

THE APOSTLE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

APRIL 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

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: Ghassan Awayjan (951) 454-5429

Antiochian Women of St. Mark President: Denise Nassif (949) 500-8318

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

Pastor's Column

The Lenten Prayer of St. Ephrem the Syriac

O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, meddling, lust of power and idle talk (prostration*)

But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant (prostration)

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own sins, and not to judge my brother: for Thou are blessed, unto ages of ages. Amen. (prostration)

Then we say: God cleanse me a sinner twelve times with a metania^ each time

* a **prostration** is the act of kneeling on both knees, touching one's head to the ground, rising and then making the sign of the cross.

^ a **metania** is the act of bowing from the waist, touching the ground with one's right hand, standing and making the sign of the cross.

Then repeat the entire prayer of St. Ephrem, performing one prostration at the end.

This prayer is much like the "Our Father", in the following way. When the disciples asked the Lord to teach them to pray, He told them to "pray in this way", and then recited the "Our Father", thus giving us a model for how to pray and a prayer which perfectly fulfilled these principles. So should we treat the prayer of St Ephrem. Its content is truly

sublime, and teaches us the right way to approach God in prayer, how to think of ourselves, and what to ask for. It also is a perfect prayer fulfilling these principles.

Everyone should say this prayer daily during the week in Great Lent. Because of the physical way in which we say this prayer (it is done with bows and prostrations), it has the remarkable ability to put the soul in the right frame of mind. One might even go so far to say that if the Prayer of St Ephrem has been prayed with attention at least once during the day, and nothing else has been done, the Christian has prayed well.

The reality of our scattered, busy, distracted and often lazy lives is that we do not pray often enough, or with enough attention, or in the proper frame of mind. If a person is consistent in praying the prayer of St Ephrem, no matter how well he does in other prayer and spiritual reading, he has a “life line” and is grounded in the most important aspects of the way a Christian should conduct himself during Lent.

Of course, to just pray the prayer of St Ephrem is NOT enough for a Christian, but a pastor must prescribe “baby steps for baby feet” We all are in some measure “babies”, and all of us should pray this prayer, attentively, and carefully, without fail. The person who takes this advice to “come and see” will soon find the fruit of this practice.

Like anything worth doing, the prayer of St Ephrem takes some practice before we can receive the full benefit. There are bows AND prostrations during the prayer, and a certain number of repetitions. To someone who is accustomed to this prayer, the physical actions and specific repetitions free the mind and penetrate the soul. This can only be understood if it is done, else, a person will consider the prayer to be too complicated, or worse, an example of “vain repetition”, which the scripture forbids.

He who has ears to hear, and mouth to speak, arms to make the sign of the cross, and knees to bend, let him understand.

Adapted from an article found at www.orthodox.net/greatlent

THE LENTEN FAST

During Great Lent, the rules of the dietary fast are thus: All of Lent and Holy Week we are to abstain from all meat and animal products (including eggs, milk, animal fats, etc.) The only exceptions are shellfish. In addition, Mondays through Fridays, we are to abstain from wine and other alcoholic drinks and olive oil. This is the "letter of the law." It is important for you and your family to participate in the "spirit of the law", working out this Lenten effort within your household in ways pleasing to God and beneficial for the soul. We all must be reminded that the purpose of the dietary fast is to help us to fast from sin and ungodliness! If you have questions regarding Lenten discipline, please see Fr. Michael.

Special Services/Events in April 2015

Lenten services

Mondays, Great Compline 6:30 p.m.

Wednesdays: Liturgy of Pre-sanctified Gifts, 6:30 p.m.

Fridays (through April 15) Akathist (Madayeh) 6:30 p.m.

Friday April 22: Little Compline with Canon of St. Lazarus 6:30 p.m.

Saturday April 23: Divine Liturgy, Lazarus Saturday 10:00 a.m.

Palm Sunday and Holy Week

Sunday April 24, Entrance of our Lord and Savior into Jerusalem {Palm Sunday} 8:45 a.m. Orthros, 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy

Sunday evening, 6:30 p.m. Bridegroom Orthros

Monday April 25, 6:30 p.m. Bridegroom Orthros

Tuesday April 26, 6:30 p.m. Bridegroom Orthros

Wednesday April 27, 6:30 p.m. Holy Unction Service

Thursday Morning April 28: Orthros 9:00 a.m., Holy Thursday Vespers Divine Liturgy, 10:00 a.m.

Thursday Evening April 28: Service of the Twelve Passion Gospels, 6:30 p.m.

Friday Morning April 29: Royal Hours, 9:30 a.m.

Friday Afternoon April 29: Vespers of the Taking Down of our Lord's Body from the Cross, 3:30 p.m.

Friday Evening April 29: Service of Lamentations 6:30 p.m.

Saturday morning April 30 Holy Saturday Vesperal Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Saturday night April 30/May 1: PASCHA Rush, Procession, Orthros and Divine Liturgy 11:00 p.m. Pascha Breakfast following.

May 2016 Advanced Calendar

May 1, Great and Holy PASCHA, Agape Vespers, 1:00 p.m.

May 8, Mother's Day & Thomas Sunday

May 15, St. Mark Antiochian Women Mother/Daughter Tea

May 25, Mid-Pentecost

May 31, Pentecost Sunday

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

April 7th

SAINT GEORGE THE CONFESSOR

Because of his great virtues, which he attained through long ascetic labors, George was chosen and installed as Metropolitan of Mitylene. This saint governed his spiritual flock prudently and zealously to a ripe old age. When a persecution began under Leo V, the Armenian, who destroyed the holy icons, this saintly elder was summoned to Constantinople, to an assembly of bishops convened by him and, whose intention it was to discontinue the veneration of icons, George not only refused to carry out the

wish of the wicked emperor, but with other courageous bishops stood up in defense of holy icons. Not only was he ridiculed for this, but he was also banished into exile by the emperor to the region of Cherson. There he endured all sorts of physical afflictions and deprivations for the remaining years of his life. He died and was translated to eternal life about the year 816 A.D. Because of his great sanctity and love for the Lord Jesus, George was a great miracle-worker, both during his life and after his death.

April 12th

SAINT BASIL THE CONFESSOR

At the time of the Iconoclastic controversy, this devout man was bishop in the town of Parus in Asia Minor. He refused to sign an imperial document against the veneration of icons. For that, Basil was greatly persecuted and severely tortured. He remained as firm as a diamond in His Orthodoxy. He died at the beginning of the eighth century and was translated to the Lord.

April 20th

THE HOLY APOSTLE ZACCHAEUS

At first, Zacchaeus was a tax collector and a sinner. When our Lord saw him in Jericho in a tree and entered his home, Zacchaeus was brought to repentance. "He (Jesus) came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town. Now a man there named Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector and also a wealthy man, was seeking to see who Jesus was; but he could not see him because of the crowd, for he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed the sycamore tree in order to see Jesus, Who was about to pass that way. When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said to him: 'Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house.' And he came down quickly and received Him with joy. When they all saw this, they began to grumble, saying, 'He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner.' But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, 'Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over.'" And Jesus said to him, 'today salvation has come to this house because this man is a descendant of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost' (St. Luke

19: 1-10). Later on, Zacchaeus followed the Apostle Peter who appointed him bishop of Caesarea in Palestine where he faithfully served the Gospel and died peacefully.

April 27th

THE HOLY APOSTLE SIMEON

Simeon was one of the Seventy Apostles. He was the son of Cleopas who was the brother of Joseph, the betrothed of the All-Holy Mother of God. Seeing the miracles of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Simeon believed and was numbered among the Seventy Apostles. He preached the Gospel of Christ with great zeal and courage throughout Judea. When the nefarious Jews killed James, the brother of our Lord and first bishop of the Church of Jerusalem, by hurling him from the heights of the Temple and beat him over the head with a hoe, then this Simeon, a cousin of James, was appointed Bishop of Jerusalem. And Simeon, as the second bishop of the Holy City, governed the Church of God with wisdom and strength until a ripe old age. He was over one hundred years old when he suffered. His suffering was in this manner: during the reign of Emperor Trajan, a two-fold persecution began: one in Palestine against the descendants of David and the other persecution against the Christians. The wicked people accused Simeon of being both one and the other (a Jew and a Christian). St. Simeon endured enormous pains and finally was crucified on a cross, as was his Lord, Whom he faithfully served on earth.

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 March 23rd, we have a total of \$183,225 pledged which is 92% of our total goal of \$200,000. We have also successfully collected 131 pledge commitments!

We thank you for your continued support! Please turn in your pledge commitment cards if you have not done so yet.

In Christ,
St. Mark Stewardship Committee

Antiochian Women of St. Mark

March was Antiochian Women's month in Our Archdiocese. We thank all the Ladies who participated in Ushering, Reading the Epistle and served during the 4 weeks of March.

The Antiochian women of St. Mark had their Meeting Sunday, March 7, 2016 Opening Prayer: Prayer was lead by President, Denise Nassif. There were 16 ladies in attendance and a new member, Treasurer Report: Giselle Awayjan gave a quick overview of our current balance.

Sunshine Report: Khouria Donna Laffoon

Script Report: Saeda Turk was not available for the meeting.

Old Business: -

The Antiochian Women Sponsored a Lenten Luncheon on March 13th – to benefit the Annual Antiochian Women's project Feed Hungry Children.

- The ladies will bake Spinach Pies and will have a mid Lenten bake sale on April 3rd.

Please Save the Date:

**1-Antiochian Women mid Lent Spinach Pie
Bake Sale Sunday April 3rd,**

**2- Antiochian Women Annual Palm Sunday
Bake Sale Sunday April 24th**

This bake sale is chaired this year by Barbara Khamis & Denise Nassif.

Bake sale Order forms has been included in the weekly bulletin and in this newsletter

3-Saturday April 30th Pascha Breakfast

**Southern California Antiochian Women
37th Annual Diocesan Spring Retreat
Camps St. Nicholas – Frazier Park, CA
April 15-17, 2016**

Topic – “The Three Day Pascha: Completing Our
Lenten Journey”

Speaker: V. Rev. Fr. John Finley

You may register and pay online using a credit card at <http://www.antiochianladioceses.org/> or mail in the registration form (included in this bulletin) with your check payable to Antiochian women, Diocese of the West, to Georgette Malouf, 1021 N. Orchard Drive, Burbank, CA 91506

Full weekend early bird by April 1, \$125; and after April 1, \$135
Saturday only with 3 meals \$60
If we have enough Ladies register from our St. Mark Church we will van pooling

Lori Nour

Antiochian Women's Secretary

Men's Club

On March 3, 2016, St. Mark Men's Club had their meeting with **14 Members Present.**

Old business: The New Year's Party, the Super Bowl Party were a success. The Men's Club profited \$3090.00 from the event.

The Men's Club has the funds to contribute \$5000.00 to St. Mark Church operations.

The Men's Club discussed how we could help fund the Book of Needs. We will revisit this at our May meeting.

The Men's Club will sponsor the Mother's Day Luncheon on May 8th. We will meet to plan final details after a Liturgy service later this month or early April.

The Men's Club will not meet in April. Our next meeting will be in May. Plans are to have Fr. Josiah be our guest speaker.

Respectfully submitted by
Don Skaff/Men's Club Secretary

Teen SOYO

Sunday Feb. 28th we held a SOYO Meeting after Sunday school to discuss future activities & general business.

Paul Rodriguez attended the Mid-Winter Conference hosted by St. Luke's from March 4th-6th where some of the topics emphasized local church attendance at the PLC in Arizona, Good Friday night Vigil's, & SOYO Day of Service.

Friday, March 11th we met at church for Vespers at 6:00 & then car-pooled to Ice Palace in Aliso Viejo for a couple of hours of ice-skating followed by dessert across the street at Chili's restaurant. We had 30 kids attend, despite the rain! It was loads of fun! If your kid hasn't been coming to church events please encourage them to do so. They will be welcomed by everyone, learn more about our faith, & always have lots of fun! We don't want YOUR CHILD to miss out!

Saturday March 19th at 6:00 is a SOYO Pan Orthodox Lenten Youth Rally hosted by St. Stevens Serbian church in Alhambra and the guest speaker is Fr. Anthony Bahou from St. George's in San Diego. An e-mail with an attached flyer explaining details has been sent to all our SOYO kids. I encourage your kids to try and make it since it is a rare opportunity for them to commune with other Orthodox denominations in a spiritual and fun environment!

Saturday, March 19th is the National SOYO Day of Service. We are joining forces with St. Luke's on a future date on a project still to be determined due to other church calendar conflicts.

Upcoming Events:

We have scheduled a Movie Night-Potluck following Akathist on Friday, April 15th.

SOYO All Night Vigil is on Good Friday, the 29th of April. This is when our SOYO kids go to Good Friday Services and then stay to sleep over night at the church and take turns reading excerpts from the Bible and watching over Jesus tomb. It is a very spiritual and special experience for all who participate! Please have your teens join us.

*St. Nicholas Summer Camp Registration has opened! Go on line to sign your kid up today! They will create memories to last a life time, and learn more about Orthodoxy while being in a beautiful and spiritual setting up in the Mountains in Frazier Park.

Financials:

Current SOYO Account Balance is \$4,400.00. (However there are still some outstanding reimbursement owed)

*Yours In Christ,
Teen's Advisor; Paula Rodriguez*

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Sarah Ammari 4/24
Jessica Azzam 4/28
Andrew Azzam 4/17
George Bahbah 4/8
Grace Bahbah 4/8
Julie Bahbah 4/11
Peter Batarseh 4/25
Nicholas Benjamin
Matthew Daruty 4/25
Diala Debbas 4/11
Liana Debbas 4/16
Selim Debbas 4/22
Mary Dibs 4/27
Samar Elsayegh 4/30
Elaina Fakhouri 4/11
Fatin Fakhouri 4/11
Ian Fortuna 4/27
Tyler Hilmar 4/25
Theresa Joubran 4/1
Juliette Khamis 4/4
Mary Ann Khamis 4/1
Aida Khamis 4/21
Malvina Kumar 4/2
Sophia Liquete 4/25
Nathaniel Liquete 4/25
Jean Nasrawi 4/26
Jason Nino 4/15
Sammy Nino 4/7

Jeries Qoborsi 4/12
Daniel Qoborsi 2/24
Paul Rodriguez 4/13
Alexander Saadeh 4/17
Michael Saba 4/2
Aaron Scholl 4/11
Jay Skaff 4/8
Sarah Smathers 4/17
Charlie Tarazi 4/7

Carol Tierney 4/24
Stephanie Toubbeh 4/30
Gina Turk 4/26

Happy Anniversary

Khaled & Ruba Ammari 4/16
Michael & Rania Debbas 4/9
Maurice & Nadia Karkar 4/17
Robert & Linda Mokbel 4/23
Sam & Adel Munayyer 4/29
Marwan & Hanan Saba 4/29
Mufid & Salam Samara 4/27

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)***

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