

THE APOSTLE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2014

SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH

Pastor's Column

OF IRVINE

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Sub-deacon: Athanasius Fakhouri
Choir Director: Barbara Scholl
Chanters: Jacob Bahbah, Theresa Joubran, Karim Youssef, & Mark Ellis
Church Office Administrator: Lydia Wakileh

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The Fast of the Apostles: On being sent into the world Adapted from an essay by Dr. Alexander Roman.

The Apostles' Fast is one that was actually engaged in by the Disciples of Christ following the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Having rejoiced throughout the fifty days following Pascha, the Resurrection of our Lord, God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Apostles began to prepare for their departure from Jerusalem to carry Christ's message to the far corners of the world.

As part of their preparation, they began a fast with prayer to ask God to strengthen their resolve and to be with them in their missionary undertakings.

It is this fast that we ourselves participate in when we observe the Apostles' Fast. But we do this not only because we honour the Apostles and their sacrifice. We do this by way of preparing ourselves to be sent as missionaries into our world to reflect and radiate Christ to those around us.

Somewhere along the line, we seem to have disconnected ourselves from the Apostles. We've placed them on a very high plane so that we may admire them and their spirituality while, at the same time, effectively preventing ourselves from ever having anything to do with it as far as our own personal lives are concerned.

When Christ asked his sleeping disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane why they could not watch and pray with Him for one hour, He was actually giving all of us some real practical advice on how much time we should be spending in prayer at a minimum.

Yet, today we think that His words were only for His apostles and disciples, for those who made a radical commitment to follow Him until the end of their days. And we think that this has nothing to do with us! How wrong we are!

The apostles were people like we are. St Peter was actually so filled with a sense of his own sinfulness that he felt it was inappropriate for him to even speak with Jesus at their first meeting. And it was he who denied Christ three times. Later, through the power of the Holy Spirit, it was into this same Peter's shadow that sick people would try and throw themselves in the hope of receiving healing!

It was St Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, who called himself the "least of the disciples." He considered himself to be a full member of the Apostolic group, notwithstanding that he did not see Christ before His Crucifixion and Resurrection.

St Paul did "see Christ." He saw Him in His heavenly glory. Paul's apostolic zeal was second to none and he was determined to make the whole world be as he was, that is, see with the eyes of the faith he had.

As the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets, Christ chose his 12 apostles to represent the New Israel or Church of the New Covenant. That St Paul would be the 13th apostle hearkens to the role that the two sons of Joseph had among the tribes of Old Israel.

In her liturgy, the Church sometimes numbers the two assistants of Peter and Paul among the ranks of the Apostles, the two Evangelists, Mark and Luke.

It was Mark in whose parents' house the Mystical (Last) Supper was held. It was Mark who was the mysterious young boy in the Garden at the time of Christ's arrest who escaped naked from the soldiers. Luke was a Syrian, former pagan doctor, whose great secular education put him right in Paul's league. It was appropriate for the Apostle to the Gentiles to have a Gentile assistant! In addition, Christ chose 70 disciples, reflecting the choice of 70 judges by Moses who helped him govern Israel.

These 70 disciples went out, two by two, as did the Apostles, and preached, prayed, healed and witnessed.

Added to this Apostolic Choir were the women who assisted Christ throughout his earthly sojourn. St Mary Magdalene was the most famous "Equal to the Apostles."

There is simply no evidence to confirm that she was the "sinful woman" of the New Testament. A sister of Lazarus and Martha of Bethany, Mary Magdalene was a woman of means who used her resources to help the spread of the Christian message.

Throughout the centuries since, others have received the title "Equal to the Apostles," including Sts. Constantine and Helen, Sts. Cyril and Methodius for their apostolic labors to bring others to Christ. So no one has missed the boat, so to speak, on becoming an Apostle. We are all called to be such, as a matter of fact.

We may not be called to witness to Christ as the original Apostles did. We may not be called to die for Christ as they and others did.

But let us remember that the root of the word "martyr" in Greek essentially just means "witness." For the ancient Greeks, to die for one's beliefs was considered a "proof" as to their validity, especially as experienced internally by the martyr.

The Romans were not, primarily, interested in killing the Apostles and other Christians. What they wanted to do is have them deny their beliefs. That was where their sense of victory lay. To this end, the refined tortures they used on the Christians were designed to get them to deny Christ and affirm the gods and social structure of the Roman Empire. But Christians would rather suffer and die than deny Christ.

The Apostles did great work to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ and His Church, as did their successors, the Bishops. This is why St Nicholas is commemorated on Thursdays along with the Apostles for he represents the episcopate of all ages. The Apostles' Fast is therefore something which should be undertaken with an apostolic vision on our part.

When Christ told His disciples to go and preach to all nations, He had us in mind as well. When He set the standards of "feeding the hungry, clothing the naked" and others, He was also using these in a spiritual sense. How many are around us who thirst for spirituality? How many who hunger for the

Word of God? What about those in the prison of their own sinfulness? Or who are naked, that is, unclothed by the Grace of the Holy Spirit?

These are all apostolic opportunities that are presented to us by our Lord Himself.

As St Peter said, our battle is with principalities and dominions etc. the representatives of the Evil One. And they are something that can only be cast out with prayer and fasting.

Fr. Michael

Note: The Apostles Fast runs from the second Monday after Pentecost until Sts. Peter and Paul Day on June 29. With Pascha falling on April 20 this year, Pentecost falls on June 8. Consequently we have at two week Apostles fast this year (from June 16 to 28)

Schedule of Special Services and Events, June 2014

Sunday June 1, Church School Awards Day

Sunday June 8, Pentecost Sunday (usual schedule of services)

June 15 – Father’s Day Luncheon

Sunday June 22, FOCUS Feeding

Tuesday June 24, Feast of Birth of St. John the Baptist

Saturday June 29, Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul

Advance Calendar for July 2014

July 4, U.S. Independence Day

July 2 to July 6, Western Diocese Parish Life Conference, San Francisco, CA

July 14 to 18, Clergy Symposium

July 20, St. Elias Day

Archbishop Joseph’s Schedule

June 4, 5 Special Nomination Convention, Chicago IL

WEEKLY SERVICES

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.

Construction has begun at St. Mark’s

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.

Selected Saints of the Month

June 1st

THE HOLY MARTYR JUSTIN THE PHILOSOPHER

Justin was born of Greek parents in the Samaritan town of Shechem, later called Nablus one hundred-five years after Christ. He zealously sought wisdom among philosophers, at first with the Stoics and after that with the Peripatetics, the Pythagorians and finally with the Platonists. Even though Plato's philosophy did not satisfy him, nevertheless, he adhered to it the longest time not having anything else that would attract him more. By God's Providence an honorable elder encountered Justin who confused him concerning the philosophy of Plato and persuaded him that men cannot know the truth about God unless God reveals it and God revealed the truth about Himself in the books of Holy Scripture. Justin began to read Holy Scripture and became a thoroughly convinced Christian. However, he did not want to be baptized nor to be called a Christian until he was personally convinced of the falseness of all those accusations which the pagans raised against the Christians. Coming to Rome in a philosopher's dolman [cape], he quickly achieved great respect there as well as many followers. He was present at the martyrdom of St. Ptolemy and St. Lucian. Witnessing the tortures of innocent Christians, Justin wrote an Apologia (Defense) of Christians and Christian teachings and presented it to the Emperor Antoninus and to the Senate. The emperor read the Apologia with care and ordered the persecution of Christians to cease. Justin took a copy of the emperor's decree and, with

it, journeyed to Asia where, with the help of this decree, saved many persecuted Christians. After that he again returned to Rome. When a persecution began under Emperor Marcus Aurelius, he wrote another Apologia and sent it to the emperor. A disreputable philosopher Crescens, a Cynic, out of envy accused him of being a Christian because Justin had always overcome him in all debates and Justin found himself in prison. Desiring the death of Justin and fearing that he [Justin] would somehow justify himself before the court, Crescens seized the opportunity and somehow poisoned Justin in prison. So ended the earthly life of this great defender of the Christian Faith who took up habitation in blessed eternity in the year 166 A.D.

June 14th

THE HOLY PROPHET ELISHA

Elisha lived nine hundred years before Christ. When the Lord willed to take the aged Prophet Elijah to Himself, He revealed to him that He had designated Elisha, the son of Shaphat of the tribe of Reuben from the town of Abel-Meholah, as his successor in the prophetic service. Elijah informed Elisha of God's will and draped him with his mantle and implored from God the two-fold grace of prophecy for him. Elisha immediately departed his home and family and followed Elijah. When the Lord took Elijah in a fiery chariot, Elisha remained to continue the prophetic service with yet a greater power than Elijah.

By his purity and zeal, Elisha was equal to the greatest prophets and, by the miraculous power that was given to him by God, Elisha exceeded them all. He parted the waters of the Jordan as Moses once parted the Red Sea; the bitter waters in Jericho he made drinkable; he brought forth water into the excavated trenches during the war with the Moabites; he multiplied the oil in the pots of the poor widow; he resurrected the dead son of the Shunammite woman; he fed a hundred people with twenty small loaves of bread; he healed Commander Naaman of leprosy; he invoked leprosy upon his servant Gehazi because of his greed; he blinded the entire Syrian army and also forced another army to flee; he foretold many events to the people as well as to individuals. Elisha died at a very old age.

June 23rd

THE HISTORY OF THE REPENTANCE OF THEOPHILUS

Theophilus, out of envy toward the bishop, rendered his soul to the devil and, in writing, renounced Christ and the Birth-giver of God [Theotokos]. However, after that Theophilus repented bitterly and obtained the forgiveness of the Holy All-pure One. After forty days of fasting and tearful prayers, Theophilus received back the paper he had written renouncing Christ, which he had given to the devil, and openly confessed his sin in church before the bishop and the people. When the bishop pronounced the words of forgiveness and administered Holy Communion to him, the face of Theophilus shone as the sun. Behold, an example of how the merciful God not only forgives the sins of true penitents but also includes them among the saints.

June 30

THE ASSEMBLY OF THE HOLY GLORIOUS AND PRAISE WORTHY APOSTLES

Even though each one of the Twelve Great Apostles has their own special day of celebration throughout the year, nevertheless the Church has set aside this day as a festal assembly of all the apostles together and with them, Paul. These are the names and the separate days of the celebrations of the Holy

Twelve:

SAINT PETER June 29 and January 16

SAINT ANDREW November 30

SAINT JAMES, THE SON OF ZEBEDEE April 30

SAINT JOHN THE THEOLOGIAN September 26 and May 8

SAINT PHILIP November 14

SAINT BARTHOLOMEW June 11 and August 25

SAINT THOMAS October 6

SAINT MATTHEW THE EVANGELIST November 16

SAINT JAMES, THE SON OF ALPHAEUS October 9

SAINT THADDEUS OR JUDE, THE BROTHER OF JAMES June 19

SAINT SIMON THE ZEALOT May 10

SAINT MATTHIAS August 9

SAINT PAUL June 29

Parish & Organizations News

Ladies Guild

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

On May 17, 2014 the ladies of St. Mark celebrated their Annual Mother Daughter Ladies afternoon Tea Party. The event committee did a wonderful job preparing for this special time, games and raffle were part of the fun; the highlight of the event was the Fashion show of 12 young girls who freely presented themselves wonderfully.

The ladies will honor all of the Fathers in church with a luncheon on June 15, 2014.

The ladies next meeting will be on Thursday May 29, 2014 and they will be getting ready to finalize the year activities.

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

President

Vera Bahbah

Men's Club

Men's Club honored all the mothers on Mother's Day May 11th and served them a nice luncheon. On Thursday May 22 the Men's Club met at the Church Hall and Father Michael spoke on the life and accomplishments of Metropolitan Phillip. Thanks to Elias Nasrawi for preparing his famous fajitas for dinner.

Don Skaff

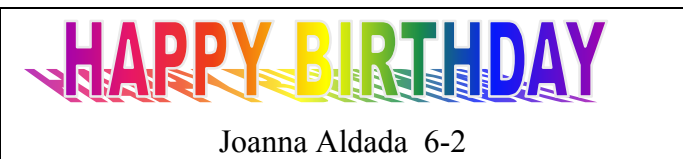
Men's club secretary

Teen SOYO

We had a Teen SOYO event May 16th. We went to Big Air Trampoline Park (23251 Avenida De La Carlota, Laguna Hills, CA 92653) @ 6:15 pm

George Bahbah

Teen's Secretary



Michael Asaly 6-4
Adele Bahbah 6-25
Joe Bahbah 6-27
Nicholas Bahbah 6-17
Amanda Bahou 6/23
Firas Billeh 6-5
Edward Chade 6-19
Alexandra Rose Chala 6-13
James Dabbah 6-20
Sally Debbas 6-4
Gabriel Donovan 6-20
Gregory Ellis 6-26
Nicole Kalache 6/7
Barbara Khamis 6-14
Marlene Khamis 6-22
Diana Khury 6-27
Madison Kort 6-14
Fr. Michael Laffoon 6-23
Nader Qoborsi 6-19
Suhair Qoborsi 6-23
Carlos Rodriquez 6-20
Rhonda Rodriquez 6-25
Marwan Saba 6-8
Ramzi Salameh 6-11
Salam Samara 6-4
Ramez Sayegh 6-20
Barbara Scholl 6-21
Rania Sliheet 6-29
Rima Tarazi 6-8
Chadi Tarazi 6-30
Dave Tax 6-6
Nicholas Tomeo 6-29
Karen Toubbeh 6-18
Austin Turk 6-24
Saeda Turk 6-29

Sleiman & Seham Aldada 6-16
Khalil & Majida Debbas 6-27
Austin & Saeda Turk 6-24

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)***

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