

THE APOSTLE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2016

SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH

OF IRVINE

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

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

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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

Self-Sacrifice Is a Key to a Wonderful Marriage

This is a letter from father to son on the occasion of Alexandre's wedding to Anastasia. The letter speaks for itself.

My Dearest Alexander:

Congratulations! My heartfelt and fiercely loyal love to both you and Anastasia on your upcoming wedding. It brings me tremendous joy and a sense of great expectations. As your father, I want to offer some thoughts for your consideration as you travel through life together, whether you are here in Ukraine or elsewhere. Experience shows that it is no easy task to fulfill the promises of marriage. As a general matter, keeping one's wedding vows demands fidelity, truthfulness and self-sacrifice – no small matters. I know what I'm talking about since I've been married for 50 years! Your mother and I celebrated our golden wedding anniversary last month.

I write this letter so that you may reflect upon the meaning of marriage as seen through the eyes of your father who is quite savvy in these matters. It's been a wonderful 50 years, I say, but a period filled with challenges and sorrows and delights and difficulties; a cocktail of "ups and downs" that leads to happiness if understood and approached properly. Tolstoy expressed the truth of this struggle in Chapter 14 of Anna Karenina when he said of Levin, the protagonist, at a moment of seeming

intense crisis in the marriage: “He felt now that he was not simply close to her, but that he did not know where he ended and she began.” Marriage is not a contract but rather a covenant, which means becoming one with the other as a result of a bond strengthened through the joy of self-sacrifice. There is nothing temporary about marriage. How might you strengthen your covenant with Anastasia? I provide you with a few reflections.

Alexandre, when you were growing up, your mother and I communicated with each other more often through deeds, winks and example than through lots of words or warnings. We whispered rather than shouted. In our capacity as teachers, we rarely employed arguments based on authority to convince you and your siblings of the goodness or merit of something. You should do the same. At times, we invoked a higher order – such as the teaching of the Church or Holy Scripture – to convey the importance of an issue or moment. But that was rare. We wanted to turn you into a thinking man who could use your freedom in accordance with right reason and the realities of human nature.

In this respect, we followed Cardinal John Henry Newman’s advice: “When the intellect has once been properly trained and formed to have a connected view or grasp of things, it will display its powers with more or less effect according to its particular quality and capacity in the individual. In the case of most men it makes itself felt in the good sense, sobriety of thought, reasonableness, candor, self-command, and steadiness of view, which characterize it. In all it will be a faculty of entering with comparative ease into any subject of thought, and of taking up with aptitude any science or profession.”

As you know, a permanent commitment means fidelity and steadfastness in the face of adversity. It goes without saying that life-long commitments are extremely difficult to keep given a person’s tendency to be fickle or simply short-sighted. There are many factors that can undermine a person’s ability and resolve to remain faithful over an entire lifetime, and you, my dear Alexandre, are not exempt from the effects of the insanity of many of the forces and ideologies that afflict the modern world. At different times throughout life, you may

experience confusion and uncertainty about Anastasia – get to the bottom of those feelings. At other times, let me speak frankly, your tendency to be lazy, self-seeking or absentminded may cause you to lose sight of marriage as a calling or vocation. There is nothing unusual about these thoughts and emotions because we are human beings and not angels. But the point I want you to understand is that, despite the many problems, some real, most imaginary, fidelity in marriage is possible – it really is! So the first thing you need to always keep in mind is that a life-long commitment to one person is possible to keep. Don’t let anyone tell you otherwise. In this sense, don’t confuse the temporary nature of a contract like in a business relationship with the reality of a perpetual enduring marriage covenant.

More thoughts. Anastasia must know that, as far as you are concerned, she is the only girl in the world. She must know that no other girl exists. That sounds simple now, because you just got married, but in 25 years, the picture may be quite different. Let everyday of your lives together be like the first day of your marriage, and let her know that. Let her know that you care about the things that she likes, be with her when she is tired and be with her when she is joyful. If she senses loneliness, discover why. If she is anxious about something, find out why. It is that process of discovery and sharing that unites your hearts, thus, solidifying that bond between the two of you. It worked for me, and it should work for you, just as it has for many others throughout the ages.

Also keep in mind that one of the most serious threats to a person’s marriage bond or covenant, in my opinion, is the tendency to convert “minor” difficulties, or inconveniences, into excuses to justify one’s own selfishness at the expense of one’s spouse or children. That is why you must work hard to get to know yourself better – to get to know your own failings and limitations; to get to know when you make a mountain out of a molehill. When you find out what “sets you off”, you need to employ means to combat those annoying tendencies that may upset Anastasia. She must do the same. It’s a two way street.

Show Anastasia that you love her with deeds. This often simply means listening or remaining silent on matters of little importance. You will notice in time that human nature itself confirms that self-sacrifice, i.e., thinking and acting for the sake of others, is a key to long-lasting happiness, and in your case, to a wonderful marriage. That may sound odd but it really is true. You see, shifting gears slightly, Jesus Christ, by suffering and dying on the cross for each one of us, showed us that life is more than pleasure, comfort, power, status, listening to ourselves speak, self-absorption and “selfies”. It is about life and living and the others. Moreover, if you struggle each day to carry your little crosses at home or wherever you are, the result will be a more robust interior peace of mind, which will deepen over time, despite the many difficulties and contradictions you run into. Let me give you some practical examples of what I mean about the need to “give” yourself to Anastasia as Christ gave himself to each one of us.

During the first year of my marriage, I used to play chess with my friends down at the park during long summer evenings – pretty typical: some guys liked bowling, others liked watching movies, and I liked chess. Your mother (you were not born yet) knew what I was up to. She never said anything. But after your older brother was born, I noticed that she was a little annoyed with me hanging out with my buddies down at the park as I would tend to return home quite late. Bad move on my part. Well, after your mother and I talked about it, I immediately gave up playing chess – except on Saturday afternoons. She was so happy with my decision; the fact that she was happy made me happy. I can tell you from experience that family, wife and kids must come first. Little sacrifices like giving up chess, for example, will always turn into joys when offered up for the sake of the others.

More thoughts. It is critically important for you to do “little things” for Anastasia in order to maintain a strong bond of unity – to nurture the covenant. Let me try to explain. Doing “little things” means making the effort to smile, when you don’t feel like it, making the effort to be mindful, when you don’t want to be, making the effort to help around the house, when you don’t feel like it. It means going for a walk, or to the movies or just sitting at home

and talking. It means just being around. It even means eating rice when you prefer “гречка” (buckwheat) – which is the greatest stuff in the world but that’s another story. I highlight just a few examples of a near infinite field of possibilities during the course of the day which you may offer up as a spiritual offering for Anastasia and family. From a Christian perspective doing “little things” is accepting the small crosses (uncertainties and contradictions) of each day bearing in mind their eternal significance. Just like Christ carried his cross, we must carry our cross – and our cross is “sanctifying” our everyday life for the sake of the others – and in your case concretely, that means doing things for Anastasia.

Never lose sight of what you know so well: Always be optimistic and courageous, even when objective difficulties present themselves. Employ the same optimism and courage, which faithful parents have shown and continue to show around the world. The fidelity of millions of people throughout the ages stands as a living witness to the generous and joyful surrender of one spouse to the other. History betrays the lie of those who whisper in your ear that to persevere in marriage is not possible, boring and a real drag. No. A joyful fidelity in marriage is indeed possible; God cannot ask the impossible from us. He has asked us to be faithful, and, if he is asking this of us, then it is certainly possible, or he wouldn’t ask!

The ability to love in marriage magnifies our human dignity as human beings. We must choose to put more love where there is less love in order to find and draw out love in and through marriage. You and Anastasia must struggle to live in synch with our historical traditions and the dictates of human nature. In time you will see that I am right but you must work at it to see what I mean. And when raising children, keep in mind His Holiness Patriarch Kirill’s words: “We know, including from the lessons of our own history, that a people that has lost its historical benchmarks, that has renounced the continuity of generations, is easily converted into an object of social and ideological experiments. And the cost of such experiments is too high.”

You and Anastasia must help each other grow in love, in concrete and practical ways. Keep in mind

that “love is patient, is kind; has no selfish aims, cannot be provoked, does not brood over an injury; takes no pleasure in wrong doing, but rejoices at the victory of truth; sustains, believes, hopes, endures, to the last” (1 Corinthians 13: 4 – 8). Think about the wisdom behind these words which are a window into earthly happiness, heaven and a healthy marriage. Make the effort to pray together – oh, a couple of minutes each day would do for starters. “Be not forgetful of prayer. Every time you pray, if your prayer is sincere, there will be new feeling and new meaning in it, which will give you fresh courage, and you will understand that prayer is an education.” (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, The Brothers Karamazov)

I ask merely that you reflect on all these matters as you enter this new, beautiful, and exciting period in your lives. The marriage bond is a permanent covenant not a temporary contract.

Mom and I are very proud of you. We can barely contain our joy for you. Be assured that you are both constantly in our prayers and that you can count on us. As long as I am here, both of you have a father and friend. Call me whenever you like. Visit whenever you want to talk. I am always available to chatter about anything. If you need a hand, let me know. I wish you both much happiness. Once again, with ebullient sentiments of joy, I look forward to your wedding and centuries of happiness.

With profound love to the both of you,
Dad

P.S. I told you that I would recommend a few books for further reading. I’ll let you know in my next letter. Also, there was scant little about Mom in this letter; in my next, I will say a few words about her – she’s the real champ here.

Feasts, Special Services and Events for October
October 9 - Annual Parish Meeting
October 7 to 9 –Annual Diocesan Meetings, St. Simeon Church, Santa Clarita CA

November 2016 Advanced Calendar

November 5, Annual Wine and Food Tasting
 November 8, Synaxis of the Archangels
 November 9, St. Nectarios the wonder-worker
 November 14, Holy Apostle Philip
 November 15, Beginning of the Advent (Christmas) Fast
 November 16, Holy Apostle Matthew
 November 21, Feast of Nativity of the Theotokos
 November 24, Thanksgiving Day
 November 30, Holy Apostle Andrew

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

October 1

THE PROTECTION OF THE MOST-HOLY THEOTOKOS

From time immemorial, the Church has celebrated the Most-holy Theotokos as the patroness and protectress of the Christian people, who, by her intercessory prayers, implores God's mercy for us sinners. The help of the Most-holy Mother of God has been clearly shown numerous times, to individuals and to nations, in peace and in war, in monastic deserts and in densely populated cities. The event that the Church commemorates and celebrates today confirms the Theotokos' consistent protection of Christian people. On October 1, 911, during the reign of Emperor Leo the Wise, there was an All-night Vigil in the Blachernae Church of the Mother of God in Constantinople. The church was full of people. St. Andrew the Fool-for-Christ was standing in the rear of the church with his disciple Epiphanius. At four o'clock in the morning, the Most-holy Theotokos appeared above the people, holding her omophorion outstretched as a protective covering for the faithful. She was clothed in gold-encrusted purple, and shone with an ineffable radiance, surrounded by apostles, saints,

martyrs and virgins. St. Andrew said to Blessed Epiphanius: "Do you see, brother, the Queen and Lady of all praying for the whole world?" Epiphanius replied: "I see, Father, and am struck with amazement!" The Feast of the Protection was instituted to commemorate this event, and to remind us that we can prayerfully receive the unceasing protection of the Most-holy Theotokos in any time of difficulty.

October 13

THE HOLY GREAT-MARTYR ZLATA OF MEGLIN

Zlata was born of poor peasant parents (who also had three other daughters) in the village of Slatina, in the province of Meglin. She was a meek and devout girl, wise in the wisdom of Christ and golden, not only in name but also in her God-fearing heart. Once when Zlata went out to get water, some shameless Turks seized her and took her to their home. When one of them urged her to become a Moslem and be his wife, Zlata fearlessly replied: "I believe in Christ and Him alone do I know as my Bridegroom. I will never deny Him, even though you subject me to a thousand tortures and cut me into pieces." When her parents and sisters found her, her parents said to her: "O daughter, have mercy on yourself and on us, your parents and sisters; deny Christ in words only, so that we can all be happy, for Christ is merciful. He would forgive such a sin, committed due to the necessities of life." Her poor parents, sisters and relatives wept bitterly. However, the noble soul of St. Zlata resisted such diabolical snares. She answered them: "When you counsel me to deny Christ the true God, you are no longer my parents or my sisters. I have the Lord Jesus Christ as my father, the Theotokos as my mother, and the saints as my brothers and sisters." The Turks then cast her into prison for three months, flogging her every day until her blood soaked the ground. Finally, they suspended her upside down and lit a fire, to suffocate her with the smoke; but God was with Zlata, and gave her strength in suffering. At last they hanged her from a tree and cut her into small pieces. Thus, this brave virgin gave her soul up to God, and went to dwell in Paradise in the year

1796. Pieces of her relics were taken by Christians to their homes for a blessing.

October 19

THE HOLY PROPHET JOEL

Joel is second in the line of the minor prophets. St. Joel was the son of Phanuel, from the tribe of Reuben. He lived eight hundred years before Christ. Joel prophesied the misfortunes of the people of Israel, and the Babylonian Captivity because of the sins they had committed in the sight of God. He called the people to fasting and the priests to tearful penitential prayer, that God would have mercy on them: Sanctify ye a fast ... and cry unto the Lord (Joel 1:14); Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar (Joel 2:17). Joel also foretold the Descent of the Spirit of God upon the apostles and the pouring out of the grace of the Spirit of God upon all Christians: Then afterward I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2:28). He prophesied and described the Dread Judgment of God, and also prophesied the glory of God's Holy Church.

October 30

THE HIEROMARTYR ZENOBIUS AND HIS SISTER ZENOBIA

They were from the town of Aegea in Cilicia. They inherited the true Faith and great material wealth from their parents. Working zealously for the Faith and with great love, they distributed all their wealth to the poor. Because their hands were so generous, the hand of God shielded them from every evil intent of men and demons. The generous hands of Zenobius, which gave to the poor, were endowed by God with the gift of miracle-working, and Zenobius healed the sick of every kind of infirmity merely by touching them. Zenobius was appointed Bishop of Aegea. During a persecution, the Prefect Lysias arrested him and said: "I offer you two choices: life or death; life if you worship the gods, or death if you do not." St. Zenobius replied: "Life without Christ is not life but death, whereas death for the sake of Christ is not death but life." When Zenobius was subjected to cruel tortures, Zenobia came to the judge and said: "I also want to drink from this cup of suffering, and be crowned with that wreath." After being tortured in fire and in boiling pitch, both were beheaded with the sword in about the

year 285. Thus this brother and sister took up their habitation in the Kingdom of the Immortal Christ the King.

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

FOCUS North America Backpack Program

Imagine how excitement would turn to anxiety if going back to school meant a supply list filled with items that parents couldn't afford, sneakers from last year that don't quite fit, and hand-me-down clothes from older siblings that leave you feeling less confident.

This year, as you prepare your own children to go back to school, please join FOCUS to help children in need get ready for school. Your family, youth group, or parish can participate in our fill-a-backpack program and provide a child with a complete set of school supplies. The program runs through October so there is plenty of time to help,

Here is the list of supplies to complete the backpacks with: **Glue Stick, Ruler, 3 Ring Binder, Pack of Pens, Highlighter, Subject Folder, Box of Pencils, Lined Paper, Scissors, Pencil Box Spiral Notebooks, Crayons, Calculator, Notebook Dividers, Colored Pencils.** (This list is included in each backpack)

Please see Tammy Qutami, who will be distributing the backpacks and collecting them by Sunday October 9, 2016. You may also return them to the church in an assigned bucket. Thank you in advance!

Annual Fall Gathering on October 7-9, 2016 will be held at St. Simeon Orthodox Mission in Santa Clarita, Ca

Please see flyer included for more information

ORTHODOXY IN THE VINEYARD - YOUNG ADULT RETREAT

Meet and hangout with Orthodox Christian Young Adults from all over in Napa, CA at a Young Adult Fall Retreat - Hosted by the Young Adult Ministry within the Antiochian Diocese of Los Angeles and the West. We've planned a day of spiritual discussion lead by Jacob Saylor - Youth Directory at Assumption Greek Orthodox Church. The day will include time at Holy Assumption Monastery in Calistoga, CA (just outside of Napa), lunch, wine tasting at the local vineyard and dinner. Our topic will be focused on "In the world, but not of the world - How to be an Orthodox Christian in a materialistic and sometimes superficial world."

21+ Young Adult Event

Date: Saturday, November 5, 2016

Time: 8:30am - 7:30pm

Cost: \$50 Per Person (includes Lunch, Wine Tasting and Dinner)

For more info and to register, please visit www.dlawyoungadults.com. Make sure to register online by Sunday, October 30, 2016 - Space is limited!

November 11-13, 2016, Annual Pilgrimage to St. Paisius. Please see flyer included for more information

Married

on July 16th, James Issa Bahbah and Yamilet Amary Marquez at St John The Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, the best man is Andrew Bahbah and the maid of honor Daniela Marquez.

Departed this life

On July 8, Irma (Odette) Chade, the wife of Leo Chade. Her funeral was sung at St. Mark Church and the graveside service and burial at El Toro . Meal of Mercy was held at the Church hall. May her Memory Be Eternal.

Antiochian Women of St. Mark

Friendship Tea was held September 25th at the home of Rima Tarazi. The traditional luncheon brings together current and new members to the Antiochian Women of St. Mark organization. The Ladies enjoyed the luncheon and tea. Many thanks to Rima for hosting this event.

The Fall Gathering for 2016 will be held on October 7-9, hosted by St. Simeon Orthodox Mission Church in Santa Clarita. Registration forms are available at the church.

Next meeting will be announced soon in the weekly bulletin.

Lori Nour

Antiochian Women Secretary

Men's Club

The Men's Club has not held any meetings in August or September.

They will meet on Sunday October 16th, when the election of new officers will occur.

Respectfully submitted by

Ghassan Awayjan/Men's Club President

Teen SOYO

General Business

On Friday night September 16, The Rodriguez family hosted a fireside chat, & dinner with Monk Fr. Joseph Morris who was visiting from St. Palames Monestary followed by a nighttime swim 6:30-11:00.

On September 18th was the Annual SOYO kidnapping lunch and pool party held at The Munayyer home for all the up in coming of age new SOYO Members!!!

On Sunday September 25th, the SOYO had their meeting after Sunday School in teen room.

Upcoming Events

*The month of October is "Youth Month" and we are kicking it off by holding our big annual fund raiser Car Wash on October 2nd! Please support our car wash

*Fall Gathering is around the corner October 7-9th hosted by St. Simeon Mission in Santa Clarita. They hope to have a good turnout and look forward to this fun opportunity for fellowship.

*October 16th is Special Olympics Awareness Day.

*October 16th is SOYO officer elections and meeting.

Financials:

Current SOYO Account Balance is \$335.00 (however there are still some outstanding reimbursement owed)

Yours in Christ,

Teen's Advisor; Paula Rodriguez

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.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

James Bahbah 10/15

Hana Bahou 10/23

Lana Chami 10/23

Sue Dabbah 10/29

Catherine Debbas 10/19

Roudiana Debbas 10/29

Michael Erdkamp 10/10

Sara Fortuna 10/27

Trevor Fortuna 10/13

Jillian Goson 10/7

Kareem Habeeb 10/27

Ehab Hanna 10/24

Lylac Joellson 10/18

Kathrina Khamis 10/27

Jabra Khamis 10/12

Elyas Khury 10/7

Lewis Malouf 10/7

Elizabeth Mamey 10/3

Joseph Munayyer 10/16

Joanna Novac 10/5

Joseph Richards 10/19

Souad Saadeh 10/10

Sylvia Saba 10/10

Angelika Schorr 10/14

Kathy Skaff 10/9

Rose Soffa 10/22

Mireille Moubayed 10/26

Maria Toubbeh 10/1
Anthony Turk 10/3
Reham Turk 10/10
Courtney Wilde 10/29

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Michael & May Asaly 10/28
Saad & Samar Elsayegh 10/13
Spiro & Samira Fasheh 10/10
George & Charlotte Hanna 10/26
Paul & Susan Qaqundah 10/29
Robert & Kimla Ranney 10/13
Manuel & Georgette Salameh 10/8
Theodore & Kathy Skaff 10/16

**SAINT MARK ANTIOCHIAN
ORTHODOX CHURCH
17840 SKY PARK CIRCLE
IRVINE, CA 92614**

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