

THE APOSTLE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2016

SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH

OF IRVINE

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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

Pastor's Column

Beloved in Christ,

As God would have it, Pascha, and therefore the start of the Great Fast falls very late in the year. Lent will begin on March 14, and Pascha falls on May 1. What shall we do with this “extra” time between the Epiphany and Lent? You may be saying, “What do you mean, Father, by ‘extra’ time? We will be working, caring for our children, studying in school, fulfilling our obligations.” What I mean is this: So often we seem to be caught unaware by Lent. It is easy, being as busy as we all are, not to get into the “swing of things” until Lent is well underway. Well, we have less of an excuse this year!

I am challenging you to take some concrete steps to get ready for the Great Fast this year.

1. Observe the Wednesday and Friday fast.
2. Look at your church calendar, and note that the pre-Lenten period begins on Sunday February 21st (the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee) with a fast free week. The following week is a “regular” week, with Wednesday and Friday as fasting days. Then we transition to Lent with a week of fasting from meat products (the week of Cheese fare) starting on Monday, March 7. During this week we are allowed to eat eggs and dairy products, even on Wednesday and Friday. The last day of Cheese fare is Sunday March 13. Lent or the Great Fast begins the next day. *Most importantly, mark these days on your personal calendars, your family calendars, your smart phoness, and all the*

places and devices that you use to organize your time.

3. Plan ahead: Make meal plans, dig out those Lenten recipes. If you have children, involve them in this planning, so that Lent is not “imposed” upon them, but simply part of your family’s life. Perhaps together you may agree that each night of Lent will have a regular menu (i.e. Monday’s dinner will be black beans and rice, Tuesdays another dish, and so on). If not everyone in the home is Orthodox, or there are special dietary needs, discuss how to accommodate these realities. You should also check with your priest on these matters for guidance.
4. Note that beginning the week of Monday March 14 there will be a Wednesday evening Liturgy of Pre-Sanctified Gifts, and a Friday evening Akathistos Service every week. Mark these on your calendars as well, and think how you (and your family) can be present at as many of these services as humanly possible. Also plan to intensify your prayer life and your alms-giving during this season.
5. Plan to come for Holy Confession, early in Lent. Lent is the “springtime of the soul.” It is important, therefore, to cleanse our souls through this Sacrament, in order to prepare for the glorious Pascha.

Let us therefore use the extra weeks given to us this year to prepare ourselves for the wonderful and God-given opportunity that is Lent.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Michael

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.

Feasts, Special Services and Events for February 2016

Monday, February 1 – 6:30 p.m., Evening Liturgy
Feast of the Presentation of our Lord in the Temple

Tuesdays, Feb 2, 9, 23 and Thursday February 18,
Adult Education 6:30 p.m.

Sunday February 7, Scouting Recognition
Sunday February 7, Super Bowl Viewing Party at St. Mark Church

Saturday February 13, 8:00 p.m. Valentine’s Dinner Dance in the Church Hall

Sunday February 14, FOCUS Ministry

February 21 – March 2 Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee

Friday: February 28, 7:00 p.m. Parish Education Night

Advance Calendar for March 2016

March 1 – First Day of Lent

March 20 – Sunday of Orthodox. Evening Vespers hosted by St. Mark Church

March 25 – Feast of the Annunciation

Archbishop Joseph's Schedule

February 7
St. Mary Church, Temecula CA
Pastoral Visit

February 8-11
Sacred Heart Retreat Center, Alhambra, CA
Diocesan Clergy Seminar

Selected Saints of the Month

February 2
THE MEETING [PRESENTATION] OF OUR LORD IN THE TEMPLE

The fortieth day after His birth, the All-Holy Virgin brought her Divine Son into the Temple of Jerusalem, in accordance with the Law, to dedicate Him to God and to purify herself. *Consecrate to me every first-born that opens the womb among the Israelites both of man and beast, for it belongs to me* (Exodus 13:2). *Tell the Israelites: when a woman has conceived and gives birth to a boy, she shall be unclean for seven days, with the same uncleanness as at her menstrual period. On the eighth day, the flesh of the boy's foreskin shall be circumcised, and then she shall spend thirty-three days more in becoming purified of her blood; she shall not touch anything sacred nor enter the sanctuary till the days of her purification are fulfilled. If she gives birth to a girl, for fourteen days she shall be as unclean as at her menstruation, after which she shall spend sixty-six days in becoming purified of her blood. When the days of her purification for a son or for a daughter are fulfilled, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the meeting tent a yearling lamb for a holocaust and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering. The priest shall offer them up before the Lord to make atonement for her, and thus she will be clean again after her flow of blood. Such is the law for the woman who gives birth to a boy or a girl child* (Leviticus 12:2-7). Even though neither the one nor the other was necessary, nevertheless the Lawgiver did not, in anyway, want to transgress His own Law whom He had given through Moses, His servant and prophet. At that time, the high-priest Zaccharias, the father of John the Forerunner [Precursor], was on duty in the Temple [*serving as a priest before God in the order of his division* (St. Luke 1:8)]. Zaccharias placed the Virgin, not in the temple area reserved for women, but rather, in the area reserved for virgins. On this occasion, two unusual persons appeared in the Temple: the Elder Simeon and Anna, the daughter of Phanuel. The righteous Simeon took the Messiah in his arms and said: *Now, Master, You may let Your servant go in peace, according to Your word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation* (St. Luke 2: 29-30). Simeon also spoke the following words about the Christ-child: *Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel* (St. Luke 2:34). Then Anna, who from her youth served God in the Temple by fasting and prayers, recognized the Messiah and glorified God and proclaimed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem about the

coming of the long-awaited One. The Pharisees present in the Temple, who having seen and heard all, became angry with Zacharias because he placed the Virgin Mary in the area reserved for virgins and reported this to King Herod. Convinced that this is the new king about whom the Magi from the east spoke, Herod immediately sent his soldiers to kill Jesus. In the meantime the Holy Family had already left the city and set out for Egypt under the guidance of an angel of God. The Feast of the Meeting of our Lord in the Temple was celebrated from earliest times but the solemn celebration of this day was established in the year 544 A.D. during the reign of Emperor Justinian.

February 11

SAINT THEODORA

Theodora, a Greek empress, was the wife of the nefarious Emperor Theophilus the Iconoclast. After the death of Theophilus, Theodora became the ruling empress and reigned together with her son Michael III. At the Council in Constantinople (842 A.D.), she immediately restored the veneration of icons. On this occasion, the Feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy was instituted which is still celebrated today on the First Sunday of the Honorable Fast [First Sunday in Lent]. This holy and meritorious woman of the Church gave up her soul to God on February 11, 867 A.D. It was at that time, by the divine and wonderful Providence of God, at the solemn triumph of Orthodoxy over all heresies, that St. Cyril and St. Methodius were sent as Christian missionaries to the Slavs.

February 21

SAINT ZACHARIAS PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM

During the reign of the Greek Emperor Heraclius, the Persian Emperor Chozroes attacked Jerusalem in the year 614 A.D. Chozroes pillaged the city, removed the Honorable Cross [of Christ] to Persia and took an enormous number of Christians into bondage, among them was Patriarch Zacharias. The Jews assisted Chozroes in committing evil against the Christians. Among the other Jewish acts of wickedness, this one is mentioned: the Jews purchased from Chozroes 90,000 Christians as their slaves and slew them all. The aged Patriarch Zacharias remained in bondage for fourteen years. Many miracles occurred in Persia as a result of the

Honorable Cross, so even the Persians said: "The Christian God has come to Persia." Later on, Heraclius forced the Persian emperor to return the Honorable Cross to Jerusalem, along with the patriarch and the remaining captives. Emperor Heraclius himself bore the Cross on his shoulders into the Holy City. St. Zacharias spent his remaining days in peace and took up habitation with the Lord in the year 631 A.D. He was succeeded on the throne by Patriarch Modestus and followed by St. Sophronius (March 11).

February 28

SAINT BASIL THE CONFESSOR

Basil was a companion and co-sufferer with St. Procopius of Decapolis. Basil faithfully followed his teacher Procopius, both in peaceful times and in times of persecution. He suffered many hardships from the iconoclasts. When the iconoclasts were defeated, Basil, according to God's Providence, returned together with Procopius to his monastery, where in fasting and prayer he lived a long life of asceticism. He died peacefully in the year 747 A.D.

Parish & Organizations News

St. Mark 2016 Stewardship Pledge Drive Progress Report

Thank you to all of you who have made their 2016 Pledge Commitment to St. Mark. As of January 29 we have a total of \$149,648 pledged which is 75% of our total goal of \$200,000. We have also successfully collected 102 pledge commitments! We are getting closer to reaching our goal!! If you haven't made your pledge commitment yet then please take a few minutes today during Coffee Hour to fill out a pledge card.

In Christ,
St. Mark Stewardship Committee

Antiochian Women of St. Mark

The Antiochian Women of St Mark Church had their meeting on Sunday, January 17th after the liturgy. 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: our ending balance is \$ 11,797

Sunshine Report: Khouria Donna Laffoon indicated that cards were sent out to some church members.

Script Report: Saeda continues to encourage Scrip gift card sales.

Old Business: Thanks to Denise Nassif and Lydia Wakileh who Chaired the Ladies Christmas Luncheon and the Gift Exchange on Sunday January 3rd at Citrus Cafe', and to all the 32 Ladies who attended and enjoyed the delicious luncheon and had fun with the gift Exchange.

The Antiochian women of St. Mark served a zalabieh dessert on Sunday January 10th for the feast of Theophany that we celebrated on January 5th.

New Business:

- 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.

Closing Prayer: Donna Laffoon led the closing prayer

Meeting Adjourned: President Denise Nassif closed the meeting.

Lori Nour

Antiochian Women's Secretary

Men's Club

St. Mark Church Men's Club Meeting was on Sunday January 24, 2016 with 16 Members Present.

New Years Party: The New Years Party was a success with 210 people attending. The Men's Club profited \$2950.00 from the event.

Super Bowl Party: The Super Bowl party is scheduled for February 7th in the church hall. (\$10 per person) The Men's Club will provide food and drinks. We are also selling squares for \$50.00 each for the football raffle. RSVP to Ghassan Awayjan at gadesigns@sbcglobal.net.

Men's Club Focus Feeding: The Men's Club will be volunteering at the Focus Feeding on February 14th.

Next Men's Club Meeting: The next Men's Club meeting will be on February 7th after Liturgy at the St. Mark Hall. (prior to the Super Bowl party)

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

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. 29th.

Financials:

Current SOYO Account Balance is \$4,149.980

*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,
Teen's Advisor; Paula Rodriguez*

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Samir Artoul 2/2
May Asaly 2/15
Ivana Awayjan 2/27
Joseph Azzam 2/15
Mikhail Billeh 2/4
Irma Chade 2/5
Sarah Chade 2/17
Vladimir Chendler 2/3
Randy Dabbah 2/18
Zahieh Debbas 2/4
Amanda Eadeh 2/24
Samira Eissa 2/1
Kevin Fortuna 2/22
George Hanna 2/13
Ben Hanna 2/29
Georgie Hanna 2/14
Jamie Hanna 2/13
Gellan Kashou 2/20
Sammy Khamis 2/17
Diana Khamis 2/19
Charlotte Khoury 2/15
Amanda Khury 2/12
Simon Kishek 2/2
Adel Munayyer 2/13
Danice Najjar 2/22
Tanya Richards 2/2
Paul Qaqundah 2/26
Mae Sakhel-Qushair 2/12
Nuha Qushair 2/10
Tammy Qutami 2/25
Robert Ranney 2/14
Kimla Ranney 2/24
Paula Rodriguez 2/6
Najib Saadeh 2/18
George Saba 2/2
Siham Saba 2/10
Yacoub Saba 2/17
Nabeel Salameh 2/16
Daniel Scholl 2/10

Sebastian Skaff 2/6
Michael Souri 2/25
Andre Terzian 2/25
Brenda Tax 2/13
Melanie Tierney 2/22
Tina Tomeo 2/19

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Fr. Patrick & Nina Irish 2/6
Antoune & Maysoun Khoury 2/10
Ramzi & Randa Salameh 2/14
Don Jr. & Penny Skaff 2/14

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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