

THE APOSTLE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

JULY & AUGUST 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

Again and Again in Peace by Fr. Vladimir Berzonsky

"Again and again in peace, let us pray to the Lord"
(Little Litany)

Again I was asked, "Why is there so much repetition in our prayers?" And again I responded the way I always had before - our worship includes certain themes and terms that bear repeating, because they remind us to pay attention to something significant on the way, or else to waft us upwards into the rarefied spiritual atmosphere of the Kingdom, lest we drift back down to the temporal and mundane area where we more normally spend our mental time.

Peace is among the most prominent; wisdom, another; and mercy, a third. Peace is the spiritual state that liberates us from the environment of distractions at minimum, angst, depression, hostility and self-destruction at worst. More than thirty times one hears the term "peace" throughout the Divine Liturgy, and at each hearing one should revive within oneself the aura of serenity. Think of it as an intake of mystical oxygen that clears the head and heart from lethargy and heaviness. Let it remind you of Who it is that is blessing you with peace, the price He paid to present it to you, and the moment *par excellence* when by the glorious mystical contact you have with the Apostles, you are there with them in the Upper Room of the dwelling of St. Mark's gracious mother that traumatic evening when He appeared. He greeted

you also with peace. You remember that He said: *“My peace I give to you; My peace I leave with you – not as the world gives, do I give to you.”* (John 14:27)

“Wisdom!” is another power-packed word you hear *“again and again.”* Snap out of your daydreams, it insists. This is not the time for reveries – mooning over something disturbing or planning your afternoon. You are here and now. Make the most of it. Something ponderous, wise and precious for your soul is about to be set forth. *“Attend!”* Pay attention. Focus your wandering thoughts and listen attentively. You may have heard it before, you may even know it by heart; nevertheless, even if the words of the gospel or prayer haven’t changed, you have. You are not the same person who listened in previous times of worship. Maybe then the phrases or parables didn’t mean much because it did not relate to your perceived needs at the time. Today you are another person from that stage of life. See now what you can make of it and apply it to your present situation. The Divine Liturgy is in a sense much like classical music, an opera perhaps, a symphony – or better yet, a concert where one human “instrument,” the priest, is played against the response, the choir or congregation. It has modulated into its present form. A classic treatise on that development is called *“The Shape of the Liturgy,”* by Dom Gregory Dix. It has indeed taken shape from a time when the people of Christ gathered, the bishop entered and said, *“Peace be with you,”* and all responded, *“And also with you.”* They all sat or stood, heard and discussed the sacred scriptures, then continued with Eucharist. That basic outline has been enhanced through the centuries into its present form. Indeed, it is challenging to absorb and assimilate its divine beauty, then to apply it to oneself. More formidable a venture when offered in a foreign tongue, but even in English it remains a study in constant progress. One must first love it to be comfortable in prayer. It goes without saying, of course, one must first love God with all one’s heart, soul and mind even to make the effort to immerse one’s self into the Liturgy. Granted, it’s not a simple matter to develop an appreciation for the way we pray. We live at a time when people lack the ability to focus or concentrate. They expect instant gratification, entertainment, and quick responses to their felt

“needs.” Orthodox Christianity challenges its children to grow in grace, develop a mind and soul able to comprehend the value of the treasures offered to us and expressed in our sacred worship, and to return our affection to the Holy Trinity *“again and again.”*

The **Dormition Fast** begins on August 1 and ends on August 14. During the Fast we will sing the service of the **Paraklesis** (or Supplication) to the Theotokos on Monday and Friday evenings (see calendar for dates). These services will begin at 7:00 p.m.

During this season the Church prescribes the following fast: we abstain from all meat, dairy products (including eggs), fish, wine and olive oil (in some traditions olive oil is allowed). Shellfish may be eaten throughout the fast. Wine and olive oil are permitted on Saturdays and Sundays only. On the Feast of the Transfiguration on August 6, fish, wine and oil are permitted. Make every effort to fast according to the best of your ability and to come to the Sacrament of Holy Confession during this holy season!

July/August Calendar

June 29 – July 3, Western Diocese Parish Life Conference, Phoenix CA

July 18 – 22 Archdiocese Clergy Symposium

Monday August 1, Procession of Holy Cross

August 1 to 14, Dormition Fast

Saturday August 6, 10:00 a.m.. Liturgy, Feast of Transfiguration (Orthros 9:00 a.m..)

Monday, August 15, 10:00a.m. Liturgy: Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos (Orthros 9:00 a.m.)

Monday August 29, 6:30 p.m. 10:00a.m. Liturgy: Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos (Orthros 9:00 a.m.)

September 2015 Advanced Calendar

September 1, Church New Year

September 3, The “Un-Golf” Tournament Dinner

September 8, Feast of the Birth of the Theotokos

September 14, Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross

September 25, Ladies Guild Friendship Tea

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.

Wednesday Vespers, 6:30 p.m.

Selected Saints of the Month

July 4th

SAINT MARTHA

Martha was the mother of St. Simeon of the Wonderful Mountain (May 24). Dedicated with all her soul to the Faith, she did not think of marriage. When her parents betrothed her to a young man, Martha thought of leaving the home of her parents and withdrawing from the world. Then St. John the Baptist appeared to Martha and counseled her to fulfill the will of her parents by entering into marriage, which she did. From this marital union, the wondrous St. Simeon, ascetic of the Wonderful Mountain, was born. St. Martha had the regular habit of rising at midnight for prayer. With great compassion she helped the poor, visited the orphaned, and served the sick. A year before her death she saw a multitude of angels with candles in their hands, and learned from them the time of her death. Upon learning this, Martha dedicated herself to prayer and good works with even great zeal. She died peacefully in the year 551 A.D., and was buried near the pillar of her son, Simeon the Stylite. After her death, she appeared many times to instruct people and to heal the sick. Her most significant appearance on record was to the abbot of Simeon's monastery. Following the burial of St. Martha, the abbot placed a votive candle on her grave, with the understanding that it should never be extinguished. But after a certain time, people became lazy, and the lamp went out. Then the abbot became ill, and the saint appeared to him and said: "Why do you not burn a votive candle on my grave? Know that I am not in need of the light from your candles, since I have been found worthy before God, the Eternal Heavenly Light--but you need it. When you burn a light on my grave, you entreat me to pray to the Lord for you." It is obvious from this that the goal of our veneration of the saints is to entreat them, as those worthier than we are, to pray to God for us and for our salvation.

July 25th

SAINT OLYMPIAS [OLYMPIADA], THE DEACONESS
Olympias was born in Constantinople of very distinguished parents. Her father, Anysius Secundus, was a senator, and her mother was the daughter of the famous nobleman Eulavius, who is mentioned in the life of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker. When Olympias reached maturity, she was betrothed to a nobleman who died before the marriage took place. The emperor and her other relatives pressured Olympias to marry another, but in vain. She in no way desired this, and devoted herself to a God-pleasing life, giving great offerings to the churches and alms to the needy from her inherited estate. She served as a deaconess in the Church during the time of Patriarch Nectarius and, after his death, during the time of St. John Chrysostom. When Chrysostom was exiled, he counseled Olympias to remain in the church and to serve as before, regardless of who the patriarch after him would be. Immediately after the banishment of this great saint, someone started a fire in the Great Church [The Church of the Divine Wisdom, Hagia Sophia], and the fire consumed many prominent buildings in the capital. The enemies of St. John Chrysostom accused this holy woman of maliciously starting the fire. Olympias was banished from Constantinople to Nicomedia, where she died in the year 410 A.D. She had requested in her last testament that her body be placed in a box and cast into the sea, and that she was to be buried wherever the waves brought it ashore. The coffin was cast ashore in the city of Vrochthoi, where there was a church dedicated to the Apostle Thomas. Throughout the centuries, her relics have had the power of great healing miracles. The exiled Chrysostom wrote beautiful letters to the exiled Olympias, which even today serve as a great comfort to all those who suffer for the sake of God's justice. Among other things, Chrysostom wrote to Olympias: "Now I am very happy, not only because you have been delivered from infirmity, but even more because you are nobly enduring all difficulties, referring to them as trivialities, which is characteristic of a soul full of strength and abounding in the rich fruits of courage. For not only are you courageously enduring misfortune, but you

do not even notice it when it comes and, without exertion, without labor and disturbance, do not even inform others, but rejoice and triumph over it. This serves as proof of the greatest wisdom" (Letter VI).

August 6th

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD, GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

In the third year of His preaching, the Lord Jesus often spoke to His disciples of His approaching passion, and also of His glory following His suffering on the Cross. So that His impending passion would not totally weaken His disciples, and so that no one would fall away from Him, He, the All-wise, wanted to show them a portion of His divine glory before His passion. For that reason, He took Peter, James and John with Him and went by night to Mt. Tabor, and was there transfigured before them: *And His face shone as the sun and His garments became white as snow*(Matthew 17:2). Moses and Elias [Elijah], the great Old Testament prophets, also appeared beside Him. Seeing this, His disciples were stunned. Peter said: *Lord, it is good for us to be here: if You will, let us make here three tabernacles; one for You, one for Moses and one for Elias* (Matthew 17:4). While Peter still spoke, Moses and Elias departed, and a bright cloud overshadowed the Lord and His disciples, and there came a voice from the cloud saying: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him* (Matthew 17:5). Hearing the voice, the disciples fell face down on the ground as though dead, and remained that way, prostrate in fear, until the Lord came to them and said: *Arise, and be not afraid* (Matthew 17:7). Why did the Lord take only three disciples onto Tabor, and not all? Because Judas was not worthy to behold the divine glory of the Teacher, Whom he will betray; and the Lord did not want to leave him alone at the foot of the mountain, so that the betrayer would not, because of this, justify his betrayal. Why was our Lord transfigured on a mountain and not in a valley? So as to teach us two virtues: love of labor and godly-thoughts--for climbing to the heights requires labor, and the heights themselves represent the elevation of our thoughts to the things of God. Why was our Lord transfigured at night? Because the night is more suitable than the day for prayer and godly-thoughts; and the night, by its darkness, conceals all

the beauty of the earth, and reveals the beauty of the starry heavens. Why did Moses and Elias appear? In order to destroy the Jewish fallacy that Christ was one of the prophets--Elias or Jeremiah or some other. That is why He appeared as a King, above the prophets, and that is why Moses and Elias appeared as His servants. Until then, our Lord had manifested His divine power many times to the disciples; but on Mt. Tabor He manifested His Divine Nature. This vision of His Divinity, and the hearing of the heavenly witness to His being the Son of God, must have served the disciples in the days of the Lord's passion--in the strengthening of a steadfast faith in Him and in His final victory.

August 18th

THE HOLY MARTYRS FLORUS AND LAURUS

Florus and Laurus were brothers in the flesh, and in spirit and in vocation. Both were zealous Christians, and were stonemasons by occupation. They lived in Illyria. A pagan prince hired them for the building of a temple to the idols. It happened that, during their work, a piece of stone flew and struck the eye of the pagan priest Merentius's son, who was observing the work of the builders with curiosity. Seeing his son blind and bloody, the pagan priest began to shout at Florus and Laurus and wanted to beat them. Then the holy brothers said to him that if he would believe in the God in whom they believed, his son would be healed. The pagan priest promised. Florus and Laurus prayed with tears to the one, living Lord God, and traced the sign of the Cross over the child's injured eye. The child was immediately healed, and his eye became whole, just as it had been. Then Merentius and his son were baptized. Shortly after that, both suffered for Christ, being tortured by fire. When they completed the temple, Florus and Laurus placed a cross on it, summoned all Christians and consecrated it in the name of the Lord Jesus, with an all-night vigil of hymn-singing. Hearing of this, the Illyrian deputy burned many of those Christians, and had Florus and Laurus themselves thrown into a well. He then filled it with dirt to suffocate them. Their relics were later revealed and translated to Constantinople. These two wonderful brothers suffered, and were martyred for Christ and glorified by Him, in the second century.

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)

Parish & Organizations News

Antiochian Women of St. Mark

Antiochian Women of St. Mark didn't have a meeting in June. They served special Luncheon honoring all the fathers at our church on the occasion of Father's Day on June 19th.

Thanks to all the Ladies who donated the food, cash, or helped in the setting up and cleaning for this event.

No meeting for summer time (July & August) but would like to wish you all a fun summer and a happy vacation.

Our tentative date for the Ladies Friendship Tea is on Sunday September 25th. If any Lady is interested on holding the Friendship Tea at her house please contact our Ladies president Denise Nassif.

Until then God bless you all and see you soon
Lori Nour & Denise Nassif

Men's Club

The Men's Club had served a beautiful Luncheon for all the mothers at our church for Mothers Day on May 8th. They had their monthly Meeting on Thursday June 16th, where they enjoyed the fellowship, dinner and Father Josiah of St. Andrew, Riverside, as a speaker at the meeting with a beautiful presentation of his trip to the Holy Land.

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

Teen SOYO

We have two teams set for the Famous "Bible Bowl" at the PLC in Arizona.

Senior Team:

Grace Bahbah, George Bahbah, & Jay Skaff

Junior Team: Diana Aldada, Jillian Goson, Marie Hanouneh, & Sami Skaff

They have started studying and are bright kids. Please pray for them as they serve and represent their parish, grow closer to God, & enjoy the Parish Life Conference!

Teen SOYO CAR WASH has been postponed to end of summer to early fall.

St. Nicholas Summer Camp Registration is still open. Go on-line <http://cts.vresp.com/c/?St.MarkAntiochianOrt/c/e818effa4/6a713b37a3/9164cf2caf> to sign your kid up today! If you are interested in signing you child up but may have questions, please don't hesitate to ask Dana Chade, or myself. 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 at Frazier Park.

Financials:

Current SOYO Account Balance is \$4,044.96 (however there are still some outstanding reimbursement owed)

Yours in Christ,

Teen's Advisor; Paula Rodriguez

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

July

Seham Aldada 7/6
Daniel Atallah 7/21
Gabriel Atallah 7/24
Ghassan Awayjan 7/9
Mayssa Azzam 7/7
Phillip Bahbah 7/2
Samir Billeh 7/21
Rita Billeh 7/26
Leo Chade 7/14
George Chami 7/28
Annabelle Dabit 7/1
Tony Debbas 7/28
Huda Debbas 7/14
Mathew Ellis 7/15
Natalie Eadeh 7/28
Sandella Goson 7/27
Norman Haffty 7/28
Esperance Hadshiti 7/15
Wafa Hanna 7/29
Julia Jirjis 7/6

Elise Kalache 7/1
 Reem Karkar 7/11
 Wael Kashou 7/1
 Steven Khamis 7/18
 Elias Khamis 7/8
 Donna Laffoon 7/6
 Nicholas Mamey 7/18
 Anne Mansour 7/1
 Robert Mokbel 7/18
 Don Nassif 7/15
 Irene Novac 7/2
 Tony Rodriguez 7/12
 Tymour Saba 7/3
 Rocky Sayegh 7/31
 Sophia Skaff 7/27
 Penny Skaff 7/8
 Seth Skaff 7/8
 Robert Smathers 7/9
 Rami Tarazi 7/8
 Devon Grace Tax 7/29
 Dave Tax Jr. 7/27
 Tiffany Tomeo 7/27
 Stephanie Turk 7/11
 Brittany Turk 7/8
 Eleanor Wackeen 7/1
 Christopher Wakileh 7/13

AUGUST

Nassrin Artoul 8/14
 Salwa Bahbah 8/28
 Randy Bahbah 8/13
 Ryan Boratynec 8/9
 Serene Batarseh 8/17
 Dana Chade 8/5
 Rania Chami 8/29
 Lauris Debbas 8/16
 Marwan Dabit 8/13
 Rula Dabit 8/1
 Victoria Donovan 8/9
 Mark Ellis 8/5
 Eileen Ellis 8/25
 Samira Fasheh 8/24
 Majed Fasheh 8/18
 Jimmy Goson Jr. 8/6
 Joseph Haffty 8/12
 Charlie Hanna 8/17
 Madeline Hanna 8/19
 Charlotte Hanna 8/10

Sandi Hanna 8/15
 Salma Hanna 8/21
 Kh. Nina Irish 8/1
 Natalie Kassir 8/21
 Tracy Khamis 8/28
 Michael Khamis 8/31
 James Kishek 8/21
 Vijay Kumar 8/19
 Joseph Laffoon 8/5
 Johnny Liquete 8/30
 Mary Rose Mamey 8/29
 Rachel Ranney 8/30
 Yasmeen Rizkalla 8/22
 Stella Saba 8/27
 Christopher Scholl 8/1
 Roger Tierney 8/22
 Christina Tomeo 8/31
 George Toubbeh 8/23
 William Turk 8/14
 James Whitacre 8/28
 Luke Whitacre 8/2
 Robert Whitehead 8/4
 Hany Youssef 8/5
 Maryan Youssef 8/22

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

JULY

Samir & Afifa Artoul 7/8
 Gabriel & Samira Attalla 7/11
 Issa & Julie Bahbah 7/23
 Randy & May Dabbah 7/30
 Marwan & Rula Dabit 7/12
 Omar & Fatin Fakhouri 7/5
 Majed & Bunia Fasheh 7/11
 Melad & Wafa Hanna 7/9
 Isa & Barbara Khamis 7/9
 Elias & Hilda Khamis 7/18
 Dimitri & Kandy Kort 7/30
 Steve & Barbara Scholl 7/18

AUGUST

Edward & Dana Chade 8/15
 Sami & Wissam Farraj 8/31
 Abe & Diana Khamis 8/28
 Nabil & Anne Mansour 8/15
 Elias & Jean Nasrawi 8/29
 Sammy & Lana Nino 8/12
 Kendall & Ronda Schorr 8/19
 Shouki & Majida Soury 8/4

*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.***

**SAINT MARK ANTIOCHIAN
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