

# **St. Mark Antiochian Orthodox Church**

**Self-ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese, Diocese of the West**

17840 Sky Park Circle, Irvine CA 92614 (949) 851-8933

Church Office Hours: M-F, 9:30 am – 4:30 pm

Website: [www.st-mark-church.org](http://www.st-mark-church.org)

Archpriest Michael Laffoon, Priest Patrick Irish

Protodeacon George Moubayed, Sub Deacon Athanasius Fakhouri

Choir Director Barbara Scholl

Chanters: Jacob Bahbah, Theresa Joubran, Mark Ellis,  
Karim Youssef

Church Office Administrator: Lydia Wakileh

Teen Advisors: Paula Rodriguez and Dana Chade

*Church School After Holy Communion*



**DECEMBER 18, 2016**

**SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST**

## HYMNS AFTER THE LITTLE ENTRANCE

**Troparion of the Resurrection in the First Tone:** While the stone was sealed by the Jews, and the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body, Thou didst arise on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world. For which cause the heavenly powers cried aloud unto Thee, O giver of life. Glory to Thy Resurrection O Christ, glory to Thy kingdom, glory to Thy providence, O Thou Who alone art the lover of mankind.

**Troparion of the Sunday before Christmas in the Second Tone:** Great are the accomplishments of faith; for the three holy youths rejoiced in the fountain of flames as though at waters of rest. And the Prophet Daniel appeared a shepherd to the lions as though they were sheep. Wherefore, by their pleadings, O Christ God, have mercy upon us.

**All: Troparion to St. Mark in the Fourth Tone:** From thy childhood the light of truth enlightened thee, O Mark, and thou didst love the labor of Christ the Savior. Wherefore thou didst follow Peter with zeal and didst serve Paul as a fellow laborer and didst enlighten the world with thy holy Gospel.

**Priest: Kontakion of the Feast of the Nativity in Tone 3:** Today the Virgin cometh to the cave to give birth in an ineffable manner to the pre-eternal Word. Rejoice, therefore, O universe, when thou hearest, and glorify with the angels and shepherds him who shall appear by his own will as a new Child, the pre-eternal God.

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**Prokeimenon** Tone 4 (Daniel 3.26, 27) Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our Fathers. For you are just in all you have done.

### **The reading from Saint Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews (11:9-10, 32-40)**

Brethren, by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets -- who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute,

afflicted, ill-treated -- of whom the world was not worthy -- wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

**Alleluia Verses** Tone 4 (Psalms 43.1; 33.17) O God, we have heard with our ears. The righteous cried and the Lord heard them.

**The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew (1:1-25)**

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, and Aram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa, and Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do

not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

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**Holy Oblations are offered today by** Lydia, Ibrahim, Michael & Christopher Wakileh for our son Charlie on the occasion of his birthday 12/17, and for Vera Bahbah 12/19, by Michael, Charlotte, Melissa, Grace & Amanda Khoury for George and Melody on the occasion of their birthdays, by Walid & Danice Najjar for their children Anthony and Marina on the occasion of their birthdays, and the Holy Oblations are offered for Hannah Frances Chade, departed this life 15 years by the Edward, Leo, Richard Chade & Mahshi families. May her Memory be Eternal!

**Instead of our usual Coffee Hour**, today we have our Antiochian Women Annual pre-Christmas Bake Sale.

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*Please remember in your prayers: Michael Debbas, Reham Turk, Maha Kureh, Michael Asaly, Darlyne Dibs, Eleanor Wackeen, Georgette Salameh, June Anter and the suffering people of Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, Libya, Ethiopia, Palestine, Venezuela, Ukraine, and all people afflicted with disease and violence.*

<p><b>Ushers this week:</b> Nader Qoborsi &amp; Maurice Karkar</p> <p><b>Ushers next week:</b> Special team for Christmas Day</p> <p><b>Altar boys serving this week:</b> Andrew Khamis, Alex Turk, Jay Skaff, Paul Rodriguez.</p> <p><b>Altar boys serving next week:</b> James Bahbah, Peter Williams, Nicholas Bahou, Youssef</p>
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**Quote from the Saints**

Those who see the Lord should purify their hearts with the continual remembrance of God. They will reach the contemplation of God in every moment, and within Him all will be light. *St. Isaac the Syrian*

**Canned Food Drive**

Low employment and homelessness continue to be significant problems, even in affluent Orange County. In light of this, the ongoing canned food collection of our parish is a small but important way to help. Please try to bring something to go in the collection barrel every week.

## **Good Samaritan Fund**

Several years ago, St. Mark Church established a fund for assisting those in need, both within our parish and in the general community. From time to time we ask for contributions to the Good Samaritan Fund, and this is one of those times. If you are in need of assistance or you are aware of someone in our parish that needs financial assistance, please speak with Fr. Michael.

## **Church Etiquette**

- Please be on time for services; those arriving late should not approach the Chalice for Communion.
- To receive Communion, one must be a baptized/chrisdated Orthodox Christian who has prepared by prayer, fasting, alms giving, and regular confession.
- Confessions are heard on Wednesday and Saturday evenings after Great Vespers and during the week by appointment.
- Men, women, and children: please dress modestly for services.
- Please remove lip balm or lipstick before receiving Communion or kissing the holy icons, Chalice, or Gospel.

## **TO THE PARENTS OF OUR YOUNG CHILDREN**

- Relax! God put the wiggle in children; don't feel you have to suppress it in God's home. All are welcome!
- Sit toward the front where it is easier for your little ones to see and hear what's going on at the altar. They tire of seeing the back of others' heads.
- Quietly explain the actions of the Liturgy (what the priests, deacon, altar boys are doing)
- Sing the hymns and responses. Children learn how to worship in church by copying you.
- Incidental noise and movement are not reasons to take your child out of church. If a child's crying or movements become a distraction to others, then it is time to leave until they are calm.
- If you have to leave the church with your child, do so but please come back. Our Lord said, "Let the children come to me and forbid them not, for such is the Kingdom of Heaven."
- Remember that the way we welcome children in church directly affects the way they respond to the Church, to God, and one another. Let them know that they are at home in our house of worship.

## **TO THE MEMBERS OF OUR PARISH**

The presence of children is a gift to the Church and they are a reminder that our parish is growing!

Please welcome our children and give a little encouragement to their parents.

### Today

St. Mark Sunday School children will perform our **Christmas program after Church today!** Our high school students will be reading Bible Verses during the program. This is a wonderful way to prepare for Christmas as our children learn these Christian songs. All participating children will also receive a gift after the performance.

**This is also St. Ignatius Sunday.** The feast day of St. Ignatius is December 20 and today we call attention to the contributions of the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch, which fund many programs of our Archdiocese.

### **St. Mark 2017 Stewardship Pledge Drive!**

**Our parish Stewardship Drive** continues and we're asking you to please consider making a pledge commitment to St. Mark for 2017. If you have not done so, you can turn in your pledge commitment to the white box in the back of the church now, but you don't need to make the first payment until January 2017.

Thank you to those who have made their 2017 pledge commitment. As of December 14, 2016, we have a **total of \$72,600** pledge which is 35% of our total goal of **\$205,000**. We have also successfully collected **31 pledge** commitments.

We hope to reach our goal by the end of February. Your financial pledge and commitment is important and supports the work of the church, the parish itself and those who work for St. Mark. Your support is appreciated!

In Christ, St. Mark Stewardship Committee

Please remember to **take your Sunday Bulletin** with you home, it will help you to remember the services and the events going on in your church. Much time and effort goes into the publishing of our bulletin so, please use it as a resource! Please put the Liturgy book service back in the pocket when you are done using it. Thank you!

**The 2017 Calendars are here. Please pick up one Calendar per family from the table at the hall by the bulletin board.**

**St. Mark Bookstore is having its first sale ever, 10% off on all items except gold jewelry. This sale is for this week only!** Also in preparation for Christmas, our **St. Mark bookstore** has many new items which make perfect Christmas gifts, large and small. Check out the new ornaments and prayer bracelets from St. Paisius Monastery or the honey and lavender from St. Barbara Monastery in addition to all other gifts. Books make great stocking stuffers too!

### ***SOS Family***

St Mark's has once again adopted two families for the Christmas Season. **A small Christmas tree is in the hall with small notes indicating items you may sponsor for this charitable effort. Today is the dead line** for bringing gifts to church. Please see Gisele Awayjan after Liturgy if you have any questions. Please help make this Christmas a little brighter for those less fortunate than ourselves.

### ***This Week***

***Today is the Fifth Sunday of the Christmas Fast (Advent).*** 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. During the last days of the fast (December 20 to 24) we observe strict fasting (abstention from all meat, poultry, dairy & egg products, alcohol and olive oil). The only way to combat the commercialization and vaguely sentimental observance of the Birth of the Savior is to prepare for a Holy Feast Day by participating in some meaningful way in the Fast.

### ***Christmas Week Services***

**Monday December 19,** Pre-Feast Vespers/Confessions 6:30 p.m.

**Tuesday December 20,** Vespers/Confessions 6:30 p.m.

**Wednesday December 21,** Vespers/Confessions 6:30 p.m.

**Thursday December 22,** Vespers/Confessions 6:30 p.m.

**Friday December 23,** Royal Hours 9:30 a.m. Vespers 6:30 p.m.

**Saturday December 24,** Christmas Eve Liturgy 10:00 a.m. **Vespers** 6:30 p.m.

### ***Next Week***

**Sunday December 25,** Feast of Nativity of Our Lord Divine Liturgy 10:00a.m. (Orthros 8:45 a.m.)

**Monday December 26,** Church Office is closed.

**Wednesday December 28,** Vespers 6:30 p.m.

**Saturday December 31<sup>st</sup>,** **Vespers 4:00 p.m. /8:00 p.m.** Men's Club Annual **New Year's Eve** at our Church Hall, please see flyer included for more information.

### *Upcoming events and services*

**Monday January 2**, Church office is closed.

**Thursday January 5**, 6:30 p.m. Epiphany Liturgy

**Saturday January 7**, 7:00 p.m. Men's Club Christmas Dinner

**Saturday January 7**, Antiochian Women Annual Christmas lunch and gift exchange from 12 noon to 4:00 p.m.

**Sunday January 8**, Ladies serving Zalabieh Dessert

**Orthodox Christian Mission Center opportunities for mission work.** Empower youth and teens in countries where youth ministry is emerging and opportunities for youth leadership exist. Orthodox Mission Teams to Alaska, Kenya, and Albania will offer programs for students and adult leaders, giving them the opportunity to develop vision for their youth groups, as well teach the Biblical basics of youth ministry and what it means to be a leader. These teams will model servant leadership by assisting in small groups, recreation, and worship. OCMC invites you to join these opportunities in youth ministry. For more information, please visit [www.ocmc.org](http://www.ocmc.org), e-mail [teams@ocmc.org](mailto:teams@ocmc.org), or call 1-877 GO FORTH (ext 141).

### **Orange County Orthodox Christian Young Professionals**

Young adults are welcome to join us for a social and spiritual/discussion each month. Contact Kyra Pelachik at [ococyp@gmail.com](mailto:ococyp@gmail.com) or Charlie Kassaseya at 858-761-1720. You can find our events on [www.tinyurl.com/ococyp](http://www.tinyurl.com/ococyp) or Facebook (search: OC Orthodox Christian Young Professionals)

### **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.

### **Sunday of the Genealogy (Sunday before the Nativity)**

On the Sunday that occurs on or immediately after the eighteenth of this month, we celebrate all those who from ages past have been well-pleasing to God, beginning from Adam even unto Joseph the Betrothed of the Most Holy Theotokos, according to genealogy, as the Evangelist Luke hath recorded historically (Luke 3:23-38); we also commemorate the Prophets and Prophetesses, and especially the Prophet Daniel and the Holy Three Children.