

THE APOSTLE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2016

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

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

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Assistant Treasurers- Kyra Pelachik {18} (714) 906-

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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

Pastor's Column

In this month we celebrate the Lord's Baptism (the Feast of Epiphany/Theophany). In the gospels we read that Jesus came to the River Jordan to be baptized by His cousin, the Prophet and Baptizer John. Fr. Thomas Hopko, in his book on the Advent/Nativity/Theophany season, "The Winter Pascha" offers us an important Biblical reflection of the place of the Jordan in the history of salvation:

The river Jordan plays a very important role in the Bible. Before it becomes the river in which Jesus the Messiah baptized, it is revealed as the river which bounds the "promised land." To cross the Jordan, for the people of Israel, was to enter into the fulfillment of the Lord's promises. It was to enter the "land flowing with milk and honey," the place where God would dwell with His people providing them with the endless blessings of His presence.

In the New Testament, with its spiritual and mystical fulfillment of the Old, to cross the Jordan was to enter into the Kingdom of God, to experience the fullness of the life of the age to come. The fact that Moses was not blessed to cross the Jordan thus became a symbol of the fact that the Law by itself could not save Israel or the world. It had to be Joshua, which literally means *Savior*, and is the Hebrew form of the Greek word *Jesus*, who led the people across the Jordan and into the promised land, thus symbolizing the saving action of the new Joshua, Jesus the messianic Savior, in the covenant of grace (see Joshua 1:12).

When Joshua came to the Jordan the streams parted at the presence of God's people, with the priests bearing in their hands the Ark of the Covenant. As the waters of the sea parted to allow God's people to pass through as if on dry land at their exodus from Egypt, so also at the entry into the land of promise, the river of Jordan made way for God's people to pass through into the place of their final destination (Joshua 3:11-13).

The Lord also commanded Joshua to take twelve stones out of the river Jordan and to place them together in one place in a pile where the people had passed through, to remain "to the people of Israel as a memorial forever" of what the Lord had done for them (Joshua 4:8-10).

After the people passed through the Jordan River, "the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks, as before." (Joshua 4:18) This miraculous wonder became part of the living memory of Israel, and the event was celebrated in the worship of God's people ever since. The psalms which recall the divine action are sung at the Church's festival of the Epiphany as prefigurations of God's final act of the salvation of all people in the death and resurrection of His Anointed, the Beloved Son who was baptized in the same Jordan streams.

"What ails you, O sea that you flee? O Jordan, that you turn back?... Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob" (Psalm 114:5,7)

The river Jordan was also parted by the passage of Elijah and Elisha, an event also recalled at the liturgy of Epiphany. (2 Kings 2) And it was from the Jordan that Elijah was taken up into heaven in order to return again, as the tradition developed, to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah. (See Mt 17:9-13) It was also in the Jordan that Naaman the Syrian was cleansed from his leprosy, a sign referred to by Jesus as a prefiguration of the salvation of all people, not only those of Israel. (Lk. 4:27) In the account of Naaman's cure the special significance of the Jordan is stressed once again.

"He [Naaman] went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of

the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." (2 Kings 5:13,14)

Can we not be washed in just any river and be clean? God's answer, No. Only in the Jordan, in the baptism of Christ, are we cleansed from all of our sins. Only through the Jordan do we enter into the land of the living, the promised land of God's kingdom. Only by the sanctified waters of the Jordan does God sanctify us forever.

*The River Jordan turned back of old,
Before Elisha's mantle when Elijah ascended.
The water were made to part in two,
So the wet surface became a dry path.
This was in truth a symbol of baptism
By which we pass through mortal life.
Christ has come to the Jordan to sanctify the
waters.*

(Troparion of the prefeast of Epiphany)

Feasts, Special Services and Events for January 2016

January 1, Feast of our Lord's Circumcision and St. Basil's Day (services held on the evening of December 31: 5:30 Orthros, 6:30 p.m. Liturgy)

Tuesday, January 5 – Evening Liturgy, Feast Theophany and Great Blessing of Waters 6:30 p.m. (Orthros 5:30 p.m.)

Monday evening January 29 – 6:30 p.m. Feast of the Three Holy Hierarchs (Orthros at 5:30 p.m.)

Advance Calendar for February 2016

February 1 Sunday of Publican & Pharisee – Start of the Triodion

February 2, Feast of Meeting of the Lord in the Temple

February 13, Valentine's Day Dinner

February 21, Sunday of the Publican & Pharisee

February 24, 1st & 2nd Discovery of the Head of St. John the Baptist

WEEKLY SERVICES

Saturday Vespers 4:00 p.m.

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

January 6th

THE EPIPHANY [THEOPHANY] OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

When our Lord reached thirty years from His physical birth, He began His teaching and salvific work. He Himself signified this "beginning of the beginning" by His baptism in the Jordan river. St. Cyril of Jerusalem says, " The beginning of the world - water; the beginning of the Good News - Jordan." At the time of the baptism of the Lord in water, that mystery was declared to the world: that mystery which was prophesied in the Old Testament; the mystery about which in ancient Egypt and India was only fabled; i.e., the mystery of the Divine Holy Trinity. The Father was revealed to the sense of hearing; the Spirit was revealed to the sense of sight, and in addition to these, the Son was revealed to the sense of touch. The Father uttered His witness about the Son, the Son was baptized in the water, and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove hovered above the water. When John the Baptist witnessed and said about Christ, "Behold, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world"

(St. John 1:29), and when John immersed and baptized the Lord in the Jordan, the mission of Christ in the world and the path of our salvation was shown. That is to say: The Lord took upon Himself the sins of mankind and died under them [immersion] and became alive again [the coming out of the water]; and we must die as the old sinful man and become alive again as cleansed, renewed and regenerated. This is the Savior and this is the path of salvation. The Feast of the Epiphany [Theophany in Greek] is also called the Feast of Illumination. For us, the event in the Jordan river illuminates, by manifesting to us God as Trinity, consubstantial and undivided. That is one way. And, the second: everyone of us through baptism in water is illumined by this, that we become adopted by the

Father of Lights through the merits of the Son and the power of the Holy Spirit.

January 12th

THE HOLY FEMALE MARTYR TATIANA

Tatiana was a Roman whose parents were of great nobility. She was a Christian and a deaconess in the church. After the death of Emperor Heliogabalus, Emperor Alexander, whose mother Mammaea was a Christian, reigned in Rome. The emperor himself was wavering and indecisive in the Faith for he kept statues of Christ, Apollo, Abraham and Orpheus in his palace. His chief assistants persecuted the Christians without the emperor's orders. When they brought out the virgin Tatiana for torture, she prayed to God for her torturers. And behold, their eyes were opened and they saw four angels around the martyr. Seeing this, eight of them believed in Christ for which they also were tortured and slain. The tormentors continued to torture St. Tatiana. They whipped her, cut off parts of her body; they scraped her with irons. So all disfigured and bloody, Tatiana was thrown into the dungeon that evening so that the next day, they could, again, begin anew with different tortures. But God sent His angels to the dungeon to encourage her and to heal her wounds so that, each morning, Tatiana appeared before the torturers completely healed. They threw her before a lion, but the lion endeared himself to her and did her no harm. They cut off her hair, thinking, according to their pagan reasoning, that some sorcery or some magical power was concealed in her hair. Finally, Tatiana along with her father were both beheaded. Thus, Tatiana ended her earthly life about the year 225 A.D., and this heroic virgin, who had the fragile body of a woman but a robust and valiant spirit, was crowned with the immortal wreath of glory.

January 19th

VENERABLE MACARIUS THE GREAT

Macarius was an Egyptian and one of the younger contemporaries of Anthony the Great. His father was a priest. Out of obedience to his parents, Macarius married. However, his wife died shortly thereafter and he withdrew into the wilderness where he spent sixty years in labor and struggle, both internally and externally for the Kingdom of

Heaven. When they asked him: "Why is he so thin when he eats and when he does not eat?" He responded: "From the fear of God." So much did he succeed in cleansing his mind of evil thoughts and his heart of evil desires that God bestowed upon him the abundant gift of miracle-working so that he even raised the dead from the graves. His humility amazed both men and demons. A demon once said to him: "There is only one thing in which I am unable to overpower you. It is not in fasting; for I do not eat anything. It is not in vigils; for I never sleep." "But, what is it?" asked Macarius. "Your humility" answered the demon. Macarius often spoke to Paphnutius, his disciple: "Do not judge anyone and you will be saved." Macarius lived to be ninety-seven years old. Nine days before his death, St. Anthony and St. Pachomius appeared to him from the other world and informed him that he would die within nine days, which happened. Also, before his death, Macarius had a vision in which a cherubim revealed to him the blessed heavenly world, commended his effort and his virtue and said to him that he was sent to take his soul into the Kingdom of Heaven. He died in the year 390 A.D.

January 30th

**THE THREE HIERARCHS:
SAINT BASIL THE GREAT, SAINT
GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN AND SAINT
JOHN CHRYSOSTOM**

Each of these saints have their own feast day. St. Basil the Great, January 1; St. Gregory the Theologian, January 25; and St. John Chrysostom, January 27. This combined feast day, January 30, was instituted in the eleventh century during the reign of Emperor Alexius Comnenus. At one time a debate arose among the people concerning who of the three is the greatest? Some extolled Basil because of his purity and courage; others extolled Gregory for his unequalled depth and lofty mind in theology; still others extolled Chrysostom because of his eloquence and clarity in expounding the Faith. Thus some were called Basilians, others Gregorians, and the third were called Johannites. This debate was settled by Divine Providence to the benefit of the Church and to an even greater glory of the three saints. Bishop John of Euchaita (June 14) had a vision in a dream: At first, all three of these

saints appeared to him separately in great glory and indescribable beauty, and after that all three appeared together. They said to him, "As you see, we are one in God and there is nothing contradictory in us; neither is there a first or a second among us." The saints also advised Bishop John that he write a common service for them and to order a common feast day of celebration. Following this wonderful vision, the debate was settled in this manner: January 30 would be designated as the common feast of these three hierarchs. The Greeks consider this feast not only an ecclesiastical feast but their greatest national school holiday.

Parish & Organizations News

Antiochian Women of St. Mark

The Antiochian Women of St Mark Church had their meeting on Sunday, December 6, 2015. The meeting was called to order by President, Denise Nassif and the Antiochian Women's Prayer was recited by members. There were 16 members plus Fr. Laffoon in attendance.

Treasurer's Report: (There was no report available)

Sunshine Report: Khouria Donna Laffoon indicated that cards were sent out to the individuals mentioned in the November 1st meeting.

Script Report: Saeda continues to encourage Scrip gift card sales especially for the holidays.

Old Business: Denise Nassif thanked all the ladies who worked hard to make the Pre-Thanksgiving Luncheon a great success.

New Business:

Thanks to the Ladies who helped at the baking day on Friday December 11th. The Bake Sale on Sunday December 13th was a great success and thanks to Julie Bahbah & Barabar Khamis for chairing the event, to Theresa Joubran for baking Spinach pies at her home and to all the ladies who helped in baking, donating, setting and cleaning up.

- December 20th was the visit of our Father Metropolitan Joseph to our church to consecrate the new Iconostasis.

The Ladies served a Lenten Luncheon of mujadarah, salad with lettuce, tomatoes and cucumbers, hummus, Arabic bread, pickle/relish, fruit platter, hilbeh and coffee/juice/water.

Thanks for Hiam Sayegh for preparing and serving the Metropolitan table during the luncheon.

- The counter skirts in the ladies bathroom and kitchen sink need to be replaced. Lori Nour offered to pay for the materials to do this. We need volunteer to do the sewing.

- Denise Nassif and Lydia will Chair the Ladies Christmas Luncheon and Gift Exchange on Sunday January 3rd at 1:00 pm. at Citrus Cafe'.

The Antiochian women of St. Mark will not serve a luncheon for the Zalabieh, it will be only a zalabieh dessert on Sunday January 10th for the feast of Theophany that we celebrate on January 5th.

- Carol Tierney gave a short presentation of The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch and encouraged all the ladies/families to join if they can.

Closing Prayer: Fr. Laffoon led the closing prayer Meeting Adjourned: President Denise Nassif closed the meeting.

Lori Nour

Antiochian Women's Secretary

Men's Club

Men's Club Christmas Party/Meeting was on Tuesday, Dec. 29 at Citrus Cafe where all men had a great time.

New Years Eve Party was on Thursday, Dec. 31 in the Church Hall. It was enjoyed by all. Thanks to Chair Ghassan Awayjan and to all the men who helped him.

Super Bowl Party at St. Mark Sunday, Feb. 7. Austin Turk is the lead.

Next Men's Club meeting on January to be announced in the weekly bulletin.

Men's Club Secretary

Don Skaff

Teen SOYO

In the month of November & December we started selling Christmas cards & made approx. \$1,050.00 taking orders of about 70 cards. They were stuffed, sealed, stamped, & mailed out last Sunday the 13th.

On November 19th SOYO held their annual "Ask Abouna" event. Unfortunately we only had about 10 kids attend, but those 10 really enjoyed the evening!

Dec. 5th we participated in The Pan Orthodox Bible Bowl. It took place at St. George's church in Upland, and was an all day event. Our team consisted of Diana Aldadah, Sami Skaff, Amanda Khoury, & Jillian Goson. They did very well considering this is their first experience participating in it. I think they placed 5th. More importantly they thoroughly enjoyed communing & having fun with other Orthodox kids their ages in the local areas. As I mentioned in my prior report I was in charge of the "ice-breaker" games for all the kids to participate in & get to know one another from the different churches. It was very impressive to see so many fellow Orthodox kids show, I think there were over a 100 kids in attendance. Our all girl team has already expressed that they would like to participate next year! It was truly a big success and rewarding for all of us!

Dec. 6th SOYO participated in the FOCUS Feeding at The Valencia Inn. We had over 20 SOYO kids helping that day! Many of our kids generously donated gifts for the children of The Valencia Inn.

It was a very fulfilling experience for all of our teens to be a part of. After the Feeding they decided to all feed themselves & went to Zancoo Chicken together.

Upcoming Events:

The Annual Teen Christmas Party was held on December 28, together with the teens of St. Luke. We are also planning a Lazar Tag event in Mission Viejo with St. Luke's on Jan. 9th.

Financials:

Current SOYO Account Balance is \$3,386.00. (however there are still some outstanding reimbursements owed)

We are also waiting to make a deposit of \$1,050.00 from the Christmas card sales.

*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

Hadel Artoul 1/19
Samira Attalla 1/1
Samir Azzam 1/13
Issa Bahbah 1/3
Andrew Bahbah 1/4
Vicky Billeh 1/30
Sonia Daher 1/4
Alice De Abdo 1/3
Michael Debbas 1/22
Matthew Dabbah 1/5
Goldie Daruty 1/10
Elsa Frech 1/28
Sierra Gordon 1/10
Michael Hanna 1/29
Louisa Kashou 1/22
Lana Kashou 1/7
Lilian Kassicieh 1/29
Helen Kassir 1/6
Isa Khamis 1/11
Andrew Khamis 1/8
Anton Kishek 1/15
Dimitri Kort 1/9
Olga Manneh 1/28
Protodeacon George Moubayed 1/7
Sam Munayyer 1/10
Susan Qaqundah 1/7
Jordan Qutami 1/24
Emad Riskallah 1/25
Ryan Rodriguez 1/17
Andrew Rodriguez 1/24
Farah Saba 1/15
Hanan Saba 1/15
Michael Sakhel 1/30
Georgette Salameh 1/31
Steve Scholl 1/6
Leila Sliheet 1/2
Anton Turk 1/24
Keitie Turk 1/9
Ibrahim Wakileh 1/6
Susan Wilde 1/19

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Ken & Adele Habeeb 1/2
Wael & Louisa Kashou 1/6
Matthew & Sophia Whitacre 1/11

*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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