

المسيح ولد ، فمجدوه !

THE APOSTLE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2016

SAINT MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF IRVINE

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

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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

2016-2017 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 – Marwan Dabit {19} (626)665-1096

Assistant Treasurer- Kyra Pelachik {18} (714) 906-9231

Ghassan Awayjan {17} (951) 454-5429

Joe Daruty {17} (949) 612-7939

Mark Ellis {19}(949) 458-1604

Lori Nour {19} (949) 370-6224

Austin Turk {19} (949) 922-2350

[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 Acting 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

In preparation for the feast:

The Sunday of the Holy Forefathers

By Fr. Thomas Hopko

Two Sundays before the celebration of Christmas, the Orthodox Church rejoices in the festival of the holy forefathers of the Old Covenant, including those who came before the giving of the Law. They foretold the coming of the Messiah and were redeemed by His saving Pascha. Together with the canon of the Nativity of Christ, the following hymns are sung at the service of the day.

Let us offer praise to the fathers Who shone for before and during the Law; with righteous minds they served the Lord and Master Who shone forth from the Virgin And now they delight in the unending Light.

The songs of the liturgical services of the day sing of Noah, Samson, Barak, Jephthah, Nathan, Eleazar, Josiah, Job, Samuel, David, and his son Solomon, Elijah, and all the prophets, including once again Daniel and the three holy children. It sings also of the holy women made "strong in the days of old by the might of Your strength, O Lord: Hanna, Judith and Deborah; Hulda, Jael, Esther, and Sarah; Miriam the sister of Moses; Rachel, Rebecca, and Ruth, the noble-minded ones." It sings, in a word, of all the righteous of the Old Covenant times, men and women, Hebrews and non-Hebrews, who found life in God and so, as the epistle reading of the day proclaims and as the Church believes, "will appear

with Him in glory” when “Christ who is our life appears” (Colossians 3:4)

The life of the righteous fathers and mothers of ancient days, like that of all God’s saints, is Christ. God’s holy people live for Him alone, for the living God and for His Word. Their reason for being is to praise God, not only in words but in deeds, and so to live.

There is a great difference between *existing* and *living*. Many people exist. Very few really live. Only those who seek God have life. Only those who delight in His commandments and rejoice in accomplishing His will pass beyond mere existence and actually find life. “Seek God, and your soul shall live” (Ps. 69:32 LXX). This is the cry of the psalmist David who is especially hymned on this Sunday and on the Sunday after Christmas. His exhortation is in perfect harmony with the words of God given to Moses in His revelation of the divine Law.

“See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you this day, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in His ways, and by keeping His commandments and His statutes and His ordinances, then you shall live and multiply,... I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendant my live, loving the Lord your God, obeying His voice, and cleaving to Him; for that means life to you and yours length of days...” (Deut 30:15-20)

The holy forefathers and mothers, together with all their descendants, have chosen life. They find it in God’s Messiah, Jesus Christ, who is Life itself, God’s incarnate Word. The celebration of the Winter Pascha [the Advent, Christmas/Epiphany season] is a celebration of Life in God’s Word. For “Christ who is our life” has already appeared (Col 3:4). We have beheld His glory” (Jn 1:14). Now that glory is hidden in the “form of a slave” (Phil 2:7), but it will be revealed at the end of the ages in power for those who “have loved his appearing” and “live in Him” (2 Tim 4:8; Col 2:6”

By anticipation, I wish all of you a most Blessed Nativity Feast!

*In His love,
Fr. Michael*

The Advent (the Christmas Fast) continues through December 24. This fast, which lasts exactly 40 days, prepares us to celebrate the Feast of the Nativity (Birth) of Jesus Christ, commonly known as Christmas. During this season we are reminded that the Christian life style must include alms giving (acts of charity), prayer and fasting. Therefore, we are asked to intensify these efforts. During Advent we should be praying more, giving more time and resources to those in need, eat less and more simply, and above all, seek to fast from sin.

The fasting rules are as follows: on all days we abstain from meat, poultry, dairy (milk, cheese etc. Fish, oil and wine may be eaten on Saturdays and Sundays (some also allow this on Tuesdays and Thursdays). The last four days of the Fast are strict fasting days (as in Great Lent). Fasting should always be combined with increased giving to the needy.

Last, but not least we should strive to fast from sin and come to Holy Confession before Christmas.

**Feasts, Special Services and Events for
December 2016**

Sunday December 4, Feast of St. Barbara and St. John of Damascus

Monday December 5, Evening Liturgy Feast of St. Nicholas 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday December 7, Friday December 9, 6:30 p.m. Advent Paraklesis

Wednesday December 14, Friday December 16, 6:30 p.m. Advent Paraklesis

Sunday December 18, Annual Women’s Bake sale **and** Church School Christmas Program

Pre-Feast Vespers, December 20, 21, 22 and 23; 6:30 p.m.

Friday December 23, 9:30 a.m. Royal Hours of the Nativity

Christmas Paramon (Eve) Liturgy, 10:00 a.m.
Saturday December 24, Vespers 4:00 p.m.

Sunday December 25, Orthros (9:00 a.m.) and Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ

Saturday December 31, 8:00 p.m. Men's Club
New Year's Eve Celebration

January 2017 Advanced Calendar

January 1 New Year's Day, St. Basil's Day

January 6 Feast of Epiphany

January 17 St. Anthony the Great

January 25 St. Gregory the Theologian

January 30 Feast of the Three Holy Hierarchs

On Saturday November 15th, Advent (the Christmas Fast) begins. This fast, which lasts exactly 40 days, prepares us to celebrate the Feast of the Nativity (Birth) of Jesus Christ, commonly known as Christmas. During this season we are reminded that the Christian life style must include alms giving (acts of charity), prayer and fasting. Therefore, we are asked to intensify these efforts. During Advent we should be praying more, giving more time and resources to those in need, eat less and more simply, and above all, seek to fast from sin. As usual, Wednesdays and Fridays are strict fasting days (abstention from all meat, poultry, dairy & egg products, alcohol and olive oil). Until December 20, the other days of the week we are to fast from all meat and meat products, with wine and olive oil allowed. As part of our Advent effort Orthodox Christians should also participate in the Sacrament of Confession.

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

December 2

THE HOLY PROPHET HABAKKUK

Habakkuk was the son of Asaphat from the tribe of Simeon. He prophesied six hundred years before Christ, during the time of King Manasseh, and foretold the destruction of Jerusalem. When Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, attacked Jerusalem, Habakkuk sought refuge in the land of the Ishmaelites. From there he returned to Judea, where he lived as a farmer. One day he was carrying lunch to the workers in the fields, when suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared to him and said: *Go carry the dinner that thou hast into Babylon unto Daniel, who is in the lion's den* (Daniel 14:34*). But Habakkuk responded: *Lord, I never saw Babylon; neither do I know where the den is* (Daniel 14:34-35). Then the angel took him by the hair and instantly brought him to Babylon, over an immense distance, to the lion's den, where Daniel had been cast by King Cyrus as a punishment for not worshipping the idols. *O Daniel, Daniel, cried Habakkuk, take the dinner which God hath sent thee* (Daniel 14:37), and Daniel took it and ate. Then the angel of God again took Habakkuk and carried him back to his field in Judea. Habakkuk also prophesied the liberation of Jerusalem and the time of the coming of Christ. He entered into rest in ripe old age and was buried at Kela. His relics were discovered during the reign of Theodosius the Great.

December 14

THE HOLY MARTYRS PHILEMON, APOLLONIUS, ARIANUS AND OTHERS

During the reign of Diocletian, a certain judge Arianus cruelly persecuted the Christians of Egypt.

He seized Apollonius and threatened him with tortures. Apollonius, afraid of the tortures, bribed a certain well-known pagan musician, Philemon, to offer sacrifices to the idols in his place, disguised in his clothes. When Philemon appeared before the idols, the light of the Christian Faith suddenly shone in his heart, and he made the sign of the Cross. After he came out of the temple, he began to shout: "I am a Christian! A servant of Christ the Living God!" Hearing this, the judge laughed, thinking that Philemon was mocking the Christians. Later, Philemon endured horrible tortures. Rain fell from heaven and baptized him. Finally, Philemon and Apollonius were beheaded by Arianus the judge. Then, because his blind eye was healed in a miraculous manner at Philemon's grave, Arianus himself became a Christian. Arianus was condemned to death by Emperor Diocletian and was slain with four soldiers who likewise declared themselves Christians.

December 20

THE HIEROMARTYR IGNATIUS THE GOD-BEARER

This holy man is called "the God-bearer" because he constantly bore the name of the Living God in his heart and on his lips. According to tradition, he was thus named because he was held in the arms of God Incarnate, Jesus Christ. On a day when the Lord was teaching His disciples humility, He took a child and placed him among them, saying: *Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven* (Matthew 18:4). This child was Ignatius. Later, Ignatius was a disciple of St. John the Theologian, together with Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna. As Bishop of Antioch, Ignatius governed the Church of God as a good shepherd and was the first to introduce antiphonal chanting in the Church, in which two choirs alternate the chanting. This manner of chanting was revealed to St. Ignatius by the angels in heaven. When Emperor Trajan was passing through Antioch on his way to do battle with the Persians, he heard of Ignatius, summoned him and counseled him to offer sacrifice to the idols. If Ignatius would do so, Trajan would bestow upon him the rank of senator. As the counsels and threats of the emperor were in vain, St. Ignatius was shackled in irons and sent to Rome in the company of ten merciless soldiers, to be thrown to the wild

beasts. Ignatius rejoiced in suffering for his Lord, only praying to God that the wild beasts would become the tomb for his body and that no one would prevent him from this death. After a long and difficult journey from Asia through Thrace, Macedonia and Epirus, Ignatius arrived in Rome, where he was thrown to the lions in the circus. The lions tore him to pieces and devoured him, leaving only several of the larger bones and his heart. This glorious lover of the Lord Christ suffered in the year 106 A.D. in Rome at the time of the Christ-hating Emperor Trajan. Ignatius has appeared many times from the other world and worked miracles, even to this day helping all who call upon him for help.

December 28

THE HOLY MARTYR DOMNA

Domna was a virgin and priestess of the foul idols at the court of Emperor Maximian. Reading the Acts of the Apostles, which she had obtained from somewhere, she came to believe in Christ and was baptized by Bishop Cyril in Nicomedia, together with the eunuch Indes. St. Cyril directed her to a convent, where Blessed Agatha was the abbess. When the emperor began to search for her, Agatha dressed her in men's clothing and sent her to a men's monastery. This was at the time when twenty thousand Christians were burned in the church by Emperor Maximian. Immediately after this, by the emperor's command, Saints Indes, Gorgonius and Peter were thrown into the sea with millstones around their necks; Commander Zeno, who had openly denounced the emperor for his idolatry, was beheaded; St. Theophilus, the deacon of Bishop Anthimus, was slain by stoning and by arrows; Abbess Agatha, the nun Theophila and the nobles Dorotheus, Mardonius, Migdonius and Euthymius were also slain for the sake of Christ. One night, Domna was walking along the seashore and saw fishermen casting their nets into the sea. At that time she was especially grieving for St. Indes. Called by the fishermen to help them, she assisted them and by God's providence drew out three human bodies in the net. Domna recognized in them Saints Indes, Gorgonius and Peter, and she took their bodies and reverently buried them. When the emperor learned that a young man was caring for and censing the graves of the Christian martyrs, he ordered that the young man be beheaded. Thus, St. Domna was seized and beheaded, and she was

crowned with the wreath of glory in the Heavenly Kingdom with the other martyrs.

Parish & Organizations News **Antiochian Women of St. Mark**

The Antiochian Women Meeting was held on Thursday November 3, at the church with 22 Ladies in attendance.

It started with a prayer by Father Michael Laffoon. At the meeting we had Dr. Tanya Nino as our guest speaker. Thanks for Doctor Tanya Nino for giving the Ladies a very informative lecture about how to protect our skin from the sun and types of skin cancer. Well Done Doctor Tanya Nino

Treasurer report: by Giselle Awajian and Lydia Wakileh. Our ending balance is \$3900.00

Old Business: We need to collect \$10.00 yearly membership dues from each lady.

Lydia Wakileh attended the Diocese Fall Gathering on October 7th-9th, 2016 at St. Simeon Church, Santa Clarita. Lydia said it was very informative and enjoyable meeting and she encourages every Antiochian Woman to attend.

Thanks to Afifa Artoul for a great job on the Breast Cancer Awareness project. It was a great success thanks to all the Ladies who walked and helped at the Luncheon.

Thank you to Fouad and Rima Tarazi for donating the Pizza for the BCA Luncheon, in memory of Rima's Mother Genie Saba.

New Business: The Antiochian Women had their Annual Pre-Thanksgiving Luncheon on Sunday November 13. It was a great success. Thanks to Denise Nassif and to all the Ladies who baked, donated food or money, served, decorated, set up and cleaned up. Our profit was over \$1300

Ladies next meeting is on Sunday December 11 after church.

Friday December 16th Christmas Bake Day at the Church

Sunday December 18th is the Ladies Annual Christmas bake sale. Thanks to Barbara

Khamis and Julie Bahbah for volunteering to chair this event this year.

Order form of the bake sale is included in the church weekly bulletin and in this newsletter.

Please fill out your form and send it to the church by December 12.

Wisam Farraj
Antiochian Women Secretary

Men's Club

Men's Club met on Sunday November 13, after church and they are working on New Year's Eve Party. Flyer is included in this newsletter, please check out the information and reserve you seats soon.

Respectfully submitted by
Don Skaff/Men's Club Secretary

Teen SOYO

SOYO Meeting held on Nov.13th

Old business:

*Christmas card sales process started and will continue through Dec. 4th for \$15- per family. Stress spelling and accuracy of names on the forms. We will take a picture of SOYO members on Dec. 4th to include in the card.

*Nov. 12th, 23 kids went out to dinner & played 2 games of Laser Tag at The Kaleidoscope in Mission Viejo.

Everyone had a blast!!! Special thanks to Sami Skaff for organizing this event!

New Business:

*.Annual Christmas Party (tentative date Dec.30th) Marianne Hannounh is the chair lady of this event. We are opening it up to all our sister churches & it will be held at St. Mark Hall.

*We hope to adopt an underprivileged family for Christmas and provide gifts and the fixings for a Christmas dinner.

*SOYO would like to put a mobile current events/Public Relations Board up in the hall near the coffee & beverage table every Sunday. The main purpose of this board is to utilize another tool

to keep everyone informed & up to date of what is going on in SOYO!

*Our next SOYO Meeting is Dec. 4th (which is also when we are taking our group Christmas photo)

*Dec. 3rd is the Pan Orthodox Bible Bowl at St. Paul's Greek Orthodox Church. We wish the following St. Mark's team good luck;

- Diana Aldada
- Jillian Goson
- Andrew Hanouneh
- Marianne Hanouneh
- Amanda Khoury
- Rachael Rainey
- Sami Skaff

5. Discuss Christmas Party-Chair Marianne Hanouneh

- A. Food
- B. Time
- C. RSVP date
- D. Flyer
- E. Advertisement
- F. DJ
- G. Committee
- H. Decorating
- I. Cost
- J. Gift exchange

*Discuss Project Mexico

The dates are Friday, June 16th- Thursday June 22nd. Registration is due on Jan. 4th.

Financials:

The Teen's balance is \$1,414.96

***Love in Christ,
Paula Anter-Rodriguez
SOYO Advisor***

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

- Christina Aldada 12/1
- Naheda Artoul 12/16
- Christopher Azzam 12/22
- Vera Bahbah 12/19
- Daniel Chami 12/29
- Alice De Abdo 12/24
- Darlyne Dibs 12/16
- Jerald Donvan 12/5
- Charlotte El-Hinn 12/31
- Salim Elsayegh 12/21
- Mary Fasheh 12/18
- Efstathios Geronikolaou 12/15
- Adele Habeeb 12/21
- John Jirjis 12/19
- Michel Joubran 12/5
- Patricia Khamis 12/8
- Hilda Khamis 12/6
- Antoun Khoury 12/27
- George Khoury 12/15
- Melody Khoury 12/16
- William Khury 12/15
- Mark Kishek 12/22
- Susan Mitri 12/27
- Claude Mokbel 12/28
- Marina Najjar 12/12
- Jamil Nassar 12/25
- Lana Nino 12/10
- Jacob Qushair 12/29
- Nour Salameh 12/21
- Manuel Salameh 12/25
- Elias Sliheet 12/31
- Shouki Soury 12/27
- Majida Soury 12/11
- Christiana Tarazi 12/26
- Charlie Wakileh 12/17

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

- Ghassan & Gisele Awayjan 12/16
- Joseph & Salwa Bahbah 12/27

*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)***

**SAINT MARK ANTIOCHIAN
ORTHODOX CHURCH
17840 SKY PARK CIRCLE
IRVINE, CA 92614
DECEMBER 2016 NEWSLETTER**



Christ is Born, Glorify Him

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