

THE APOSTLE **MONTHLY NEWSLETTER**

SEPTEMBER 2015

SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF IRVINE

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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 & Jake Bahbah

Church Office Administrator: Lydia Wakileh

2014-2015 PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman - Nelson Mamey {15} (949) 673-7400

Vice Chairman - Randy Dabbah {17} (949) 293-7732

Secretary - Mark Ellis {15} (949) 458-1604

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Penny Skaff {15} (949)713-7411

[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: Austin Turk (949) 581-2060

Ladies Guild President: Julie Bahbah (714) 335-9166

Teen SOYO President: Grace Bahbah (714) 401-2094

Pastor's Corner

Who Am I and Who They Say I Am

[Fr. Vasile Tudora](#)

Every time a new school year start I cannot but start thinking on the choices one has in education today. The beauty of living in a free country is that one can choose the best-suited education modality for their offspring. Public school is a basic choice opened to all, more refined private schools offer new avenues for the ones that can afford them and for those that don't trust either, one can also adventure into home schooling.

This was not the case back in communist Romania where I grew up. You had to go to the only school system that was and be taught whatever they decided to teach you. There was not much choice involved. Among other things that were taught was compulsory ideological training that was trying to indoctrinate the children with communist ideas. There was a flurry of methods used for this purpose: youth organizations, patriotic hymns, camps, parades, uniforms, just to name a few. The idea was that you are never too young to become a communist. The things went so far that when Stalin died, my mom tells me this story, the teacher ordered all the classroom students to cry.

But no matter how much they tried to brainwash, when you were out of the controlled environment of the classroom, everybody, with a few notable

exceptions that always are, were treating this with great superficiality and often even with humor. For the most part the indoctrination was able to reach the masses only a very superficial level. The main reason was that the theory would not match the practice. Basically communism was teaching equality in theory but in practice some were more equal than others.

Why am I going down this painful memory lane? Because I see today, in a country that is the epitome of freedom to the world, that, in the very name of this freedom, there is a new ideology that is starting to form and the public school systems is the carrier. This new ideology is trying to embody the ideal of being open to all, to make everybody feel welcome and appreciated, to create a world where everyone is accepted. There is nothing wrong with that so far, except that, in practice, while ethnic and racial diversity is encouraged and fostered in public schools, religious diversity is crashed to the ground. A recent news flash talks about a high school student that was summoned in the principal's office for reading from the Bible to some fellow students during the lunch break. And this is only one small example of many.

The reason ethnicity and race is fostered is because it is thought to further define who we are. We are not just Americans, we are also African-Americans, Native-Americans, Greek Americans and so on. The times where people would try to hide their ethnicity and not teach their children their mother tongue are gone. We are proud now also about where we come from and this is all good. But if we are in search for a true identity just naming a country and a race is by far not enough.

What gives me personally an identity is not my affiliation to a racial or ethnic group, but is my allegiance to the Orthodox way of life. You probably noticed I did not say that I am defined by my

religion, because my faith as an Orthodox Christian is not in just another way to explain the universe, not just another moral code of conduct, but is a way of living my life that penetrates into the most intimate aspects of it. I cannot be an Orthodox at home and then be a secular person at work, because I will be in the same boat with the communist ideology, which was good only in theory but was vastly different in the real world.

The ideology that the secular society is pushing through school is based on the [false to me] notion that all religions are man made. Once you say this then is easy to say that all religions are equally made-up, it's therefore part of culture, let's not fight about them, actually let's not even talk about them, take them out completely and all will be fine. So when a child reads from the Bible in School, or makes the sign of the cross in the cafeteria, or says Merry Christmas instead of season's greeting, they are called into the principal's office as agitators. Where is then the claimed universal acceptance when I am not allowed to be who I am?

As Christians we cannot agree with this attitude. Our faith is not a man made story, but is who we all really are, who all the people are, aware or not of the fact. It is the ultimate reality. We are Christians because Christ is "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6). We live like we do because only by following Him we will fulfill our potential as human beings, leaving aside all ethnicity, race or cultural backgrounds. What we believe in is very important and cannot be dismissed because is the motor of all our actions, is what defines us the most. We may nuance it in various cultural and ethnic ways, but these are all just superficial in the end because "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal 3:28) We are Christians first and we are struggling to live like ones every minute of our lives.

Do not regard my humble words as more than they are intended: a word of caution for all Christian parents that should know what their children are going through. They are also a warning that oftentimes we might have to supplement [and sometimes even undo] at home and in our churches what the public school system cannot give.

So before you send your kids to school this year take a moment to remind them who they are, children of God in the first place. Encourage them to keep their values intact in a world that will try to dismiss them. And most of all don't forget to pray that God will open their minds to the true knowledge that only comes from Him. Amen

Source: [Gladsome Light Dialogues Blog](#)

Feasts and Special Events for September 2015

Sunday September 6, FOCUS Ministry, Valencia Motel

Monday September 7, Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos 6:30 p.m. Divine Liturgy (Orthros 5:30 p.m.).

Monday September 14, a.m. Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross 6:30 p.m. Divine Liturgy (Orthros 5:30 p.m.) This commemoration is a fasting day regardless of the day of the week it falls.

Saturday September 19, St. Mark 30th Anniversary at the Marconi Automobile Museum.

Sunday September 20, Church School Registration

Sunday September 27, Ladies Friendship Tea

Sunday September 27, Start of Church School

Advance Calendar for October 2015

October 4, Annual Parish Meeting

October 9, 10, 11, Fall Diocesan Gathering, Goleta CA

October 11, Parish Picnic, Mason Park

October 25, FOCUS Ministry, Valencia Motel

Metropolitan Joseph's Schedule

September 1–5

Antiochian Village for the 35th Anniversary of the Antiochian House of Studies

September 9–13

Pastoral visit to St. Elias Cathedral, Ottawa, ON
Canada

September 14

Academic Convocation at St. Vladimir Seminary

September 15–17

Meeting of the Assembly of Bishops in Chicago

At our October 4, 2015 Parish Meeting, the Nominating Committee will present a slate of candidates for election to three Parish Council seats. If you would like to be nominated or to suggest someone for nomination, please speak with outgoing Council Members, or Fr. Michael. Per our parish Constitution, all nominations must be made through the Nomination Committee (outgoing Council members, Nelson Mamey, Isa Bahbah, Penny Skaff and Mark Ellis). The Nominating Committee must complete its work no later than 10 days before the Annual Meeting (September 24, 2015), and the list of Nominees will be printed in the Sunday Bulletin one week before the Annual Meeting. Only Orthodox Christians 25 years of age or older, who are Regular Pledged members of St. Mark's, are in good spiritual standing, and agree to fulfill the duties of a Council Member, may be nominated for Parish Council.

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

September 1

THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH YEAR, OR THE BEGINNING OF THE INDICTION

The First Ecumenical Council [Nicaea, 325] decreed that the Church year should begin on September 1. The month of September was, for the Hebrews, the beginning of the civil year (Exodus 23:16), the month of gathering the harvest and of the offering of thanks to God. It was on this feast that the Lord Jesus entered the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-21), opened the book of the Prophet Isaiah and read the words: The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn (Isaiah 61:1-2). The month of September is also important in the history of Christianity, because Emperor Constantine the Great was victorious over Maxentius, the enemy of the Christian Faith, in September. Following this victory, Constantine granted freedom of confession to the Christian Faith throughout the Roman Empire. For a long time, the civil year in the Christian world followed the Church year, with its beginning on September 1. The civil year was later changed, and its beginning transferred to January 1. This occurred first in Western Europe, and later in Russia, under Peter the Great.

September 14

THE EXALTATION OF THE HONORABLE CROSS

Two events in connection with the Honorable Cross of Christ are commemorated on this day: first, the finding of the Honorable Cross on Golgotha and second, the return of the Honorable Cross from Persia to Jerusalem. Visiting the Holy Land, the holy Empress Helena decided to find the Honorable Cross of Christ. An old Jewish man named Judah was the only one who knew where the Cross was located, and, constrained by the empress, he revealed that the Cross was buried under the temple of Venus that Emperor Hadrian had built on Golgotha. The empress ordered that this idolatrous

temple be razed and, having dug deep below it, found three crosses. While the empress pondered on how to recognize which of these was the Cross of Christ, a funeral procession passed by. Patriarch Macarius told them to place the crosses, one by one, on the dead man. When they placed the first and second cross on the dead man, the dead man lay unchanged. When they placed the third cross on him, the dead man came back to life. By this they knew that this was the Precious and Life-giving Cross of Christ. They then placed the Cross on a sick woman, and she became well. The patriarch elevated the Cross for all the people to see, and the people sang with tears: "Lord, have mercy!" Empress Helena had a silver case made and set the Honorable Cross in it. Later, the Persian Emperor Chozroes conquered Jerusalem, enslaved many people, and took the Lord's Cross to Persia. The Cross remained in Persia for fourteen years. In the year 628 the Greek Emperor Heraclius defeated Chozroes and, with much ceremony, returned the Cross to Jerusalem. As he entered the city Emperor Heraclius carried the Cross on his back, but suddenly was unable to take another step. Patriarch Zacharias saw an angel preventing the emperor from bearing the Cross on the same path that the Lord had walked barefoot and humiliated. The patriarch communicated this vision to the emperor. The emperor removed his raiment and, in ragged attire and barefoot, took up the Cross, carried it to Golgotha, and placed it in the Church of the Resurrection, to the joy and consolation of the whole Christian world.

September 19

THE HOLY MARTYR ZOSIMAS THE HERMIT

Dometian, a Sicilian prince, went hunting in the mountains with his servants. There he saw an old man surrounded by wild beasts as tame as lambs. Asked who and what he was, the elder replied that his name was Zosimas, that he was a Christian, and that he had lived long among the wild beasts, who were better than those who lived in the city and tortured Christians. This offended Dometian, who was himself a cruel persecutor of Christians. He chained Zosimas and sent him ahead to Nazareth, as he especially wanted to torture him there, to intimidate those who believed in Christ. When

Dometian had wounded and bloodied Zosimas with blows, he tied a stone around his neck and suspended him from a tree. Then the prince mocked him, saying: "Command that a wild beast come forth so that we may all believe!" The holy martyr prayed to God, and, indeed, an enormous lion appeared, drew near to Zosimas, and placed his head under the stone to alleviate the martyr's suffering. In great fear, the prince freed Zosimas, but the latter soon rendered his spirit into the hands of his Lord.

September 30

SAINT MICHAEL, FIRST METROPOLITAN OF KIEV

St. Michael was sent to Russia by the Patriarch of Constantinople at the request of the great Prince Vladimir, to baptize the pagan people and establish and organize the Church. St. Michael baptized the people in Kiev, Novgorod, Rostov and many other towns and villages. He organized the Church, appointed bishops and priests, laid the foundation for the Monastery of St. Michael in Kiev, and sent missionaries among the Bulgarians and Tartars, winning many of them for Christ. This saint accomplished all this, and much more of great benefit, in only four years. He went to his reward peacefully, in the year 992. His relics repose in the Monastery of the Kiev Caves.

Parish & Organizations News

Fallen Asleep in the Lord

On August 20, Jamal Qutami passed from this life. His Funeral Service was sung at St. Mark Church on Tuesday August 25 and interment at Loma Vista Memorial Park. Memory Eternal!

Ladies Guild

Parish Life Conference was held July 1-5 hosted by Saint Andrew Orthodox Church and enjoyed by all the fellow Orthodox Christians from throughout the Diocese and beyond.

Our Ladies Annual Friendship Tea will be held on Sunday September 27th at the home of Denice and Don Nassif. Please see flyer included for more information.

Yours in Christ

Ladies Guild Secretaries

Lydia Wakileh & Wissam Farraj

Men's Club

Due to the passing of our brother Jamal Qutami the Men's Club Fun Night (Cigars, Hookah & Card games) was canceled on August 20th

*Respectfully submitted by
Don Skaff/Men's Club Secretary*

Teen SOYO

The 2014/2015 SOYO year has been an exciting and fulfilling year! Over the summer things tend to slow down however, we had a junior & senior SOYO Bible Bowl team compete in the Bible Bowl hosted by St. Andrew's at The Irvine Marriott. The participants of the Junior High team consisted of Sami Skaff, Diana Aldadah, and Andrew Bahbah, and the High School team consisted of Jay Skaff, George Bahbah, Grace Bahbah, and Alex Turk. They all dedicated a great deal of time & energy to studying the life of St. Raphael under the diligent direction & support of their coaches, Jacob Bahbah and Edna Deeb! Congratulations to all of our Bible Bowl teams and coaches on doing a great job!

We would also like to congratulate Paul Rodriguez on running for and attaining the position of The Diocese SOYO Vice President! The election also took place at the Parish Life Conference at The Irvine Marriott. Soon after receiving the position of Vice President, Paul flew out to Boston to attend St. Mary's Archdiocese Convention & represent the DLAW region for our SOYO. He found the meetings he attended to be productive and insightful! Paul Rodriguez is inspired by the direction of Saidna Metropolitan Joseph and hopes to serve our youth and have a positive impact on our Region!

We couldn't let the summer go by without a Big SOYO Family Beach Bash! That it was! We had approximately 90 plus people join us Friday August 7th at Big Corona! It was a great time, with lots of good food, good fun, and especially good friends! Special thanks to Caren Khouri for helping me organize the event, and for reserving the fire pits for us.

I am also very proud of the following young men, James Dabbah, Matthew Dabbah, Alex Munayyer,

Alex Turk, and Paul Rodriguez, for devoting a whole day in their busy summer schedules to help install the Icon in the dome at St. Mark's. It proved to be a rewarding experience for all of them!

More fun is to come soon as we celebrate, and kidnap our in-coming new SOYO members!! I can't disclose the date or too much about it, because we have a lot fun surprises that day planned for the new kids! So "mum" is the word for now, but I'm sure you will hear all about it soon. It's always a favorite event that all of our SOYO members look forward to!

As the new SOYO year approaches, I would like to commend and thank all of our existing SOYO Officers for all of their dedication and commitment to making this last year of SOYO run so smoothly and successfully!

President: Grace Bahbah

Vice President: Alex Turk

Secretary: Jay Skaff

Treasurer: George Bahbah

Historians: Christiana Tarazi & Paul Rodriguez

8th Grade Rep: Nadim Youssef

7th Grade Rep: Maryann Hanouneh

It truly has been an awesome 2014/2015, thanks to the help and great attitudes of all of our SOYO members & their supportive parents! I would also like to thank Dana Chade for all of her time and effort to assist myself in making it another fulfilling and memorable year!

I would also like to encourage our parents to discuss with your children, the possibility of running for a SOYO Officer position in the coming election in October for the New Year. It is a wonderful opportunity for your kids to learn early on about the importance of being a servant in the church as well as to help them become better leaders, communicators, and Orthodox Christians.

In Christ,

Paula Rodriguez

SOYO Advisor

Nora Bahbah 9/9

Chloe Dabit 9/15

Joe Daruty 9/21

Rania Debbas 9/19

Nicholas Debbas 9/2

Andrew Ellis 9/14

Mark Hanna 9/15

Jeries Hanna 9/8

Zaina Hanna 9/11

Nadia Karkar 9/16

Abe Khamis 9/20

Alex Munayyer 9/14

Giselle Rizkallah 9/4

Heba Saadeh 9/16

Hiam Sayegh 9/24

Alexander Turk 9/26

Christy Wilde 9/13

Theodora Whitehead 9/23

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Ghassan & Geny Bahou 9/6

Youseff & Rita Billeh 9/9

Scott & Diane Daruty 9/4

Norman & Wetcka Haffty 9/2

Haitham and Sahar Hanna 9/9

Michael & Charlotte Khoury 9/11

Nader & Suhair Qoborsi 9/16

Farah & Silvia Saba 9/15

Ibrahim & Lydia Wakileh 9/19

Hani & Marian Youssef 9/5

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)***

SAINT MARK ANTIOCHIAN

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Arij Alchammas 9/9

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