frmlaffoon@yahoo.com](mailto:frmlaffoon@yahoo.com)  
Website: [www.st-mark-church.org](http://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: Jacob Bahbah, Theresa Joubran, Karim Youssef, & Mark Ellis**  
**Church Office Administrator: Lydia Wakileh**

#### 2011-2012 PARISH COUNCIL

**Chairman {15} Penny Skaff** (949)713-7411  
**Vice Chairman {14} Patrick Wilde** (949) 330-9819  
**Secretary & Assistant Treasurer {16} Richard Jirjis**  
(949) 552-7424  
**Issa Bahbah {15} Treasurer** (714) 685-8841  
**Michael Khoury {14}** (714)373-1225  
**Nelson Mamey {15}** (949) 673-7400  
**Roger Tierney {14} Humanitarian** (949) 699-2413  
**Fouad Tarazi {16}** (949) 276-2923  
**Kyra Pelachik {16}** (714) 906-9231  
**Afifa Artoul {16}** (949) 215-2305

[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

into the desert as Jesus did following his baptism. It is essential that we extricate our inner selves from our surroundings, if we are to have an over-view of our lives. If we cannot physically retreat, we must at least retreat mentally. This we are able to do by the very fact that we are human beings. For example, a fish in an aquarium is alive in every sense that we are who observe him; with one exception. As far as we know, he is not able to transcend himself, in the way we are. Not only are we able to look at ourselves from a distance, we must analyze and evaluate ourselves to be truly human.

Fasting is simply to make us hungry, enabling us to evaluate the person we really are; how enslaved we are to that drive which draws us against our will to the refrigerator! How we cannot think about anything but the growlings of the stomach! I'll get a headache, I just must eat something," you say. You've learned something about yourself.

We must see how we've surrendered the gift of freedom God intended for us, as we reach out to our cigarettes or bottle, refusing to evade the reality of our slavery until we hate the fetters enough that we will admit that we are imprisoned by our habits, then make the difficult struggle involved in setting ourselves free.

I am convinced, however, that concentration on ourselves is no longer sufficient. We must mature into a new awareness of life around us, developing a respect for nature and all of God's creatures not previously manifested among us. There is a need for a new attitude towards property, both ours and others, a reverence for living beings over institutions and man-made laws; we must have the courage to analyze and perhaps reevaluate our priority of values. What should be borne uppermost in our minds, nevertheless, is that true, effective and worthwhile change takes place in hearts and consciences, and only their bearers can make them. *With God's help, let us make this Lent truly a springtime for our souls!*

*Fr. Michael*

**THE LENTEN FAST (Lent begins on March 3)**  
***During Great Lent, the rules of the dietary fast are thus: All of Lent and Holy Week we are to abstain from all meat and animal products (including eggs, milk, animal fats, etc.) The only exceptions are shellfish. In addition, Mondays through***

***Fridays, we are to abstain from wine and other alcoholic drinks and olive oil. This is the "letter of the law." It is important for you and your family to participate in the "spirit of the law", working out this Lenten effort within your household in ways pleasing to God and beneficial for the soul. We all must be reminded that the purpose of the dietary fast is to help us to fast from sin and ungodliness! If you have questions regarding Lenten discipline, please see Fr. Michael.***

### **Construction has begun at St. Mark's**

On February 16, we celebrated our last Divine Liturgy in the "old" sanctuary. After coffee hour all the holy items (the icons, altar tables, etc.) were removed. The next day, Wilkins Family Construction (WFC) began demolition on the south end of our building in preparation for expanding the sanctuary by nearly 1500 square feet. The completion of the project is expected to take four months. In the meantime, our Sunday morning and Lenten services will be held in the Church Hall. Due to hall rentals, no Saturday Vespers will be held at St. Mark. Unless otherwise announced, we will celebrate Saturday Vespers with Holy Nativity of the Theotokos Serbian Orthodox Church (2148 Michelson Drive, Suite 1, Irvine) at 5:00 p.m. Some special services may be at other churches.

### **SPECIAL SERVICES/EVENTS IN MARCH**

Sunday March 2 is Cheese Fare Sunday (the last day to eat Dairy)

Monday March 3, the first day of Great Lent

March 3 – 9 First week of Lent

Monday, Tuesday Great Compline 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday Liturgy of Pre-Sacntified Gifts, 6:30 p.m.

Thursday Great Compline, 7:00 p.m.

Friday Little Compline with Akathist Hymn, 7:00 p.m.

Saturday March 8, Pan-Orthodox Youth Rally, 4:00 p.m.

Pan-Orthodox Vespers with Archbishop Joseph preaching all at St. St. Stephen Serbian Orthodox Cathedral, 6:00 p.m.

Sunday March 9, Pan-Orthodox Divine Liturgy with Metropolitan Gerasimos, Archbishop Joseph, Archbishop Benjamin and Bishop Maxim at St. Stephen Serbian Orthodox Cathedral.

Sunday March 9, Joint Vespers Sunday of Orthodoxy, at St. Paul Greek Orthodox Church, Irvine 6:00 p.m.

Monday March 24, Evening Liturgy, Feast of the Annunciation (6:30 p.m. at St. Luke Orthodox Church, Garden Grove)

General Lenten service schedule:  
 Monday Great Compline 7:00 p.m.  
 Wednesday Liturgy of Pre-Sacntified Gifts, 6:30 p.m.  
 Friday Little Compline with Akathist Hymn, 7:00 p.m.

**April 2014 Advanced Calendar**  
 April 13, Palm Sunday  
 April 14, Start of Holy Week  
 April 20, GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA

**Archbishop Joseph's Schedule**  
 March 1-3, 2014  
 St. Stephen Church, Campbell, CA  
 Episcopal Visit

March 15-16, 2014  
 St. Athanasius Church, Sacramento, CA  
 Episcopal Visit

March 21-24, 2014  
 Holy Cross Church, Yakima, WA  
 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**  
**MARCH 3<sup>RD</sup>**  
**THE HOLY MARTYRS, EUTROPIUS, CLEONICUS AND BASILLISCUS**

They were companions of St. Theodore Tiro. When the righteous Theodore gloriously died, they remained behind in prison, and for a long time they were not sentenced due to a change in the emperor's deputy in the city of Amasea. When the new governor arrived, more inhuman than his

predecessor, he ordered that these three be brought before him. All three were youths. Eutropius and Cleonicus were blood brothers, and Basilliscus was a kinsman of St. Theodore. All three were like blood brothers in brotherly love. As such, they said before the governor, "As the Holy Trinity is undivided, so also are we by our faith undivided and in love inseparable." In vain was all the flattery on the part of the governor and in vain were his attempts to bribe Eutropius. First of all, the deputy invited Eutropius to dine with him. Eutropius refused, quoting from the Psalms, "Happy the man who follows not the counsel of the wicked" (Psalm 1:1). After that, the deputy offered him a large amount of money, one hundred-fifty litres of silver, which Eutropius also refused and reminded the governor that because of silver, Judas lost his soul. After all attempts at interrogation and torture, the first two were sentenced to be crucified, and Basilliscus was sentenced to be beheaded. And so it was, two brothers crucified on two crosses for which they gave thanks to Christ that He made them worthy of the same death by which He Himself died. The third, Basilliscus, was beheaded. They all entered the Kingdom of Joy where St. Theodore, their commander, awaited them and who before them was glorified by Christ the Lord and Victor. They suffered honorably in the year 308 A.D.

**MARCH 16<sup>TH</sup>**  
**THE HOLY APOSTLE ARISTOBULUS, ONE OF THE SEVENTY APOSTLES**

Born in Cyprus, Aristobulus was the brother of the Apostle Barnabas. He followed the Apostle Paul, who mentions him in his Epistle to the Romans saying, "Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus" (Romans 16:10). When the great apostle appointed many bishops throughout the various parts of the world, he appointed Aristobulus as bishop for the British, that is, England. In Britain the people were savages, heathen and wicked. Aristobulus endured many indescribable tortures, misfortunes and evil among them. They struck and beat him mercilessly, dragged him about the streets, ridiculed and mocked him. Finally this holy man succeeded by the power of the Grace of God. He enlightened the people, baptized them in the name of Christ the Lord, built churches, ordained priests and deacons and, in the end, died there peacefully

and entered into the Kingdom of the Lord, Whom he faithfully served.(\*)

(\*) In the Greek Synaxarion the Venerable Christodulos is also mentioned on this day. He lived a life of asceticism on the island of Patmos, where he build a monastery dedicated to St. John the Theologian. He died in the year 1111 A.D. Many miracles occured over his relics.

### **MARCH 25TH**

#### **THE ANNUNCIATION**

When the All-Holy Virgin completed the fourteenth year after her birth and was entering her fifteenth year, after having spent eleven years of living and serving in the Temple of Jerusalem, the priests informed her that, according to the Law, she could not remain in the Temple but was required to be betrothed and enter into marriage. What a great surprise to the priests was the answer of the All-Holy Virgin that she had dedicated her life to God and that she desired to remain a Virgin until death, not wanting to enter into marriage with anyone! Then, according to Divine Providence, Zacharias, the high priest and father of the Forerunner, under the inspiration of God, and in agreement with the other priests, gathered twelve unwed men from the Tribe of David to betroth the Virgin Mary to one of them to preserve her virginity and to care for her. She was betrothed to Joseph of Nazareth who was her kinsman. In the house of Joseph, the All-Holy Virgin continued to live as she did in the Temple of Solomon, occupying her time in the reading of Sacred Scripture, in prayer, in Godly-thoughts, in fasting and in handiwork. She rarely went anywhere outside the house nor was she interested in worldly things and events. She spoke very little to anyone, if at all, and never without special need. More frequently she communicated with both of Joseph's daughters. When the fullness of time had come, as prophesied by Daniel the Prophet, and when God was pleased to fulfill His promise to the banished Adam and to the Prophets, the great Archangel Gabriel appeared in the chamber of the All-Holy Virgin and, as some priestly writers wrote, precisely at that same moment when she held open the book of the Prophet Isaiah and was contemplating his great prophecy: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son!" (Isaiah 7:13). Gabriel appeared in all of his angelic brightness and saluted her: "Rejoice, highly favored one! The Lord is with

you" (St. Luke 1:28), and the rest in order as it is written in the Gospel of the saintly Luke. With this angelic annunciation and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Virgin, the salvation of mankind and restoration of all creation began. The history of the New Testament was opened by the words of the Archangel Gabriel: "Rejoice, highly favored one" This is to imply that the New Testament was to signify joy to mankind and to all created things. It is from this that the Annunciation is considered not only a great feast, but a joyful feast as well.

### **MARCH 31TH**

#### **THE PRIESTLY-MARTYR HYPATIUS THE BISHOP OF GANGRA**

Hypatius was born in Cilicia and was the bishop of Gangra. He was present at the First Ecumenical Council [Nicaea, 325. A.D.] and was renowned throughout because of his pious and saintly life and his miracle-working. The Emperor Constantius ordered that a likeness of Hypatius be made during the saint's lifetime. The emperor kept this likeness in his palace as a weapon against all adverse powers. Once upon returning from Constantinople, Hypatius was attacked in a narrow gorge by Novatian heretics and, along with others, was hurled to the ground in mud. At that moment a woman from that group struck him in the head with a stone and, thus, the saint died. Immediately that woman went insane and took that same stone and struck herself with it. When they took her to the grave of St. Hypatius, he interceded before God on her behalf. She was healed by the great compassionate soul of Hypatius and lived the remainder of her life in repentance and prayer. St. Hypatius died and took up habitation in the eternal Kingdom of Christ the God, in the year 326 A.D.

### **Parish & Organizations News**

#### **Baptised into Christ**

On February 2<sup>nd</sup>, Mikhail M. Boulos son of Mokhllis & Stephanie Boulos, his god father was Elie Abdo

#### **Ladies Guild**

The ladies sponsored the Valentine Dance in February, and would like to thank each and every one who supported this event. Many thanks to all who donated items for the Raffle, and to those who encouraged their friends to attend.

March is Antiochian Women Month, the ladies usually read the Epistle, Usher and serve during the 5 weeks of March.

Your input is very important to us, please plan to attend the monthly meeting and share your ideas with the ladies.

Next meeting will be on Sunday April 6, 2014 and we will be getting ready to organize for Easter Bake Sale, Pascha Breakfast and more!

*Vera Bahbah, President*

### Men's Club

Men's Club met on February 20<sup>th</sup> at the church hall. They had a guest speaker Ezmat Hafez from Ziadie Insurance Services spoke about the changes regarding health care reform and how it has changed the current insurance marketplace. They also enjoyed a Papa John's Pizza for dinner, thanks To Fred Tarazi for providing the Pizza.

Men's Club will make a \$500 check to the Good Samaritan Fund.

Sunday Services during the construction:

Chairs will be set up by caterer.

Volunteers need to arrive Sunday morning by 8:00 am to help with set up.

We are asking that the two ushers from the Sunday usher schedule plus to volunteers help with set up.

Tarneeb Tournament was suggested that we invite St. Luke to join in the tournament.

Next Men's Club meeting has not been scheduled.

*Respectfully submitted by*

*Don Skaff/Men's Club Secretary*

### **Teen SOYO**

The Teen officers will meet on Sunday March 2. Our teens will join with the teens of St. Luke on March 30 for a volleyball game.

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY**

Sleiman Aldada 3/11  
Diana Aldada 3/4  
Joseph Attallah 3/27  
Sarah Asaly 3/10  
Gisele Awayjan 3/24  
Anahid Azzouni 3/19

Jacob Bahbah 3/1  
Nicholas Bahou 5/26  
Wally Batarseh 3/12  
Lucy Billeh 3/20  
Nuha Daher 3/23  
Mark El-Hinn 3/30  
Dina Elsayegh 3/30  
Nicole Fakhouri 3/1  
Katrina Fakhouri 3/26  
Carole Jo Goson 3/29  
Anton Hadoub 3/17  
Wetcka Haffty 3/19  
Sameer Hanna 3/17  
Amanda Hanna 3/25  
Mary –Margret Hanna 3/26  
George Hanna 3/21  
Fr. Patrick Irish 3/12  
Maurice Karkar 3/25  
Mitri Khamis 3/6  
Tanya Khamis 3/4  
Samir Khamis 3/20  
Amanda Khoury 3/5  
Melissa Khoury 3/19  
Najat Khury 3/20  
Elena Khury 3/29  
Jerri Mamey 3/26  
Nabil Mansour 3/24  
Linda Mokbel 3/31  
Liana Munayyer 3/3  
Walid Najjar 3/11  
Elizabeth Nassar 3/2  
Daniel Rizkallah 3/16  
Deena Salameh 3/23  
Ramsey Samara 3/18  
Jamal Sayegh 3/3  
Samira Skaff 3/29  
Richard Tierney 3/2  
Martha Toubbeh 3/30  
Isabella Turk 3/10  
Juliana Turk 3/4  
Osama Turk 3/12  
Michael Wakileh 3/23  
Lydia Wakileh 3/25  
Matthew Whitacre 3/19

**HAPPY ANNIVERSARY**

Samir & Maysa Azzam 3/4  
Carlos & Rhonda Rodriguez 3/1  
George & Martha Toubbeh 3/28

*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 15<sup>th</sup> of the month to the Church office (949-851-8933)***

**SAINT MARK ANTIOCHIAN  
ORTHODOX CHURCH  
17840 SKY PARK CIRCLE  
IRVINE, CA 92614**

**MARCH 2014 NEWSLETTER**

