

THE APOSTLE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2015

SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH

OF IRVINE

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Pastor's Column

Homosexuality and Shrimp by Fr. John Whiteford

"The Bible says that homosexuality is an abomination (Leviticus 18:22), but it also says that eating shrimp is an abomination (Leviticus 11:9-12), so why do Christians eat shrimp, but oppose homosexuality?"

As these texts are translated by the King James Version, and in several other translations, you do find the same word ("abomination") is used, but in the Hebrew text you find two different words:

Leviticus 18:22 reads:

"Thou shalt not lie with a man, as with a woman: it is abomination [to^êbah]."

Leviticus 11:9-12 reads:

"These shall ye eat of all that are in the waters: whatsoever hath fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, them shall ye eat. And all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of any living thing which is in the waters, they shall be an abomination [sheqets] unto you: they shall be even an abomination [sheqets] unto you; ye shall not eat of their flesh, but ye shall have their carcasses in abomination [shaqats (verbal form of sheqets)]. Whatsoever hath no fins nor scales in the waters, that shall be an abomination [sheqets] unto you."

These two words, while they have some overlap in terms of their range of meaning, do not have the same range of meaning. The NRSV translates "sheqets" as "detestable," which at least alerts the

reader to the fact that the words are not identical. According to the Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, the word “sheqets” is used “mostly in reference to unclean and forbidden foods... Relegating certain animals to the category of “unclean” and “abominable” may in a number of instances involve considerations of health. Yet the main consideration here must be that, whatever the reason, or however much or little it was understandable to the Israelites, certain foods were forbidden and regarded as detested. This was to be accepted on the simple basis of trust in, and obedience to God” (Vol. II, ed. R. Laird Harris, et al. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), p. 955).

While “toʿēbah” can refer to that which is ritually offensive, it also includes matters that are morally repugnant, such as homosexuality (Leviticus 18:22), human sacrifice (Deuteronomy 12:31), ritual prostitution (1 Kings 14:23f), etc.

“Whereas toʿēbah includes that which is aesthetically and morally repulsive, its synonym sheqets denotes that which is culturally [i.e, ritually] unclean...” (Ibid., p. 977).

Even when one uses the very same word, this does not necessarily mean that they carry the same weight. I can say that I love Blue Bell Ice Cream, and I can say that I love my wife, but while I would die for my wife, I will generally only buy Blue Bell when it is on sale. Though the same word is used, it is used in two very different senses.

In the case of eating shrimp vs. homosexual sex, you can tell a lot about the degree to which these things were regarded as sinful by the punishments meted out to those who violated them. In the case of eating shrimp, there was no specified punishment at all. The person who ate shrimp would have certainly been considered unclean for some period of time, pending ritual purification. According to Jewish tradition, they might also have been subject to corporal punishment. The punishment for engaging in homosexual sex was death (Leviticus 20:13).

We can also tell that these things are viewed very differently by the fact that only Israelites were expected to abstain from non-kosher food. On the other hand, the passage that the ban against

homosexual sex is listed (in Leviticus 18) is in the context of a list of sexual sins for which God judges even the gentiles.

There was no mention that non-kosher foods were forbidden before the Law of Moses. For example, God said to Noah: “Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things” (Genesis 9:3). And when Gentiles began entering the Church, the Apostles declared that the Gentiles were not bound by the kosher laws of the Mosaic Law:

“For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well” (Acts 15:28-29).

And it should be noted that the word translated as “fornication” is the Greek word “porneia,” which includes any kind of sexual immorality, including those listed in Leviticus 18.

The pro-homosexual argument regarding these passages also completely ignores the vision given to St. Peter which specifically ended the requirement for Christians to abstain from non-kosher food (Acts 10:9-16), and that there are several other New Testament passages that condemn homosexuality. So the argument that Christians are hypocritical in their appeal to the ban on homosexual sex in in Leviticus 18:22, which still eat shrimp, lobster, clams, and crawfish is completely consistent with testimony of Scripture.

Some things are inherently sinful, and some things are sinful in specific contexts. For example, it is sinful for an Orthodox Christian to disregard the fasts for no compelling reason, and to eat a hamburger on a fast day, but there is nothing inherently sinful about hamburgers. Likewise, for Israelites, not eating certain kinds of foods had a symbolic meaning, and was a matter of obedience, but there was nothing inherently sinful about eating shrimp. However, it is inherently sinful for a man to have sex with another man, and the Bible is completely unambiguous about this.

This line of argument is really not just against the Church's position on homosexuality. It is also an argument against taking the Bible seriously at all. No one who considers himself a Christian should have any sympathy for such arguments.

Slavery is nowhere in the Bible presented as a good thing. A Christian can certainly not own slaves and oppose most forms of slavery without violating any tenet of Scripture or Church Tradition (we still allow for involuntary servitude as a punishment for a crime, and in the form of the military draft). And so the comparison of this issue to the question of whether or not homosexual sex is a sin is a red herring.

The Old Covenant was given to people who were at a very low level of spiritual understanding. The harsh penalties that are often found in the Old Testament law were due to this. St. John Chrysostom, commenting on the law which condemned Sabbath breakers to death, said that it was "Because if the laws were to be despised even at the beginning, of course they would scarcely be observed afterwards" (Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew 39:3). But while the harsh and immediate penalties for the violation of the law are relaxed in the New Testament, the strictness of the laws themselves are not only not relaxed, but are rather enhanced. Just as you spank younger children, but expect less of them, and expect more of older children, without spanking them, the Old Testament dealt with the Israelites where they were, but brought them gradually to a higher level of spiritual understanding.

For the full article go to:

<http://www.pravmir.com/shrimp-and-homosexuality/>

Feasts, Special Services and Events for October

October 4 - Annual Parish Meeting

October 9 to 11 - Annual Diocesan Meetings, Holy Cross Church, Modesto CA

November 2015 Advanced Calendar

November 7, Annual Wine and Food Tasting

November 8, Synaxis of the Archangels

November 9, St. Nectarios the wonder-worker

November 14, Holy Apostle Philip

November 15, Beginning of the Advent (Christmas) Fast
November 16, Holy Apostle Matthew
November 21, Feast of Nativity of the Theotokos
November 30, Holy Apostle Andrew

Metropolitan Joseph's Schedule

October 2-5

Pastoral Visit to St. George in Troy, MI

October 9-11

Fall Gathering of the Diocese of LA and the West - Santa Barbara, CA

October 11

Pastoral Visit to St. Athanasius in Goleta, CA

October 18

St. Luke in Garden Grove, CA for their Patronal Feast

October 12-21

Various visits within the Diocese of the West

October 23

(morning) Bishop's Meeting in Van Nuys, CA

October 23-24

Board of Trustees Meeting in Van Nuys, CA

October 25

Hierarchical Liturgy - St. Nicholas Cathedral, Los Angeles

October 31

Consecration of St. Ignatius Church in Florida, NY

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

October 1

THE PROTECTION OF THE MOST-HOLY THEOTOKOS

From time immemorial, the Church has celebrated the Most-holy Theotokos as the patroness and protectress of the Christian people, who, by her intercessory prayers, implores God's mercy for us sinners. The help of the Most-holy Mother of God has been clearly shown numerous times, to individuals and to nations, in peace and in war, in monastic deserts and in densely populated cities. The event that the Church commemorates and celebrates today confirms the Theotokos' consistent protection of Christian people. On October 1, 911, during the reign of Emperor Leo the Wise, there was an All-night Vigil in the Blachernae Church of the Mother of God in Constantinople. The church was full of people. St. Andrew the Fool-for-Christ was standing in the rear of the church with his disciple Epiphanius. At four o'clock in the morning, the Most-holy Theotokos appeared above the people, holding her omophorion outstretched as a protective covering for the faithful. She was clothed in gold-encrusted purple, and shone with an ineffable radiance, surrounded by apostles, saints, martyrs and virgins. St. Andrew said to Blessed Epiphanius: "Do you see, brother, the Queen and Lady of all praying for the whole world?" Epiphanius replied: "I see, Father, and am struck with amazement!" The Feast of the Protection was instituted to commemorate this event, and to remind us that we can prayerfully receive the unceasing protection of the Most-holy Theotokos in any time of difficulty.

October 13

THE HOLY GREAT-MARTYR ZLATA OF MEGLIN

Zlata was born of poor peasant parents (who also had three other daughters) in the village of Slatina, in the province of Meglin. She was a meek and devout girl, wise in the wisdom of Christ and golden, not only in name but also in her God-fearing heart. Once when Zlata went out to get water, some shameless Turks seized her and took her to their home. When one of them urged her to become a Moslem and be his wife, Zlata fearlessly replied: "I believe in Christ and Him alone do I know as my Bridegroom. I will never deny Him, even though you subject me to a thousand tortures and cut me into pieces." When her parents and sisters found her,

her parents said to her: "O daughter, have mercy on yourself and on us, your parents and sisters; deny Christ in words only, so that we can all be happy, for Christ is merciful. He would forgive such a sin, committed due to the necessities of life." Her poor parents, sisters and relatives wept bitterly. However, the noble soul of St. Zlata resisted such diabolical snares. She answered them: "When you counsel me to deny Christ the true God, you are no longer my parents or my sisters. I have the Lord Jesus Christ as my father, the Theotokos as my mother, and the saints as my brothers and sisters." The Turks then cast her into prison for three months, flogging her every day until her blood soaked the ground. Finally, they suspended her upside down and lit a fire, to suffocate her with the smoke; but God was with Zlata, and gave her strength in suffering. At last they hanged her from a tree and cut her into small pieces. Thus, this brave virgin gave her soul up to God, and went to dwell in Paradise in the year 1796. Pieces of her relics were taken by Christians to their homes for a blessing.

October 19

THE HOLY PROPHET JOEL

Joel is second in the line of the minor prophets. St. Joel was the son of Phanuel, from the tribe of Reuben. He lived eight hundred years before Christ. Joel prophesied the misfortunes of the people of Israel, and the Babylonian Captivity because of the sins they had committed in the sight of God. He called the people to fasting and the priests to tearful penitential prayer, that God would have mercy on them: Sanctify ye a fast ... and cry unto the Lord (Joel 1:14); Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar (Joel 2:17). Joel also foretold the Descent of the Spirit of God upon the apostles and the pouring out of the grace of the Spirit of God upon all Christians: Then afterward I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2:28). He prophesied and described the Dread Judgment of God, and also prophesied the glory of God's Holy Church.

October 30

THE HIEROMARTYR ZENOBIUS AND HIS SISTER ZENOBIA

They were from the town of Aegea in Cilicia. They inherited the true Faith and great material wealth

from their parents. Working zealously for the Faith and with great love, they distributed all their wealth to the poor. Because their hands were so generous, the hand of God shielded them from every evil intent of men and demons. The generous hands of Zenobius, which gave to the poor, were endowed by God with the gift of miracle-working, and Zenobius healed the sick of every kind of infirmity merely by touching them. Zenobius was appointed Bishop of Aegea. During a persecution, the Prefect Lysias arrested him and said: "I offer you two choices: life or death; life if you worship the gods, or death if you do not." St. Zenobius replied: "Life without Christ is not life but death, whereas death for the sake of Christ is not death but life." When Zenobius was subjected to cruel tortures, Zenobia came to the judge and said: "I also want to drink from this cup of suffering, and be crowned with that wreath." After being tortured in fire and in boiling pitch, both were beheaded with the sword in about the year 285. Thus this brother and sister took up their habitation in the Kingdom of the Immortal Christ the King.

Parish & Organizations News

Please mark your Calendar for our St. Mark Church **Annual Wine & Food Tasting Dinner** on November 7th 2015. Please see flyer included for more information.

Sweetheart Ball Events

Please come and support our Debutantes!
On Saturday, November 14, 2015 at 11:30 am we will be hosting The Fashion Show/Luncheon held at the Sheraton Universal Ballroom. Come and witness the style and poise of your young ladies. It will be a special day and a lot of fun! Tickets are \$65 a piece and will be available the first week in October. Please call Ms. Isabel Elac: 818-956-3756 for tickets and reservations.
Save the Date for the 55th Sweetheart Ball to be held at the Hyatt Century Plaza Hotel in Century City.
Cocktail hour is 6pm. Tickets are \$155. Please come and support our beautiful Debutantes. It will be an evening to remember.
Thank you!
Yours in Christ, Caren Deeb Kouri, Chairman. 818-399-8899

Ladies Guild

The Ladies Guild held their Annual Friendship Tea Party on September 27th at the home of Denise Nassif in Irvine. It was a very nice and beautiful event; there were 50 Ladies in attendance where they all enjoyed the pot luck luncheon, Tea, Lemonade, fruits and desserts. They also enjoyed the games played during the gathering. Thank you to Don, Denise & Christen Nassiff for hosting the Ladies at their beautiful home and for their hospitality.

During the party the Ladies also revealed their secret Pals.

The Ladies will have the Annual Breast Cancer Awareness walk on October 17th, and the BCA Pizza luncheon on Sunday October 18th, more information will be posted in the weekly bulletin

Our Ladies next meeting is on Tuesday October 13th at the church with potluck dinner and announcing of the new officers for 2015-2016.
Hope to see all the Ladies at the meeting.

Ladies Guild Secretary
Lydia Wakileh

Men's Club

The Men did not meet during summer. They will meet again on October 11th, to elect new officers.

Teen SOYO

September was a very exciting month for Teen SOYO! We initiated our new 7th graders by having Father Michael bring them up to the altar, bless them and officially welcome them into SOYO. Immediately after Liturgy we whisked them off to the Munayyer's where they joined in on get-to-know-you games, a balloon toss and swimming. A great time was had by all! A huge shout out goes out to our newest members...
Ryan Boratynec
Rita Ezzat
Katrina Fakhouri
Lylac Joellson
Amanda Khoury
Madison Kort
Yasmeen Rizkallah
Rami Tarazi

Merolla Youssef

A big thank you to the Munayyer's for hosting the pool party and for barbequing hamburgers and hotdogs in 100 degree weather!

SOYO also had their first official meeting for the new school year where they started planning for Youth Month in October. This is when our teens are responsible for ushering, the collection and the reading of the Epistle. If your teen hasn't signed up, please see Grace Bahbah, Paul Rodriguez or an advisor. This is an important part of participating in SOYO. On October 11th, SOYO will also be having elections for the 2015-2016 school year. If interested in a position please see Father Michael, Paula Rodriguez or Dana Chade. Finally, we will end October with a SOYO sponsored luncheon after Liturgy. The teens will be responsible for the planning, preparation, serving and of course the cleanup.

It's a great time to give to our parish, make new friends and just be together!

Dana Chade

Teen's Advisor

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Paul Anter 10/17
Emile Ayoub 10/31
James Bahbah 10/15
Hana Bahou 10/23
Lana Chami 10/23
Sue Dabbah 10/29
Catherine Debbas 10/19
Roudiana Debbas 10/29
Michael Erdkamp 10/10
Sara Fortuna 10/27
Trevor Fortuna 10/13
Jillian Goson 10/7
Kareem Habeeb 10/27
Ehab Hanna 10/24
Lylac Joellson 10/18
Kathrina Khamis 10/27
Jabra Khamis 10/12
Elyas Khury 10/7
Lewis Malouf 10/7
Elizabeth Mamey 10/3
Joseph Munayyer 10/16
Joanna Novac 10/5

Joseph Richards 10/19
Souad Saadeh 10/10
Sylvia Saba 10/10
Angelika Schorr 10/14
Kathy Skaff 10/9
Rose Soffa 10/22
Mireille Moubayed 10/26
Maria Toubbeh 10/1
Anthony Turk 10/3
Reham Turk 10/10
Courtney Wilde 10/29

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Michael & May Asaly 10/28
Leo & Irma Chade 10/27
Saad & Samar Elsayegh 10/13
Spiro & Samira Fasheh 10/10
George & Charlotte Hanna 10/26
Paul & Susan Qaqundah 10/29
Robert & Kimla Ranney 10/13
Manuel & Georgette Salameh 10/8
Theodore & Kathy Skaff 10/16

*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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