

المسيح ولد ، فمجده !

THE APOSTLE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Christ is Born, Glorify Him

DECEMBER 2015

SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF IRVINE

CHRIST IS BORN, GLORIFY HIM

17840 Sky Park Circle
Irvine, CA 92614-6407
Tel: (949) 851-8933
Fax: (949) 851-0010
Email: frmlaffoon@yahoo.com
Website: www.st-mark-church.org

Pastor's Column

Excerpt from "Meditation for Christmas" from **The Year of the Grace of Our Lord** by A Monk of the Eastern Church.

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 & Jake Bahbah
Church Office Administrator: Lydia Wakileh
Teen's Advisors: Paula Rodriguez & Dana Chade

2015-2016 PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman - Randy Dabbah {17} (949) 293-7732
Vice Chairman - Barbara Scholl {18} (949) 533-4634
Secretary - Dimitri Kort {18} (909) 529-3671
Treasurer - Fouad Tarazi {16} (949) 637-0621
Assistant Treasurers- Kyra Pelachik {18} (714) 906-9231 & **Dimitri Kort {18}** (909) 529-3671
Afifa Artoul {16} (949) 215-2305
Ghassan Awayjan {17} (951) 454-5429
Joe Daruty {17} (949) 612-7939
Richard Jirjis {16} (949) 552-7424
Paula Rodriguez {16} (949) 922-9916
[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: Ibrahim Khamis (714) 962-7367
Antiochian Women of St. Mark President: Denise Nassif (949) 500-8318
Teen SOYO President: Grace Bahbah (714) 401-2094

"The feast of Christmas is the feast of the mystical Body, for it is through the Incarnation that men have become members of Christ. Whatever theological interpretation we give to this great spiritual and patristic affirmation of our incorporation into Christ, we must believe that with the Incarnation, an ineffable union – that passes all understanding-- began, in human flesh, between Jesus Christ and men. Beyond the particular historical event that took place at Bethlehem and through which the Son of God took on a visible human body, another event took place that concerns the whole human race: God, in becoming incarnate, in some way weds and assumes the human nature which we all share and creates between himself and us a relationship which, without its ever ceasing to be that between the Creator and his creature, is also that between the body and its members. There is union without confusion. Christmas allows us to become most deeply conscious of what is our true nature, human nature, regenerated by Jesus Christ. 'And the Word was made flesh.' These words summarize and express the feast of Christmas perfectly. If we give them their full meaning, we will understand that they do not only concern the mystery by which the Son and Word of the father became man: this formula also carries an implication of a moral and practical order. Our flesh is often a source of temptation and sin to us. May the Word God become flesh in us, may it enter

into our body. May the power of this Word (for there can be no question of its being an Incarnation is substance) pass from the exterior to the interior, and so, into our bodies; the law of the flesh. Christmas will have a true meaning for us only if our own flesh becomes transformed, changed and ruled by the Word made flesh.”

In anticipation of the Feast: **Christ is born!**

Fr. Michael

The Advent (the Christmas Fast) continues through December 24. This fast, which lasts exactly 40 days, prepares us to celebrate the Feast of the Nativity (Birth) of Jesus Christ, commonly known as Christmas. During this season we are reminded that the Christian life style must include alms giving (acts of charity), prayer and fasting. Therefore, we are asked to intensify these efforts. During Advent we should be praying more, giving more time and resources to those in need, eat less and more simply, and above all, seek to fast from sin.

The fasting rules are as follows: on all days we abstain from meat, poultry, dairy (milk, cheese etc. Fish, oil and wine may be eaten on Saturdays and Sundays (some also allow this on Tuesdays and Thursdays). The last four days of the Fast are strict fasting days (as in Great Lent). Fasting should always be combined with increased giving to the needy.

Last, but not least we should strive to fast from sin and come to Holy Confession before Christmas.

Sunday December 20, Visit of Metropolitan Joseph

Pre-Feast Vespers, December 20, 21, 22 and 23; 6:30 p.m. (Great Vespers on Saturday the 19th at 4:00 p.m.)

Thursday December 24, 9:30 a.m. Royal Hours of the Nativity

Thursday December 24, 6:30 p.m. Vespersal Divine Liturgy of Nativity Eve.

Friday December 25, 9:00 a.m. Orthros, 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy, Feast of the Nativity of our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ

Sunday December 27, **Church School Music Program after Liturgy**

Wednesday December 31, 6:30 p.m. Evening Liturgy, Feast of our Lord’s Circumcision

January 2016 Advanced Calendar

January 1 New Year’s Day, St. Basil’s Day

January 6 Feast of Epiphany

January 17 St. Anthony the Great

January 25 St. Gregory the Theologian

January 30 Feast of the Three Holy Hierarchs

Feasts, Special Services and Events for December 2015

Thursday December 4, Feast of St. Barbara and St. John of Damascus

Sunday December 6, St. Nicholas Sunday, *FOCUS Ministry*

Wednesday December 10, 6:30 p.m Advent Paraklesis

Sunday December 13, Ladies Guild pre-Christmas Bake Sale

Friday December 11, 6:30 p.m Advent Paraklesis

Metropolitan Joseph’s Schedule

December 6

Feast of St. Nicholas at St. Nicholas Cathedral, Los Angeles, CA

December 12-14

Pastoral visit to Ss. Peter and Paul Church, Salt Lake City, UT

December 20

Pastoral visit to St. Mark Church, Irvine, CA

December 21

Return to New Jersey

December 24

Nativity Matins and Divine Liturgy at St. Nicholas Cathedral, Brooklyn, 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

December 4

The Holy Great-martyr Barbara

This glorious follower of Christ was betrothed to Christ from early childhood. Her father Dioscorus was a pagan and was renowned for his position and wealth in the city of Heliopolis in Syria. Dioscorus locked up his only daughter Barbara, brilliant in mind and of beautiful countenance, in a high tower. He surrounded her with every comfort, gave her female servants, erected idols for worship, and built her a bathing room with two windows. Looking through the window at the earth below and the starry heavens above, Barbara's mind was opened by the grace of God. She recognized the One True God, the Creator, despite the fact that she did not have a human teacher to bring her to this knowledge. Once, while her father was away from the city, she came down from the tower and, according to God's providence, met some Christian women who revealed the true Faith of Christ to her. Barbara's heart became inflamed with love for Christ the Lord. She ordered that a third window be cut open in the bath so that the three windows would represent the Holy Trinity. On one wall she traced a Cross with her finger, and the Cross etched itself deep in the stone as if cut by a chisel. A pool of water sprang forth from her footprints on the floor of the bath, which later gave healing of diseases to many. Learning of his daughter's faith, Dioscorus beat her severely and drove her from the tower. He pursued her in order to kill her, but a cliff opened up and hid Barbara from her brutal father.

When she appeared again, her father brought her to Martianus, the magistrate, who handed her over for torture. They stripped the innocent Barbara and flogged her until her entire body was covered with blood and wounds, but the Lord Himself appeared to her in prison with His angels and healed her. A certain woman, Juliana, upon seeing this, desired martyrdom for herself. Both women were severely tortured and with mockery were led through the city. Their breasts were cut off and much blood flowed from them. They were finally led to the place of execution, where Dioscorus himself slaughtered his daughter, and Juliana was slain by the soldiers. That same day, lightning struck the house of Dioscorus, killing him and Martianus. St. Barbara suffered in the year 306. Her miracle-working relics rest in Kiev. Glorified in the Kingdom of Christ, she has appeared many times even in our own day, sometimes alone and sometimes in the company of the Most-holy Theotokos.

December 17

THE HOLY MARTYR SOLOCHON

Solochon was an Egyptian by birth and a Roman soldier under Commander Campanus during the reign of the nefarious Emperor Maximian. When the directive from the emperor was handed down that all the soldiers must offer up sacrifices to the idols, Solochon declared himself a Christian. Two of his companions also declared themselves Christians: Pamphamir and Pamphylon. The commander ordered that they be flogged and cruelly tortured from which Saints Pamphamir and Pamphylon died. Solochon remained alive and was subjected to new tortures. The commander ordered the soldiers to open his mouth with a sword and to pour the sacrifices of the idols into his mouth. The martyr broke the iron sword with his teeth and did not consume the foul sacrifice of the idols. Finally, they pierced a quill through both ears and left him to die. The Christians removed the martyr and brought him to the home of a widow where he gradually, by food and drink, became a little stronger and, again, continued to counsel the faithful to be persistent in their faith and in their sufferings for the Faith. Following that, he gave thanks to God, completed his earthly life and presented himself to the Lord in the kingdom of heaven in the year 298 A.D.

December 23

The Ten Holy Martyrs of Crete

They suffered for Christ the Lord during the persecution of Decius in the year 250. Their names were Theodulus, Saturnicus, Euporus, Gelasius, Eunician, Zoticus, Pompeius, Agathopous, Basilides and Evaristus. They were all eminent and honored citizens, the best among the best. When they were brought to the place of execution they were elated, and they discussed among themselves which of them would be the first to be beheaded, for each one of them wanted to be the first to go to his beloved Christ. Then they prayed: "O Lord, forgive Thy servants and accept our blood, which is about to be shed, as an offering on our behalf and for our kinsmen and friends and for all of our fatherland, that all may be freed from the darkness of ignorance and may know Thee, the True Light, O Eternal King!" They were beheaded and entered into the Kingdom of Glory to rejoice eternally.

December 31

The Venerable Melania the Roman

Melania was born in Rome of devout and very wealthy parents. She was forced by them to enter into marriage with a young nobleman, Apinianus. She became gravely ill in giving birth to her second child, and she told her husband that she would be healed only if he vowed before God to live with her in the future as a brother with a sister. Her husband vowed, and Melania, out of spiritual joy, was physically restored to health. When it was pleasing to God to take both of their children to Himself, they decided to sell all their possessions and distribute the proceeds to the poor, the churches and the monasteries. They traveled through many lands and cities, doing good works everywhere with their wealth. They visited famous spiritual fathers in Upper and Lower Egypt, learned much and were inspired by them. During that entire time, Melania lived an ascetic life of strict fasting, fervent prayer, and the reading of the Holy Scriptures. Melania had the custom of reading the entire book of the Holy Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, three times every year. She lived with her husband as with a brother and fellow-ascetic. Coming to Alexandria, they received the blessing of the

Patriarch, St. Cyril. After that, they traveled to Jerusalem and settled on the Mount of Olives. There Melania closed herself off and devoted herself to divine contemplation, fasting and prayer. Thus, she lived for fourteen years, after which she came out to help others to salvation. She founded a monastery for men and a convent for women. At the invitation of her kinsman, Senator Volusian, a pagan, she went to Constantinople and converted him to the Christian Faith (which even Blessed Augustine himself was unable to do). She then returned to the Mount of Olives, where she presented herself to God in the year 439 at the age of fifty-seven.

Parish & Organizations News

The Wine and Food Tasting Dinner was a very successful event on November 7th.

Thanks to Fr. Finely, to Chef Hanna Zabaneh and to the committee Austin Turk, Gisele Awyajan and Lydia Wakileh.

Our benefits net is over \$4000.

Antiochian Women of St. Mark

Antiochian Women of St. Mark

Our last meeting was held on Sunday, November 1st at the church. We had 20 ladies in attendance. Fr. Michael was out of town, so our president, Denise Nassif led the meeting with an opening prayer.

Treasurer's report by Gisele Awayjan: Our balance is \$9071.67. (Afifa Artoul stated that this year's Breast Cancer Awareness Walk raised close to \$900.)

Sunshine report: Donna Laffoon was out of town, but it was brought to the committee's attention that 4 cards of sympathy or thanks were needed.

Scrip report: Saeda Turk was not able to attend the meeting, but the committee discussed several ways in which we could improve the sales of Scrip especially during the upcoming holiday season.

New business: The pre-Thanksgiving luncheon menu sign-up and ticket cost were discussed. The decision was made to leave the prices as they were last year.

A cleaning crew will be hired to thoroughly clean our kitchen. While we have regular cleaning

each week, this one-time cleaning will tackle the baked on oil of our pans and cleaning of the oven.

The benefits of the Pre-Thanksgiving Luncheon was about 1200. Thanks to Denise the Women President for her hard work and to all the ladies who cooked, donated, set up, cleaned up and served. Great Job Ladies.

We need some ladies volunteers to put up and decorate the Christmas Tree for the Church some times after the Thanksgiving holiday. Please call the office with the good times for you to come and help.

Next meeting: December 6th at the Church after the Sunday Liturgy. All women parishioners are welcome to attend. We will be discussing very important information about:

1- Friday December 11th, spinach baking day at our church kitchen and all ladies are invited.

2- Sunday, December 13th, the Annual Antiochian Women Christmas Bake Sale. The chairs volunteer for this project are Julie Bahbah and Barbara Khamis. Orders forms for the bake sale are already put in the weekly bulletin. Please see Julie or Barbara to sign up for what you would like to bake for us.

3-The luncheon for the Metropolitan Joseph visit to our church on December 20th.

Closing Prayer: President, Denise Nassif, closed the meeting with a prayer and thanks to althea ladies who work hard to support our church.

Lori Nour

Antiochian Women's Secretary

Men's Club

The Men's Club had their meeting at the church on Thursday November 19.

Men's Club Christmas Party/Meeting is a Tuesday, Dec. 29. Details will come later.

New Years Eve Party Thursday, Dec. 31 in the Church Hall.

Super Bowl Party at St. Mark Sunday, Feb. 7.

Austin Turk is the lead.

Men's Club Secretary

Don Skaff

Teen SOYO

October was a busy & fulfilling month since it was Youth Month!

We held officer elections on Oct.11th. The new officers are as follows:

President: Grace Bahbah

Co Vice Presidents: Matt Beyrooty and Peter Williams

Secretary: Jay Skaff

Treasurer: Alex Munayer

Co High School Historians: Christina Habeeb and Paul Rodriguez

8th Grade Historian: Nadim Youssef

7th Grade Historian: Katrina Fakhouri

8th Grade Representatives: Diana Aldada and Marianne Hanounch

7th Grade Representative: Merola Youssef

Oct. 18th, we held an extra collection for Special Olympics. We sent a check for \$400.00 to The Antiochian Village to support Special Olympics.

On Oct. 25th SOYO hosted a delicious & entertaining Luncheon!

We had 35 kids participate in some form. We decorated the hall in Halloween theme.

*Mathew Dabbah spoke & shared with the parishioners his experience at Leadership Fellowship Camp

*Tana Tarazi & Paul Rodriguez worked together in preparing a slide show of SOYO's events over the last year.

*We also managed to raise \$ 545.00 from the luncheon!

*On the same day, (thanks to Tariez Bahbah's influence) we sold Mimi's Cafe' pies! We raised \$200.00 from the pie sale.

Upcoming Events:

I, Paula have been attending a monthly meeting for a Southern California Pan Orthodox Bible Bowl that our kids will be participating in on Dec.5th at St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church in Upland. I am also responsible for organizing "The Ice Breakers" at this Bible Bowl event, so if anyone has any suggestions please share them with me. Thank

you!

We have planned an "Ask Abouna" event on Fri. Nov. 19th after vespers. We are bringing food for a potluck after vespers & board games after "Ask Abouna".

We have received our SOYO Christmas cards & we will start taking orders on Nov. 22nd!

We are also going to be planning a Christmas event in Dec. details still to be determined.

Financials:

Current SOYO Account Balance is \$3,386.00.

(however there are still some outstanding reimbursement owed)

*We are waiting to see the final draft of the "Book of Needs" to donate a specific item from SOYO for our newly remodeled sanctuary.

*Yours In Christ,
Paula Rodriguez*

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Christina Aldada 12/1
Naheda Artoul 12/16
Christopher Azzam 12/22
Vera Bahbah 12/19
Daniel Chami 12/29
Alice De Abdo 12/24
Darlyne Dibs 12/16
Jerald Donovan 12/5
Charlotte El-Hinn 12/31
Salim Elsayegh 12/21
Mary Fasheh 12/18
Efsthathios Geronikolaou 12/15
Adele Habeeb 12/21
John Jirjis 12/19
Michel Joubran 12/5
Patricia Khamis 12/8
Hilda Khamis 12/6
Antoun Khoury 12/27
George Khoury 12/15
Melody Khoury 12/16
William Khury 12/15
Mark Kishek 12/22
Susan Mitri 12/27
Claude Mokbel 12/28
Marina Najjar 12/12
Jamil Nassar 12/25

Lana Nino 12/10
Jacob Qushair 12/29
Nour Salameh 12/21
Manuel Salameh 12/25
Elias Sliheet 12/31
Shouki Souri 12/27
Majida Souri 12/11
Christiana Tarazi 12/26
Charlie Wakileh 12/17

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Ghassan & Gisele Awayjan 12/16
Joseph & Salwa Bahbah 12/27

*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
ORTHODOX CHURCH
17840 SKY PARK CIRCLE
IRVINE, CA 92614
DECEMBER 2015 NEWSLETTER**



**SAINT MARK LADIES GUILD ANNUAL CHRISTMAS
SUNDAY BAKE SALE
SUNDAY DECEMBER 13TH, 2015**

Anise Cookies (Macaroon)	\$ 7.00/Dozen
Baklava	\$10.00/Dozen
Ghiraibeh (Sugar Cookies)	\$ 7.00 /Dozen
Spinach Pies	\$ 8.00 /8 pieces
Maneish (Zaater Bread)	\$ 7.00/Dozen

Let Us Bake For You

Please Return Your Order Form to the Church Office
 By person or by Mail
 17840 Sky Park Circle, Irvine, CA 92614
 By December 10 2015

Anise Cookies _____	\$ _____
Baklava _____	\$ _____
Ghiraibeh _____	\$ _____
Spinach pies _____	\$ _____
Maneish (Zaater Bread) _____	\$ _____
TOTAL	\$ _____

Name _____
 Address _____
 Phone _____

Please make your check payable to Saint Mark Ladies Guild
 Check must accompany the order

Orders ready for pick up on Christmas Bake Sale December 13, 2015

Questions? Please call Barbara Khamis (714) 964-6137, or Julie Bahbah at (714) 685-8841



**The Men's Club of St. Mark Orthodox Church in
Irvine invites you to our
New Year's Eve Party**

Celebrate the launch of 2016. Toast the New Year in style and enjoy an unforgettable evening of great food, drinks, entertainment and fellowship.

**Thursday, December 31st 2015
 St. Mark Church Hall at 8:00 PM
 17840 Sky Park Circle**

Enjoy an Evening of Middle Eastern Food
 Mezza and Dinner prepared by Raffi

Water, Soft Drinks and Champagne will be provided
 Feel free to bring your own beverage

Dance to the Fabulous Music of DJ Charles Toubbeh

Tickets are \$50 Per Seated Person
 (Seating is limited to 200 people)

Reservations start on Sunday, November 28

For Reservations Contact: Ghassan Awayjan at:

Home Number: 951-372-0567

Cell Number: 951-454-5429

Email: gadesians@sbccglobal.net

